

# Stewardship Handbook

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Capital Campaign - 2019



## Giving to God: Guilt or Joy?

An Authentically Lutheran  
Approach to Stewardship

### *The purpose of this pamphlet*

*Bethlehem Lutheran is embarking on a campaign to raise funds to pay down debt. We have already taken the effort to make sure this campaign is based on spiritual renewal. Now it is time to understand what the Bible teaches about how we give to God. Each member is asked to read this pamphlet and begin to pray and think about their personal stewardship commitment.*

spare His own Son but give Him freely for us into death on the cross then certainly He will give us all things that we need.

*And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. **Philippians 4:19***

*Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! **Luke 12:24***

*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. **Luke 12:32***

So God has forgiven us, made us heirs to great blessings in heaven someday and promised to care for all our needs. These promises of His Gospel free us up to be joyful givers.

### **Conclusion**

Since we know that "the Gospel cannot be bound (2 Tim 2:9), this campaign is about freeing us to more effectively do our mission of building the family of God. It frees up resources for us to serve and love well. It gets us all pulling together in the same direction. It proves that we can go through the hard times and take the next steps into the future.

We have all been led by God to be at Bethlehem. He has arranged us, the parts of His body, just as He wants (1 Cor. 12), and the body is still developing. At this Bethlehem, there is more room in the inn!

This campaign will enable the Bethlehem faith family to continue to "do what God is blessing" – to serve and connect more with our community, with our members, and with our God!

grace. (We talked about that in the “Means of Grace” booklet you received a few weeks ago.) So the more we get those means of grace into our lives (preaching, absolution, baptism, the Lord’s Supper), the stronger our faith will be. In regards to stewardship and giving offerings this converts into cheerful givers. But just as we learned above, we do not start with the Gospel. We start with the law and it has some harsh things to say about the sin in our hearts and how it likes to selfishly hoard things for itself. Jesus says this:

*No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. **Matthew 6:24***

*Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. **Luke 12:33***

Solomon and Isaiah have this to say:

*He who loves money will not be satisfied. **Ecclesiastes 5:10***

*Why do you spend your money on that which does not satisfy? **Isaiah 55:2***

These words are spoken to us not to leave us in despair but to lead us to God’s better word of Gospel. God forgives us our sin of selfishness and even more, He promises to take care of us. Consider the infamous words of the twenty-third Psalm:

*The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want... **Psalms 23:1***

God will take care of all our needs. If He would not

## Giving to God, Guilt or Joy?

Look at the crucifix in the picture on the right. Does it conjure up guilt or joy for you? It might do both and that is okay.



As Christians we sometimes feel guilt for our many sins but we also feel great joy in knowing that Christ has paid the price for them. The motivation for Biblical stewardship is also a healthy combination of both guilt and joy. The challenge is understanding how to have the right mix of each.

### Guilt Works but God Wants Cheerful Givers

Guilt is a great motivator. We could raise a lot more money in offerings if pastor used a lot more guilt in his preaching and teaching. Most religious people have a well-developed conscience and so telling them how much they need to sacrifice for God usually works.

The problem with this approach is that God does not want his children to be unhappy or guilty. God wants us to give cheerfully and with joy. Consider this passage from Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians:

*Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. **II Corinthians 9:7***

A guilty giver is not a cheerful giver but instead is a begrudging giver.

But that is not the end of the story on guilt. There is a place for the preaching of guilt, sacrifice and the law as we shall see in the next section.

### God's Word is a Two-Edged Sword of Guilt and Joy

Here is what the author of Hebrews says about God's word:

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. **Hebrews 4:12***

One edge of the sword is the law of God and the other edge of the sword is the Gospel of God. You probably remember this teaching of law and Gospel from your confirmation class.

God uses His word of law to show us our sin and He uses His word of Gospel to show us our Savior. They are both truly God's word.

### The First Edge of the Sword – The Law

God speaks his word of law to show us our sin. Notice what Paul says in Romans:

*For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. **Romans 3:20***

If we did not know about our sin we would never know that we needed to be forgiven.

Looking at Jesus hanging on the cross conjures up guilt. After all, He had to come to earth, be born of a woman, be beaten and lashed and finally die on a cross all because of our sin. A religion without the

proper guilt demanded of the Law is a religion that ignores a major emphasis of the Bible – God's accusing word of law. But that is not God's final word. The sword has a second edge and it is the better edge. It is God's comforting word of the Gospel.

### The Second and Better Edge of the Sword – the Gospel

Once we recognize our sin we are able to confess it. The confession of our sin is followed up by God's proper work - the work He loves to do - forgiving us so that we might be His children. This passage clearly demonstrates this two-fold work of God's word culminating in Him taking away our sins.

*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **1 John 1:8-9***

Through the sacrifice of His Son, God totally forgets our sins. The Bible uses the metaphor of the sea to convince us that our sins are forever lost. The prophet Micah (7:9) says that God has cast our sins into the depths of the sea where they can never be retrieved.



Let's not forget our focus. We have reviewed God's two-fold word so that we might sort out "giving from guilt" from "giving joyfully."

### How the Sword of the Word Motivates Giving

God's word of Gospel is what grows our faith. God has attached His word of Gospel to the means of