Center for faith&giving

ABUNDANT LIVING STUDY GUIDE

This **five-session guide** invites you to explore stewardship as a way of life rooted in God's generosity. No special knowledge or preparation is needed—just a willingness to listen, reflect, and consider how faith shapes our everyday choices.

Sessions are most effective when groups have **60–90 minutes** together. If your Sunday School hour is shorter, consider adapting the material or using it in another small group setting. For each session, watch the corresponding video or videos together, or invite participants to watch beforehand. (Videos available here.)

Read the scripture passages and the overview, then use the **discussion questions** to guide your conversation. There is no need to rush through every question; give the group time to explore what feels especially meaningful or challenging. Readings from the supplemental materials packet are optional for those who want to explore further.

Before closing, **review the weekly practice** and invite each person to consider how they might put it into action. **End with the provided prayer or a prayer offered by the group.** At the next gathering, **allow a few minutes for participants to share what they noticed or learned** during the week.

Create space for honest, respectful conversation. Everyone is welcome to contribute, and anyone may pass on a question. No one is expected to disclose personal finances or giving amounts. Listen without judgment, respect different circumstances and experiences, and keep personal stories shared in the group confidential. The purpose is to encourage one another as we grow in gratitude, trust, and generosity.

This curriculum was originally developed to train teachers through the **Academy of Christian Training and Study (ACTS)** of the Northern California/Nevada Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). It has since been adapted for use as a **small group study, Bible study, or Sunday School curriculum**.

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Session 1:
Believing in God's Abundance

Read
Genesis 1:26–31; Deuteronomy 26:1–11

Overview
Stewardship begins with God's generosity. Creation is good, and its gifts are entrusted to our care. In Deuteronomy, bringing the first fruits includes remembering God's saving work and celebrating with others. Our giving grows from gratitude for what God has already done. It is not a bargain that guarantees more money in return. Stewardship includes our bodies, the earth, our relationships, our resources, and the good news we share. Abundance calls us to share so that others can flourish, too.

Discuss
1. What gifts do you notice in these passages? Who is included in the celebration in Deuteronomy?

2. How does the video expand your understanding of stewardship beyond raising money for the church?

3. Where do you hear the message that you do not have enough? How does it shape your choices?

4. How can we trust God's abundance while taking seriously the needs of people who lack food, housing, or other necessities?

Practice
Each day, name one gift you have received. Choose one of those gifts to share during the week through your time, care, skills, or money.

Closing Prayer
Generous God, open our eyes to your gifts. Deepen our gratitude and help us share what you have entrusted to us so that others may flourish. Amen.

Optional supplemental packet reading: Abundant Living Resolution, pp. 4–6.

Session 2:
Living Faithfully in Relationship

Read
Genesis 2:15; Acts 4:32–35

Overview
Stewardship takes shape in relationship. In Genesis, the human vocation is to tend and keep the garden. Caring for creation means serving and protecting the life God has made. In Acts, the community shares its resources in response to people's needs. The video asks us to consider whether we know the people we serve and whether our generosity builds relationships. We also steward the gospel through words and actions that help others experience God's love.

Discuss
1. What do these passages suggest about our responsibility to the earth and to one another?

2. How do our everyday choices about buying, using, and sharing resources affect other people and creation?

3. The video asks whether we know the names of the people we serve. What helps a ministry become a relationship of mutual care?

4. Where could our congregation share its gifts more fully so that fewer people are left out?

Practice
Take one step toward mutual care: listen to a neighbor or community partner about what they need and what gifts they bring. Let that conversation shape one action you take in the coming week.

Closing Prayer
God of all creation, teach us to care for the earth and for our neighbors. Help us listen, receive as well as give, and make your love visible in our relationships. Amen.

Optional supplemental packet reading: Relational Tithe, pp. 7–11; Interview with Sallie McFague, pp. 17–18.

Session 3:
Practicing Sabbath Rest & Trust

Read
Exodus 16:13–30; Mark 10:17–22

Overview
Sabbath invites us to stop, receive rest, and remember that our worth does not depend on constant work. The manna story joins daily provision with limits on accumulation and a rhythm of rest. In Mark, Jesus loves the man who comes to him, yet challenges the hold his possessions have on his life. The video connects these stories with our own anxiety about having enough. Rest and simpler living can help us make room for God, for others, and for the care of our bodies.

Discuss
1. What do the instructions about gathering manna teach about enough, sharing, and rest?

2. Why do you think the man in Mark goes away grieving? What makes it difficult for us to loosen our grip on possessions?

3. What makes rest difficult in your life? How might the church help people whose work or caregiving leaves little time for Sabbath?

4. What might change if you measured your worth by being loved by God rather than by what you produce or possess?

Practice
Set aside a realistic period of time for rest, prayer, or unhurried enjoyment this week. Choose one task or purchase that can wait. Notice what makes stopping difficult and what restores you.

Closing Prayer
God of rest, quiet the pressure to do more and have more. Help us receive your love, honor our limits, and make room for the rest our neighbors need as well. Amen.

Optional supplemental packet reading: Practicing Sabbath Economics, pp. 19–21; The Sabbath Promise, pp. 21–23.

Session 4:
Giving with Purpose & Joy

Read
1 Corinthians 16:1–4; 2 Corinthians 9:6–8

Overview
Paul invites churches to prepare a collection for believers in need. Giving is intentional, generous, and freely chosen. The video presents it as a spiritual practice through which love of neighbor becomes concrete. Congregational spending also expresses what we value. A narrative budget explains how resources support ministry and affect people's lives. Connecting expenses to mission helps us consider both what our church is doing and whether our priorities reflect the gospel.

Discuss
1. What do these passages say about preparing to give and the spirit in which we give?

2. What helps giving become a joyful practice? What kinds of appeals make it feel pressured?

3. If someone looked at our congregation's spending, what would they learn about our priorities?

4. Choose an expense such as utilities, staff time, or supplies. What ministry does it support, and whose life is affected?

Practice
Write two or three sentences explaining the ministry supported by one church expense. Name the people served and the difference that ministry makes. Share this description with someone in the congregation.

Closing Prayer
Generous God, shape our giving and our spending. Help us offer our gifts freely and use them faithfully in service to your love. Amen.

Optional supplemental packet reading: Building a Narrative Budget, pp. 29–32.

Session 5:
Living as Stewards of Grace

Read
1 Peter 4:10–11; Acts 9:36–42

Overview
Our final video brings stewardship into everyday practice. Tabitha's care for others leaves a visible mark on her community. Her story reminds us that generosity includes skills, time, and practical acts of love. First Peter calls each person to use their gifts in service to others as stewards of God's grace. Caring for creation, receiving rest, sharing resources, and telling the good news belong together. A generous congregation grows as its people practice these commitments and encourage one another.

Discuss
1. What do the widows' actions tell us about Tabitha and the impact of her life?

2. What gifts have been entrusted to you? How might someone experience God's grace through them?

3. Which theme from these five sessions most challenges or encourages you? What has changed in your understanding of stewardship?

4. What is one commitment we could make together? How can we encourage one another without comparison or pressure?

Practice
Choose one stewardship practice to continue for the next month. Complete this sentence: "Because God has entrusted me with _____, I will _____." Name when you will begin and invite someone to check in with you.

Closing Prayer
God of grace, thank you for the gifts you place among us. Give us courage to use them, generosity to share them, and faithfulness to continue. May our lives tell the story of your love. Amen.

Optional supplemental packet reading: Revisit the packet's Session Five theme on p. 2 and your notes from earlier sessions.