



SOUTH CAROLINA
BAPTIST CONVENTION

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Stewardship...
God's Way

Senior Adult Edition

Answering for our Witness

Group Study — Part 2

Study Goal: To convince the learner that godly and biblical stewardship includes the matter of our sharing the gospel with others, because it is the most important thing God has entrusted to us.

Teaching Aim: To create understanding of the basic Bible texts teaching us God's priority purpose is to build His kingdom and 'we answer to God for our own lives' surrender to this purpose.

Preparation:

- Review the member material and be prepared to review study content with them.
- Bring or prepare for use a dry-erase board or chalk board for notes.
- Bring a copy of the church's budget for illustration.
- Bring a witnessing tract that outlines the plan of salvation.

Introduction

This study builds on the principles taught in the previous study, namely God owns everything and shares it with us. Today's study explores the purpose God has in sharing His resources with us:

- God doesn't simply toss us into the world and hand us a bag of blessings and say, 'Do whatever you like.'
- Someday we will answer to God for what we do — and in fact, we already do.
- God has a priority purpose for our lives and resources. Do you know what it is?

Let's review the goal we set during the first of these special studies. It applies in this study as well:

My goal is to learn God's principles of stewardship, obey them, and apply them to my life.

This is why we can't wait, or pass our responsibility off on someone else.

Ask how many find it difficult to witness. Tell them they don't have to raise their hands, except inside! Admit many don't think they're cut out to witness. Confess some don't share the gospel because they aren't sure of it, or because they are cool in commitment.

Demonstration

Show the copy of the gospel tract. Say there are wonderful tools like this to help you share the gospel, and which give the other person something to take with them if they need to reflect on it alone. If your church has a program to train persons in witnessing, say that they will explain how to use a tract like this. If there is time, go through the points of the presentation, which are similar to the four points found in the member lesson.

Suggest one of the greater solutions to these problems is prayer. Lead the class in something like the following as a closing prayer:

Father, we ought to be good givers, and support our church's ministry and missions. We ought to support a denominational missions strategy. We're thankful we do. We're thankful for the opportunity to raise special amounts to expand our own church's ministry here, where many still need Christ.

It's sometimes easier to write a check for an offering than to offer our witness personally. We want others to know Christ. By your grace and power, we will develop and maintain the discipline of sharing the gospel. We will do it because You command it, and because we are excited to know You, and want to make You known. Amen.

If, as we've said a moment ago, God actually has a plan for our use of all His resources, then few things will be as important as finding out what that plan is, so we can follow it. Let's pray about that:

(Suggested Prayer)

*F*ather, the more we've learned about Your word the more we have realized that we are not here by accident, and You have a plan for each of us and all of us. Show us more of this plan today, especially what part we play in Your kingdom work. Help us not only to learn what it is, but also to desire to see it come to pass in our own lives. Melt our hearts to want nothing more than Your will, and nothing less, and nothing else. Amen.

Review

Review the material in the members' study beginning with "God Holds You Responsible." Teach the class the scripture verse Romans 14:12. Suggest they memorize it. It's short. Have them repeat it:

So then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God (Romans 14:12).

Go into the background of this verse. Paul was talking to the Romans about the matter of being harshly judgmental toward other Christians. They didn't see eye to eye about eating meat bought in the marketplace which had first been offered to pagan idols. This brought up a dispute about vegetarianism. Paul told us we must not measure each other against ourselves, because we will all be measured by the yardstick of the Lord. He summed it all up with this: **every one of us shall give account of himself to God.**

The point was, what are you doing with *your* life? We often seem to be interested in evaluating what other people and their lives are worth. What we ought to be doing is looking closely at ourselves, since we will answer to God.

Activity

The study briefly mentions Proverbs 9:12, which tells us good stewards will reap the rewards of wise living, and bad stewards will bear the brunt of their foolishness.

State that this discipline is biblically based. It comes from not only the Great Commission, but also such verses as 1 Thessalonians 2:4, which speaks of the gospel as a "trust," and 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, which says the "mysteries of God," which are the gospel, are part of our stewardship.

Stress the details of the discipline (Use the dry erase board if possible, for the major headings):

- **Every Christian** means every Christian. None is exempted just because he isn't a "preacher" or a "teacher," or isn't "trained." In fact, perhaps we need to seek training, so we can do what we ought to do better!
- **Share** suggests the source from which we speak and the spirit in which we do it. We are to be telling something we know, in a spirit of love and concern.
- **Gospel** obviously means the good news of salvation. This means we need to know what the gospel is, and be able to explain it so someone else can understand and obey it.
- **On some level** means from the simplest remark in passing, to the more involved conversation, to formal speaking.
- **As God gives opportunity** means we needn't force ourselves on anyone, but wait for the open door. Yet it also means we need to be watching for the open doors, not assuming we have no role in witnessing. If we pray for opportunity, God will no doubt give it.

Inform the group members of the following statistics, to demonstrate how important it is for all Christians to share the gospel. Stress that we cannot stop doing it just because we get older, or because someone else comes into the church who is more active, or because ... whatever. Write the following figures on the board ("1-21 — 19/20, 25 — 1/10,000" etc.)

- Nineteen out of 20 who become Christians do so before they are 21 years of age.
- After age 25, only 1 in 10,000 comes to Christ.
- After age 35, only 1 in 50,000 becomes a Christian.
- After 45, only 1 in 200,000.
- After 55, 1 in 300,000.
- After 65, 1 in 500,000.
- After 75, only 1 in 700,000 persons becomes saved.

Every church should take seriously God's priority on His kingdom. Every church should make a significant contribution to extending its reach to more and more lost persons and people groups. That's why we are involved in missions throughout the world.

