



Stewardship in the Second Testament

Lesson 5: The Writings of Paul

Overview

This session explores Paul's understanding of stewardship as partnership in the work of the Gospel. Participants will reflect on how shared mission, generosity, and mutual responsibility shape faithful relationships within the church and beyond.

Preparation for the Teacher

- Read the texts (found below) ahead of time.
- Watch the video (link below)—it may stimulate additional questions appropriate for your context. Make certain you have tested the equipment necessary for showing the video—it helps to keep the technical gremlins away!
- Do a little homework about your church and community. Our lesson this week focuses on partnerships. Think about successful partnerships (not Abbott and Costello or Batman and Robin), but partnerships in your community that have made a difference.
 - It might be civic and corporate partnerships that have made a difference in the arts, a park, or another resource in your community.
 - There are other partnerships as well. Are there any in your congregation between people or groups within the congregation who have impacted the church? What partnerships are there between your church and any organization that makes a difference in your town?
 - How does your church understand the partnership between your local congregation and the wider church represented by your Region or the General Church within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)?

Background

The letters of Paul are among the earliest writings in the New Testament and provide insight into the life and challenges of the first Christian communities. Written to congregations across the Roman world, Paul's letters address practical concerns such as conflict, generosity, leadership, and faithful living, while also offering deep theological reflection on the meaning of life in Christ.

Scholars note that Paul understood the church as a body—an interconnected community in which each member has a role to play (1 Corinthians 12). This communal vision shapes his understanding of stewardship, as believers are called to use their gifts, resources, and relationships for the good of the whole and for the sake of the Gospel.

A central theme in Paul's writing is grace—God's unearned gift that creates and sustains the community of faith. In response to this grace, believers are invited to live generously and in partnership with one another. Paul frequently uses language of participation and sharing (*koinonia*) to describe the mutual responsibility and support that define Christian community.

Within this framework, stewardship is understood as faithful participation in God's ongoing work—expressed through generosity, partnership, and the responsible use of all that has been entrusted to the community.

Pray for your students as you prepare this week's lesson.

Facilitating the Lesson

As the class begins, welcome the class and engage in your usual opening exercises (taking attendance, collecting an offering, prayer concerns, other announcements, etc.).

Opening Activity

Ask everyone in the class to find a partner.

- Have them, in their own words, explain Paul's deep understanding of partnership.
- Describe to each other how you do or do not see yourself as a partner in Christ with your congregation and with people in it.
- If you have a strong sense of partnership, how can you reinforce that?
- If your sense of partnership is not so strong, what can you do to increase it?

Scripture Reflection

Read the following texts:

- 1 Corinthians 4:1–2
- 1 Corinthians 16:1–5
- 2 Corinthians 8:1–15
- 2 Corinthians 9:1–15
- Philippians 1:3–11

Video Segment

Have the class watch the video link on YouTube: <http://youtu.be/SwOBLUmjUwE>

Discussion Questions

Invite the class to wrestle with the following:

1. Steward-Partners

- Name three practical things you can do as a steward-partner to act out your partnership with God through the mission of the congregation.
- What qualities, behaviors, and resources can you contribute?
- What qualities, behaviors, and resources can others contribute?

2. Partnerships Beyond the Church

- With whom outside the church can you enter into partnership in the values and practices of the Realm?

3. Solidarity and Shared Mission

Paul collected an offering among the Gentiles to express eschatological solidarity with Jewish believers in Jerusalem.

- Name a community with whom your congregation or Region can express similar eschatological partnership today.

Closing

Dismiss the class with prayer.

This is part of a 7-session series on Stewardship in the Second Testament, designed to be used as a Sunday School or small group lesson. Content is provided by Rev. Dr. Ron Allen in partnership with the Center for Faith & Giving (www.centerforfaithandgiving.org).