

Re-Introducing a Lectionary Resource
That You May Have Missed

The Stewardship Companion

Lectionary Resources for Preaching

By David N. Mosser

Based on the Revised Common Lectionary (A, B, C), this stewardship commentary is an essential resource for any preaching occasion called for by the church's liturgical calendar.

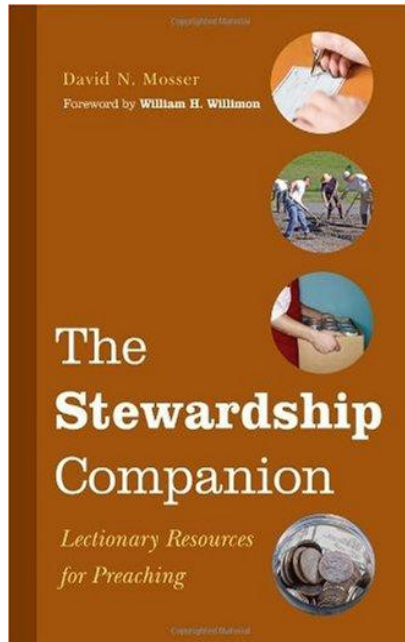
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The Stewardship Companion

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Each week every church must address issues related to stewardship. With deep pastoral sensitivities and solid biblical knowledge, veteran pastor and author David N. Mosser draws one Scripture passage from each week in the three-year lectionary cycle to provide a brief reflection on how that passage can be used to teach and preach about stewardship.

Mosser's inspirational and motivational reflections offer a clear connection between the lectionary Scripture passage and the matters of stewardship.

The Stewardship Companion is the first resource to use a lectionary passage from each week to provide guidance for teaching and preaching on stewardship. Addressing a variety of issues related to stewardship, this comprehensive resource is essential for all pastors, worship leaders, and stewardship communities.

Paperback: 240 pages
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Price: \$24.00

“ . . . In reading Mosser’s commentary I was freshly reminded that the ability to know God’s will and to join in God’s work is surely one of the greatest of God’s goods gifts.”

—From the foreword by **William H. Willimon**
Bishop, North Alabama Conference, United Methodist Church

David N. Mosser is senior pastor of First Methodist Church in Arlington, Texas. He holds a PhD in rhetoric from the University of Texas at Austin and is the author of several books on preaching and ministry as well as the editor of the *Abingdon Preaching Annual 2003-2012*.

To order copies of *The Stewardship Companion*
Call: (800) 672-1789 or email cokes_serv@cokebury.com
International orders call collect: (615) 749-6113

For review copies (for media), exam copies (for potential classroom use) or to interview the author please e-mail Bob Todd at BT@BobToddPublicity.com

The Foreword by William H. Willimon

“The earth is the LORD’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.”
(Ps. 24.11)

This claim of divine ownership is axiomatic for anything we say about Christian stewardship. The earth is the Lord’s. God creates and owns all of it. Whatever we have, including life itself, is on loan. This Christian life is one long process of learning that we don’t “have” anything of any value and that anytime we use the word “mine” we are on shaky ground. Life, time, possessions, family, nature, pension funds, friends—all are held in trust by us, all are on loan from God to us. God graciously gives, but God does not let go of what God owns. Our God is a “jealous God,” as the Scriptures sometimes put it. This God is gracious, but at the same time possessive. Learning to acknowledge God’s claim upon us is the beginning of wisdom.

Furthermore, Jesus tells us that we are held accountable for everything we have received—every cent, every minute, every thing. God loves us enough not only to give us good things but also to hold us accountable for the gifts. As the Germans say *ti*, every gift (*Gabe*) is an assignment (*Aufgabe*). God’s grace is both free and costly. There is, with this gracious God, always that time, sometime, when we asked simply, “What have you done with what you have been given?”

David Mosser knows all this. He brings a pastor’s heart and a preacher’s skill to the task of biblical interpretation. He pours a lifetime of stewardship education into this book. His interpretation of the Revised Common Lectionary’s periscopes demonstrates the fruitfulness of reading Scripture from a distinctive perspective. In all too many cases, many of us pastors have been trained to read Scripture in the mode of the academy—keep detached from the biblical text, attempt objectivity, keep as great a distance as possible from the text, read hoping for intellectual understanding rather than expecting divine obligation. When Mosser looks at a given text from the standpoint of stewardship, he sees both gift and assignments everywhere. Mosser playfully, obediently listens to each text confident that he will hear a contemporary discipleship claim from it. He reads not only to understand but also to receive a God-given task that may cost something.

