

Everyday
STEWARDSHIP

LIVING AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE

Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS

Everyday Stewardship: Living An Extraordinary Life

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Reflecting on the Journey



In the three years since the publication of “Everyday Stewardship: Reflections for the Journey,” I have been blessed in so many ways it is hard to account for most of them. The response from those in the Church has been overwhelming. I am humbled and honored to have played even a little part in many a parish or diocesan journey of stewardship.

I have received many wonderful letters and emails from people who have been touched by the reflections. I continue to meet Stewardship Committee and Parish Council leaders who use the book for an opening reflection at every meeting. Parishes have formed Everyday Stewardship study/prayer groups. Some have had me come to speak to their community for a day or for an extended parish mission. It has been quite a spectacular experience.

However, the Everyday Stewardship journey has only begun! It is with great love that I share with you the next steps on this pathway. This volume provides you with 68 more reflections for your personal and communal journey. Like the first book, each reflection springs forth from a passage of Holy Scripture and ends with an idea for response and a reflection question. Doodle boxes accompany each reflection as well for you to write, scribble, or doodle in all you want. This is not meant to be a book that calls for a passive response. If you are moved by what you read, you should act!

The book is organized with eight general reflections, followed by 10 reflections for each of the 6 Characteristics of an Everyday Steward: Mindful, Prayerful, Grateful, Gracious, Committed, and Accountable. As an individual or with a group, you may want to journey with me for 10 weeks, reading a reflection from each characteristic 6 days in a row with a 7th day for rest. No matter how you use this book, hopefully there is enough here for you to be challenged and to discover new aspects of your spiritual journey.

Praying your “ordinary” becomes “extraordinary,”

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracy E. Welliver". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Living an Extraordinary Life

You might not think of yourself or your life as being extraordinary. This type of experience might even seem light years away from your own reality. Why do you think this?

To be Christian, particularly Catholic, means that the supernatural is never that far away. Our faith attests to things like the communion of saints, sacraments, and sometimes, actual miracles. These are not realities debated on some ghost hunter show on cable television. We are talking real everyday life.

What part do you and I play in all of this? Are we not in communion with the saints? Do we not encounter the real Jesus Christ in the sacraments? Is there a greater miracle than Jesus coming to us under the disguise of bread and wine?

Jesus Christ has entered our lives and continues to be present to us so that we might draw closer to him and bring his Gospel to a world that needs it so badly. Our stewardship brings others into contact with the real Jesus. Others have a chance to see in us something that is actually supernatural. You can't get more extraordinary than that!

We are called by Christ to make the ordinary extraordinary. We are called to bring the supernatural into the natural world. We are everyday people called to live the Gospel within our everyday lives, making those lives then simply extraordinary.

Don't think for a second this is an overstatement. When you begin to see stewardship in all aspects of your life and strive to achieve complete surrender to God, all things are possible. You and I have been given much by God. The choice is now ours.

We Are All Called to Be Everyday Stewards

In the years since the first book, I have had the chance to talk to so many different people and to think about so many different aspects of the stewardship way of life, particularly in the light of the six characteristics. The Everyday Stewardship spirituality was never meant to replace or improve on anything. It simply was a way for ordinary people to more easily grasp the meaning of stewardship and to begin to live this way of life in all aspects of their lives, not just their church community.

If a philosophy, theology, or spirituality cannot be understood and applied to all people regardless of age, place of origin, education, or economics, I believe it cannot be called truth. Truth cuts through all barriers, labels, and experiences, touching people at their very core. Jesus is truth. His Gospel is truth. The life Jesus calls all of us to is a way to live out and provide testimony to that truth.

Although we are following a truth when committing ourselves to a stewardship way of life, it does not mean that we do not have a difficult time of it. Truth does not make the journey easier. It just makes it worthwhile.

All of us before God are sinners, falling short of the example set for us by Jesus Christ. As we mature in our faith, we do find ways to avoid some of the spiritual pitfalls along the way. However, not even maturity can chase away the temptations of the world.

In some ways, I have found three types of people who at times can struggle with stewardship more than most. Even though the groups are different, some of the same reasons for the struggle remain: a fear or inability to fully trust, a lack of awareness of their own God-given gifts and talents, and a greater focus on one's self. Just hearing about stewardship, or the 6 Characteristics of an Everyday Steward, can cause discomfort and concern.

The Young

When you are an adolescent, you are still in information-gathering mode about this world of ours. You are not sure whom to fully trust, and you are skeptical of many things that are told to you as “truth.” You are also the center of your universe. That makes sense because you can’t understand anything else out there unless you know yourself and are aware of how interactions with the forces around you benefit or hurt you.

That doesn’t mean you are not generous. In fact, young people are constantly looking for ways to give. However, it is mainly with their friends or those they wish were friends. That’s okay, because that is how we learn to be stewards. We give first to our family, then to our friends, then to those we do not know. Once we are more secure with the person God created us to be and we have at least a few friends with whom to share the journey, the world is wide open to our generosity.

I am no expert on young people. I once was young. I have had three children of my own. I have had my hand in various youth ministry groups over the course of two decades. However, I know of no magic answers when communicating to teens about stewardship and discipleship. That is because I believe there is no such thing as a collective group called *youth* who all exhibit the same characteristics and personalities. Young people come in all types and personalities, and no two are alike. We make a big mistake when we begin sentences with, “The youth of today...”

If we want to communicate stewardship spirituality in a way that makes sense, we need to address one’s state in life. For most young people, this means looking at what it means to be a student. I sometimes share with people my “10 Points on Good Stewardship for Students,” which you can download from the Coaching & Consulting section of the LPi website (www.4lpi.com.) Getting all people, including youth, to see that good stewardship encompasses all of their life is key. Stewardship is about so much more than activities in a church community. That’s why it is called *a way of life!*

The Retired

By the time you reach retirement, you lived on this earth for many years and have given so much to family, work, and your parish. Now you find yourself retired from a job that took up most of your time for several decades. Perhaps you even worked the same job all those years. In many ways, it is all you know. You value time more now than ever, because you have more of it on a daily basis, but less of it in the big picture of life. You want to give of yourself, and different corners of your world are calling upon you, including your parish community.

What will you give and how will you give it? You either were in an occupation you are unsure lends itself well to other avenues of life, or you are just tired of the same thing and want to do something different. However, you are at a loss. Surely you have much to give but are unsure of all the gifts and talents you have or if they are inside you at all.

Our world is experiencing a huge growth in the senior population, and many of them have defined themselves by their career or family most of their adult lives. As Church, we have a responsibility to help them see themselves as God sees them: fearfully and wonderfully made with many different dimensions and unique gifts. It is no doubt that we see high rates of depression in the two groups mentioned here that have sometimes the greatest struggle with identity: the youngest and oldest among us.

Gift discernment programs in parishes provide useful information to all those who seek to serve their God more fully. Seniors, particularly the retired, can benefit greatly from seeing themselves as having more to give than they ever realized. It helps them see a larger purpose for their lives. It allows them to see they are an important part of the Body of Christ. When speaking to both youth and seniors, it is important that we communicate they not only need Jesus Christ, but his Church needs them.