Have a group member read **Philippians 5:15-18**. Explain that while some churches like Antioch provided encouragement, the church at Philippi actually sent money and provisions to support Paul, who had given his life to preach and teach the gospel, to plant churches wherever he went. The Philippians were partners with him through their giving. They made it possible for him to continue the mission cause without being slowed down or distracted by having to make a living through other means. This is the philosophy behind the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program.

Ask if anyone knows how much his or her church gives through the Cooperative Program to the cause of missions. Ask if they know how much stays in the state.

State that Baptists believe in the priority of the kingdom of God as the purpose of Christian giving. State that the church believes its own ministries, including whatever it builds, staffs or funds, must help carry out the cause of missions and ministry. Say you believe your church is committed to this as it seeks to raise funds for special projects. It's for the building up of the body of Christ and the advancement of the kingdom of God.

Transition Thought

The principles of accountability and the importance of the kingdom in God's plan lead us to realize we need to be involved in witnessing. We have to "personalize" these principles.

Sharing the Gospel

Review

Review *briefly* the member material under "Sharing the Gospel." Have the group repeat the definition of the discipline of sharing the gospel:

Every Christian is to share the gospel of Christ on some level as God gives opportunity.

There are other proverbs which illustrate good and bad stewardship.

[Divide the class up into two groups sufficient to look up the following proverbs.]

Bad Stewardship Proverbs

1:19, 3:28, 10:2, 11:28, 13:7, 16:8, 21:17, 21:20, 24:30-34

Good Stewardship Proverbs

3:9-10, 6:1-8, 10:2, 11:24, 12:14, 13:7, 13:22, 24:3-4, 31:10-31

Have the groups read alternately a "good" proverb and a "bad" one. Contrast the kinds of stewardship shown, and make the point each of us illustrates these kinds of living daily. Ask which one they think is more like them.

The *principle of accountability* is stated in the lesson. Repeat it together: ***We are and will be held accountable for what we are and have, both here and at judgment.***

Ask members if they ever think about the principle of accountability when they are considering decisions or actions.

Transition Thought

If we will answer for what we do with what we are and have, it is helpful for us to know in general what God has in mind for our lives. He has not left us in the dark. Not only does He give us life and resources, but He tells us what they are for:

God's Kingdom Comes First

God's purpose is first that His own kingdom be built and established in the world. This means persons will come to know and obey Him, throughout the world. Eventually, the King of the kingdom, Jesus Christ, will come again, to rule.

Review

Review the material in the member study beginning with "God's Kingdom Comes First," and ending at "Sharing the Gospel." Then add the following material:

Illustration

Have you ever seen those groups of yellow and blue crosses along the highway here and there — mostly on the interstates? Do you know who put them there? A man by the name of Bernard Coffendaffer, who died in 1993, spent the last ten years of his life putting them up, to remind people of Calvary. He had a heart attack and almost died, but believes God gave him a vision and a command to put up the crosses. He spent \$2 million doing it.

What have you and I done to let God use us to build His kingdom? How much have we invested, or given? Have you ever gone “out on a limb” for God? Have you ever been criticized for “taking this Christianity thing too far?”

The primary mission of the church as the people of God is to obey the Great Commission: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel.” The kingdom of God must come first.

What is the church? It is the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12).

Who is the body of Christ? It is you and me, believers in Christ:

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it (1 Corinthians 12:27).

This means whatever the priority of the church is, it is shared by all its members — you and me. The church’s priority is the kingdom of God. Everything the church does should be related to the kingdom of God, and everything you and I do should fit into a life devoted to the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). If we follow this plan for living, God will meet all our true needs.

[Take the copy of the church budget. Go through its items with the class and identify items at random. Ask how they believe each of these things relates to the goal of establishing the kingdom of God. Are they related to ministry? Missions?]

Every individual Christian should participate in the ministry and mission of his church through tithes and offerings. In fact, this is the principle of the priority of the kingdom of God:

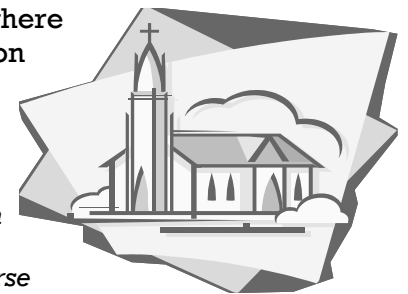
The priority purpose of Christian giving is to support and build, through the local church, the ministry of the gospel and the cause of missions.

[Have someone read **Malachi 3:10.**] Explain the concepts in this verse:

The concept of a “storehouse tithe” is often discussed. The word “storehouse” literally means “house of supplies.” There is the implication in Deuteronomy 12-14 that there was an ample facility in Jerusalem for the tithes of the people, in particular the third-year tithes, to be stored, so the Levitical priests could be provided for, for more than the few days of the ingathering of offerings.

2 Chronicles 31:11-12 specifically describes the construction of storehouses for tithes and offerings under Hezekiah. In the reconstruction under Nehemiah, they were careful to provide this place. It is clear that Malachi, delivering the word of the Lord, was teaching God’s people to return to systematic, disciplined, proportionate giving, and to direct that giving as they had been commanded earlier — to the temple storehouses, for the administration of it by the priests. What do you think the command to bring the tithe to the storehouse say about the growing trend to give money only to designated offerings? *Remind learners most people will not designate gifts to salaries, light bills, etc.; but those expenses are incurred in caring out ministry in the community.*

Jesus changed only the target. God has declared the human heart to be His true temple, but the place of worship is the place where the church gathers. The church is where God centers His ministry and mission work to the community and the world.



Quote: Charles Chaney said, “Churches are agents of the kingdom of God. They are colonies of heaven planted within the diverse and perverse cultures of mankind, outposts in the wilderness of human chaos. Their task is to extend God’s kingdom through evangelism and church planting.”