I was invigorated by Mosser’s insights, time and again surprised by unexpected stewardship implications of the biblical texts. I also got a sense that God’s stewardship expectations of us are not onerous burdens but rather gracious gifts. God graciously treats us as if we were the responsible disciples we have been called to be. In Jesus Christ we become coworkers with a creative God. Whatever God is doing in the world, God chooses not to do it alone. Something good is left for us to do. Our little lives are swept up into the grand drama of God’s redemption of the world. In reading Mosser’s commentary I was freshly reminded that the ability to know God’s will and to join in God’s work is surely one of the greatest of God’s gifts.

A friend of mine says that the whole gospel can be encapsulated in the phrase “God is going to get back what belongs to God.” A major means of getting what God wants in the world is through our stewardship of what God has given. Stewardship is a primary way that good news is enacted and embodied. As a good steward, David Mosser repeatedly brings something new out of something old, he locates the gospel in your congregation and mine, he bears what we have failed to hear before, and he gives us something good to say on Sunday, something good that is not of our own devising.

Well done, good and faithful steward.

—William H. Willimon, Bishop, North Alabama Conference on the United Methodist Church

David N. Mosser. *The Stewardship Companion: Lectionary Resources for Preaching*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007. 249 pages. \$24.

Companion: a friend or someone who accompanies us. Preachers charged with the stewardship of preaching the gospel in seasons of feast or famine need faithful companions for the task. *The Stewardship Companion: Lectionary Resources for Preaching* is well-suited for the task through its careful attention to the intensive and extensive implications of scripture for a lifetime of stewardship. This is evidenced in the genesis story of this text; a small inheritance becomes a major investment of ministry as an old book on stewardship, handed on from one pastor to another, grows into Mosser's constant companion. Stewardship themes become the core of ministry.

With the guidance of a perceptive editor (Jon Berquist), the author shaped his meditations on the common lectionary. It promises to be a steward of the task of searching God's word for the practical and spiritual implications of stewardship. Although this text can certainly be used in this way, it is not designed to be a quick fix for a yearly pledge campaign. Mosser notes, "those who have mastered Christian stewardship principles know far too much than to confuse a congregation's annual budget drive with a genuine biblical understanding of stewardship. Our stewardship reaches into every corner of our life of faith..." (xii). This text is a study of discipleship in the word of God for the world of God. But how does this work when the first congregational commandment is "Thou shall not preach about our money"?

The preacher who does not take stewardship in the fullness of its implications cannot hide the grinding of gears caused by a rough transition from free grace to the cost of discipleship. The spirituality of stewardship presented here is not an occasional topic but a careful exposition of the theology of giftedness, prepared over time in the context of preaching an economy of grace in a world of layoffs and foreclosures. Fortunately this is exactly what *The Stewardship Companion* provides. What we need and have received in this publication is a companion that helps us recover the resources of faith, the practical and prophetic, discipleship through a scripture shaped Christian year.

This merits a close and careful reading, an invitation to *tolle lege*, take up and read.

What would convince a preacher to elect this companion as a guide? Reviewing the interpretation of two major festival texts might appeal to those who look for fresh insights on well-worn texts. How might we preach stewardship on Easter, the one day when the readings are solidly set and hope blooms for the miraculous conversion of the Christmas and Easter crowd? How might the Spirit fire our hearts if we preach stewardship on Pentecost? When denominational and theological expectations seem fixed in stone, how might the preaching of stewardship stir the church's pillars to song? What might transform the business as usual approach to our work and worship? Can a theology of giftedness transform our appropriation of scripture and the Christian year? Here are some of the resourceful answers from the *Companion*.

Easter: In a society that is addicted to security, Easter is the assurance that the risk we take in faith becomes the life we make in Christ. We can bet our lives on this future: we have been made shareholders, stakeholders in God's beloved community. Our lives now have meaning in the way that God extends Godself to us. Our integrity, our wholeness is intimately and ultimately found in the God who restores our life in an extraordinary economy of grace for a bankrupt world.

Pentecost: The outpouring of the Spirit is not primarily a possession of individuals but a gift designed to empower us to work together. The true spiritual power in any congregation is in the way it works together in the stewardship of creation. True stewardship is exercised when we recognize what is not our own. Part of this care for creation is in our call to praise and prayer and the ways we work together to work with those outside our community and context.

