

# StewardCAST

A monthly e-newsletter of LCMS Stewardship Ministry

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## Steward Leaders Eat Last

**S**IMON SINEK ENDS THE BOOK *Leaders Eat Last* with these words, “There is an entire section in the bookshop called ‘self-help.’ What we really need is a section called ‘help others.’”<sup>1</sup> This might be seen as an odd quote to end a book extolling leadership, but it is spot on. Using the example of the military, Sinek encourages the need for leaders to be concerned more about the people with whom they work rather than the abstracts of profit and loss and other metrics of business success. “Leadership,” according to Sinek, “is always a commitment to human beings.”<sup>2</sup>

### The steward leader in the congregation

What might stewardship look like in a congregation if the steward leader embraced a “steward leader eats last” mentality? The first thing is it would place a much greater burden on the steward leader. Instead of the steward leader following the example of command and control that plans the stewardship Sunday, processes the commitment cards and then laments that the commitments don’t come in as planned, the steward leader would view the corporate stewardship of the congregation as being made up of individual stewards who are all being called to live out the vocation for which they have been created and redeemed.

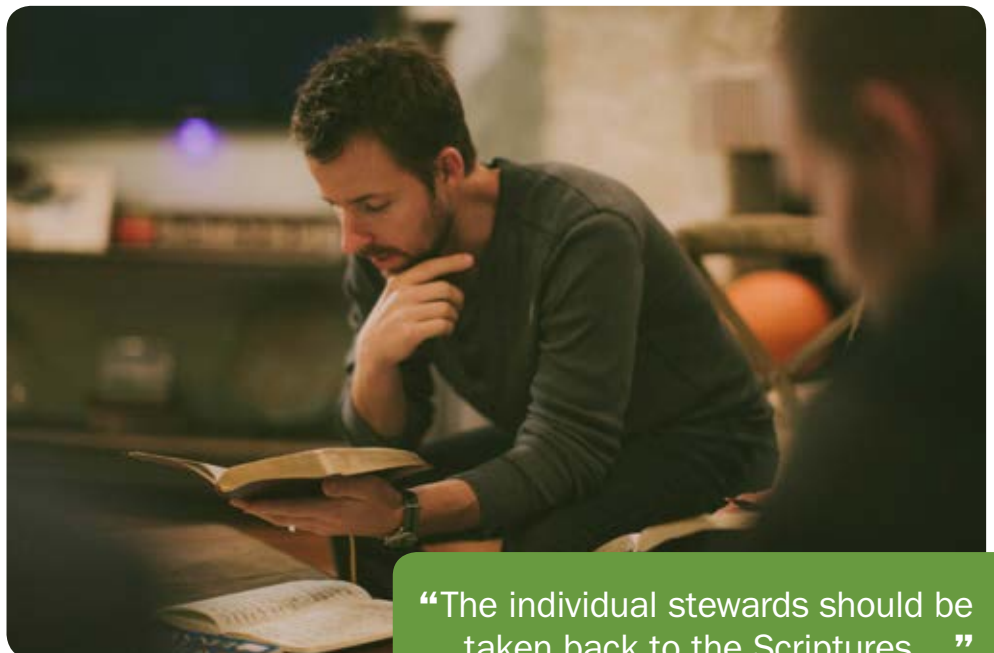
Steward leaders are not in place to compel those entrusted to their leadership to give

or serve out of compulsion. Guilt and manipulation, appeals to programs and formulas, are akin to the barking of orders from a general based in Washington rather than on the front lines of battle. But unlike true leadership, this approach takes no consideration of the individual steward. The goal of this kind of leadership tends to focus on metrics surrounding the survival of the institution. Steward leaders like this are more worried about the budgets and the balance sheets than the growth of stewards.

### Long-lasting stewards

However, steward leaders who eat last will have a much longer view of stewardship.

While it is true that stewardship will ultimately help fund and staff the mission of the local congregation and the Church at large, numeric metrics will never be center. Steward leaders who eat last will be the ones willing to take the time to form stewards rather than seek quick fixes. This will mean taking the time to gently, regularly and without apology, communicate from the pulpit, in the classroom and in all other forms that stewardship is really a matter of identity more than activity. The individual stewards should be taken back to the Scriptures to highlight the fact that they were made to be stewards, their stewardship failings have been nailed to the cross of Calvary, and in their Baptism they have been



“The individual stewards should be taken back to the Scriptures ...”

<sup>1</sup> Simon Sinek, *Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2017), 305.

<sup>2</sup> Sinek, *Leaders Eat Last*, 287.

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fully restored to the trust of stewarding all of life and life’s resources for the glory of God!

### A steward’s vocation

This makes steward leaders more worried about helping the steward see who the Lord has called them to be. When building stewards is the goal, when the leader is seeking to help stewards be the best they can be, it will inevitably lead to stronger corporate stewardship. A steward leader will strive to provide opportunities for those committed to their care to have a better understanding of the relationship between stewardship and the work of the Gospel. This means regular teaching on faithful stewardship in Bible classes. It means seeking to proclaim faithful stewardship from the pulpit when the lectionary gives opportunity. It means providing opportunity for individual stewards to get their financial house in order as well as providing opportunity to establish legacy stewardship for their seasoned saints. This list is not exhaustive. But what it does is puts the onus of the steward leader on helping the people entrusted to their care.

### Stewards of the Gospel

Stewards really only have one thing to steward: the Gospel. The things that have been traditionally seen as the purview of stewardship are really instruments that are used in service to the Gospel. Good

stewardship is a means by which Gospel ministry is given the ability to thrive! Leading a person through difficulty into financial freedom because they are created in the image of God rather than a means to an institutional end leads to joy. Leading a steward to embrace the strengths of their gifts for service to their neighbor and for the glory of God results in joy. The steward leader that eats last will find the joy in helping those entrusted to them because it connects them to the joy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Admittedly, this is long on concept and short on application. The concept of steward leaders eating last is so much more about a mindset rather than a punch list. The steward leader that sets his mind on others rather than self, stewards rather than institutions, long-term solutions rather than just quick fixes, will be the one who will find the greatest joy. This greatest joy is the joy that Paul spoke of as the partnership in the Gospel in his writing to the Philippians. Steward leaders, working with the means the Lord provides, will eat last as they seek the best, most faithful responses out of the stewards entrusted to their care. Steward leaders relying on the Gospel, the Word fearlessly and faithfully proclaimed and in the Sacrament liberally distributed, will provide a feast for others! When steward leaders adopt a “help others” mentality, they will embody the very Gospel-centered stewardship they have been called to lead!


**Leading a steward to embrace the strengths of their gifts for service to their neighbor and for the glory of God results in joy.**