These brief examples can only suggest the imaginative development and pastoral sensitivity as well as the subtlety of Mosser's exegesis. With care and attention to the way the lectionary can shape stewardship preaching and congregational study, this book will provide and encourage the development of preaching resources. Buy this book. It's good to have this companion on hand.

—**William Wesley Elkins**, Drew University and New Brunswick Theological School, Madison and New Brunswick, NJ

About the Author



David N. Mosser

David N. Mosser is currently the senior minister of FUMC, Arlington, Texas (Central Texas Conference) a congregation of 5000 members.

He is also an adjunct preaching professor at Perkins School of Theology and teaches a multicultural "Introduction to Philosophy" at Navarro College (Midlothian, Texas campus).

Mosser has received degrees from Southern Methodist University, Perkins School of Theology, and the University of Texas at Austin where he earned a Ph. D. in the academic discipline of rhetoric.

His active ministry includes writing Bible curriculum for adults, and articles and book reviews for a dozen theological journals. In addition he directs preaching workshops for an assortment of judicatory levels of several Christian denominations.

David is married to Helen Segerstrom Mosser and they have three children: Cassie Leann, Robert Ryland, and David Neil, Jr, and two grandchildren.

Books

- *The Abingdon Preaching Annual*, 2003-2012 Editions, David Mosser, editor; Abingdon Press
- *Prayers for Lent and Holy Week*, Abington Press, 2010
- *Just in Time—Stewardship Series*, Abingdon Press, 2007
- *Stewardship Companion*, Westminster/JKP, A commentary on The Revised Common Lectionary, 2007
- *First Fruits: 14 Sermons on Stewardship*, Abington Press, 2004

Question and Answer with David N. Mosser

Question 1: What is *The Stewardship Companion*?

Answer: *The Stewardship Companion* is a biblical commentary addressing one text for every preachable day of the Christian Year for the three year cycle of the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL). If preachers wanted to preach a sermon on an aspect of stewardship, for example, on Christmas Eve or on The Festival of the Christian Home Sunday, the preacher would have a 650 word essay on the RCL text for that day along with an illustration and application for the sermon. This way stewardship can be addressed regularly and not simply at one three week blitz in the fall.

Q2: Isn't this kind of stewardship preaching sneaky?

A: Preaching about stewardship periodically is sneaky only if one's theology assumes that stewardship is about separating a person and his or her money. Yet those who have a deep understanding of Christian stewardship realize that it is part and parcel of our vow to follow Jesus as the Messiah. Preaching about stewardship five or six times a year is not sneaky—rather it is faithful leadership and the teaching of discipleship.

Q3: What makes you a qualified person to write such a commentary?

A: I have pastored every size of church since I began in ministry at the age of 25. I teach preaching at a large United Methodist Seminary (Perkins School of Theology, SMU, Dallas) and know that stewardship is one practical skill that a seminary does not have the time to adequately develop. Too few pastors receive enough substantive stewardship training in seminary. This deficiency in practical divinity curriculum is beginning to produce its predictable and counterproductive results.

Thus, I know not only how important teaching stewardship is, I also know how to do it from both the academic side and the practical side of the church. My academic training is in classic rhetoric and public speaking. In addition, I teach the Bible to many local churches. Putting these disciplines together made me a natural to discuss preaching, stewardship, and the Bible.

Q4: So are you some kind of stewardship guru?

A: No! But I am a person who has tried to raise money for mission and ministry for 30+ years. I also know that almost all stewardship material and the resources available to local preachers and churches tend to be "stewardship in a box." When preachers look for stewardship help it tends to be programmatic and not theologically or biblically focused. Certainly theology and the Bible are always mentioned, but the exegetical part of scripture and God's claim on our life takes a back seat most of the time to figuring out how to squeeze money out of the reluctant rather than challenging the discipleship of the faithful. If that is being a guru, then I am guilty.

Q5: How can this book be of use in theological education?

A: Seminaries or schools of theology could adopt *The Stewardship Companion* as a textbook for seminary courses that address practical divinity: preaching, evangelism, church administration, and the like. Although seminaries are not "pastor's school," most seminaries could do much more to equip students who instantly face stewardship and budget issues upon arrival at their first parish. Truly,

theological schools stand in a unique position to prepare students to handle this component of practical ministry, a fact of church life that will challenge novice as well as more tested pastors at every turn.

Q6: What gave you the idea to write this commentary?

A: In 1954 Roy Smith wrote a 250 page hardback book titled *Stewardship Studies*. A friend gave me Smith's book about twenty years ago, and I realized Smith's model to be indispensable to teaching modern people about biblical stewardship. Smith took what he deemed the 237 most important biblical texts that addressed stewardship, chiefly in the economic sense. He then wrote a one-page essay on each text comprising about 400 to 450 words. These essays suggested the most vital stewardship elements of each text. Many of Smith's essays also contain several biblically based pullout illustrations. Pastors, preachers, and Sunday school teachers could use these pieces to illustrate stewardship principles in a wide variety of settings.

Q7: How does *The Stewardship Companion* differ from Roy Smith's original book?

A: For one thing I carefully modernized Smith's book design to be compatible to the lectionary but kept Smith's basic structure. About the only glaring difference between Smith's approach and mine was that I did more exposition of biblical text so that the commentary can be used in concert with stewardship themes. These stewardship themes do not necessarily need to dominate a sermon. In other words, one can use stewardship themes for a part of the sermon but not make the sermon "exclusively" on stewardship.

Q8: Would non-lectionary preachers be able to use this commentary?

A: Of course. Some preachers think that a lectionary commentary cannot be used by non-lectionary preachers, but this is a myth. To help those who want to preach stewardship but do not use the lectionary, I have included a scriptural index for easy use. Simply because a Bible lesson is in the lectionary does not preclude its usefulness to the church. In fact there are many aspects of *The Stewardship Companion* that can easily be adapted to a sermon series on one or another stewardship topics.

Q9: Why is this book's publicity coming out now?

A: That is a good question, and the best way to answer it is to tell you what people have said to me. They write or call and ask why they have not heard of this commentary before, and all I can say is that the book business being what it is, it is economically difficult for publishers to both print/distribute books and publicize them too. Thus word of mouth is more important than ever.

Q10: Someone said *The Stewardship Companion* commentary has "a long shelf life." What does that mean?

A: It means that this commentary because it is used regularly, but not every Sunday, can be used with profit over the course of many years. Pastors and preachers can access it for writing blogs, newsletters, sermons, letters to church members, and the like. It has as many uses as the preacher's

creativity can muster. With about 180 individual 600-650 word homiletical essays there is plenty of ammo in there to make points about the nature of being a good steward and disciple.

Q11: If you had to suggest *The Stewardship Companion's* most helpful aspect, what would it be?

A: I would first say that I have never heard the phrase "Our church has too much money so we don't need to talk about stewardship." The truth is that although stewardship is much more than dealing with money it is at least that! All I want to do is give preachers another tool or another method by which they can help their people understand that good disciples are good stewards. In fact there could be a case made that discipleship and stewardship are nearly synonymous.

Q12: What do you mean that discipleship and stewardship are nearly synonymous?

A: We give to live. I heard about one church that listed something interesting in the weekly worship folder where it notes "Giving from Last Week." The church listed there, not only plate and pledge monies, but also the hours spent by church members visiting the sick, preparing for the Wednesday night children's dinner, and the youngster's Bible study. The point was clear—"stewardship," that word that is often narrowly connected with money, was synonymous with discipleship for this particular church. Stewardship is the giving of our total being in response to all God has done for us.

We give to live. We are wired that way. One of the crucial components of stewardship is a giving back to God in Christ of the financial gifts we have received. John Wesley had a very practical, yet spiritual formula for financial stewardship: "Earn all you can; save all you can; give all you can." Two hundred plus years later, that's still good advice.

Q13: Who do you think might best benefit from getting this book?

A: The audience for *The Stewardship Companion* includes pastors, preachers, seminary students, lay speakers, and Sunday school teachers. These folks will be able to use selected portions of this book to understand more broadly how the Bible teaches and brings to light Christian stewardship principles. It will also help these same people communicate these biblical ideas to others.

Also by David N. Mosser

The Abingdon Preaching Annual 2011

Edited by David N. Mosser
Abingdon Press
Publication Date: 04/2010
Book with CD-ROM
ISBN-13: 9781426707018
Retail Price: \$24.00

The Abingdon Preaching Annual, always a trusted resource, is now the most comprehensive and useful aid for sermon preparation you will find.

Pastors and other preachers have long turned to The Abingdon Preaching Annual for help with one of the central tasks of their ministry: sermon preparation. The 2011 edition of the Annual continues this fine tradition:

Sermon Helps:

- Lectionary-based sermons for each Sunday and special liturgical event of the year
- Commentary on lectionary passages not used in the weekly sermon
- Two-dozen topical sermon series on diverse themes

Worship Planning Aids:

- Four-year liturgical event calendar
- Guide to liturgical colors
- 2010 lectionary readings in one, easy-to-read table
- Related worship aids following each lectionary sermon and each series sermon
- CD with full text search provides ease of navigation and use
- CD with full text of the print edition with linked table of contents
- Offertory and pastoral prayers
- Classical prayers
- Classical and contemporary affirmations of faith
- Classic sermon
- Annotated Bibliography
- Full text of every lectionary passage

The Abingdon Preaching Annual 2010

Edited by David N. Mosser

Abingdon Press

Publication Date: 04/2009

Book with CD-ROM, 425 pgs

ISBN-13: 9780687656615

Retail Price: \$24.00

Pastors and other preachers have long turned to *The Abingdon Preaching Annual* for help with one of the central tasks of their ministry: sermon preparation. The 2010 edition of the *Annual* continues and, in response to our faithful readers, improves this fine tradition:

Sermon Helps:

- Lectionary-based sermons for each Sunday and special liturgical event of the year
- Commentary on lectionary passages not used in the weekly sermon
- 19 topical sermon series on such diverse themes as the Jonah, Parenting, Serpentine Tales
- Faith and Eschatology, Mountains of Revelation, and many more

Worship Planning Aids:

- Four-year liturgical event calendar
- Guide to liturgical colors
- 2010 Lectionary readings in one, easy-to-read table
- Related worship aids following each lectionary sermon, and each series sermon

Searchable CD-ROM included with every book

- PDF format provides ease of navigation and use
- Full text of the print edition with a hyperlinked table of contents
- Offertory and pastoral prayers
- Classical prayers
- Classical and contemporary affirmations of faith
- Classic sermons
- Hyperlinked helps: annotated bibliography, full text of every lectionary passage

Prayers for Lent and Holy Week

By David N. Mosser

Publisher: Abingdon Press

Publication Date: 11/2010

Paperback ISBN-13: 9781426710315

Retail Price: \$12.00

Handy, helpful prayers to use in public worship during Lent and Holy week. The collection includes invocations, opening prayers, prayers of confession, and pastoral prayers for the Sundays of Lent, Palm/Passion Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday services. Drawn from a variety of traditions, the prayers in this collection will aid any congregation as it worships throughout the journey of Lent.

Stewardship Services (Just in Time!)

Publisher: Abingdon Press Publication

Date: 02/2007

Paperback 102 pgs

ISBN-10: 0687335167

ISBN-13: 9780687335169

Retail Price: \$12

Provides ready-to-use worship and preaching resources for themes related to Stewardship.

Understanding the concept of stewardship in a broader context as management of our God-given gifts, this book provides material for twenty-four services including: suggested liturgies, prayers, Scripture passages, and sermon briefs to help pastors minister more effectively.

Contents include:

1. Make Your Money Work for You (Luke 16:1-13)
2. Owning Up to Our Greatest Obligations: Death and Taxes (Matthew 22:15-22)
3. Make a Difference: Be the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31a)
4. Who Needs Bigger Barns? (Luke 12:13-21)
5. Playing the *Price is Right* (Luke 12:49-56)
6. Counting the Cost Means Quality not Quantity (Luke 14:25-33)
7. Why God Doesn't Want Your Money (Isaiah 1:10-18)
8. What God Deserves (Matthew 22:15-22)
9. Risking to Make the Right Investment (Matthew 25:14-30)
10. The Miracle of Immortal Giving (I Cor 15:35:38, 42-50)
11. Give Me Your Money or Your Life! (Luke 12:13-21)
12. Hold Nothing Back (2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18)
13. Who Do You Really Want to Be? (Matthew 21:33-46)
14. Putting Your Money Where Your Mouth Is (2 Corinthians 8:7-15)
15. God, You've Got to be Kidding (Mark 10:17-31)
16. But It's Not What I Signed Up For! (Luke 14:25-33)
17. Give Me More than Possessions (Luke 16:19-31)
18. Yes, Sometimes the Directions Do Help (Mark 10:17-31)
19. Getting What We Pay For...or Not (Romans 6:12-23)
20. Life is Unfair? (Matthew 20:1-16)
21. Joy Fully Serving (Mark 9:30-37)

22. There is Nothing Wrong with Being Shrewd for God's Kingdom (Luke 16:1-13)
23. Be Empowered *and* Gifted (1 Corinthians 12:3*b*-13)
24. Jesus was no Fool (Matthew 22:15-22)