



2016 Stewardship Witness Talk by Ryan & Liz Kruse

Ryan: Good morning/afternoon. Thank you, Father. We are humbled to be asked to speak with you all today about stewardship. We truly do not feel worthy of this honor. As Father said, I am Ryan Kruse and this is my wife, Liz. We have a two-year-old son, Carver, and a two-week-old son, Kai. Liz and I have been members of the Resurrection Parish community for as long as we've been married, a little over five years. We chose Resurrection as our parish because it had the vibrancy, strong sense of community, and amazing music ministry that we had grown to love at the Masses at Loras College where we were both students.

Liz: As we heard in last week's gospel and homily, stewardship is all about giving back as gift what we have received as gift. With a toddler and a newborn to take care of at home, it would have been easy to say "we don't have time" to write and deliver this talk (and in fact, this was my initial reaction). However, I had to remind myself that our gifts and our time are not truly "ours" - that our gifts and our time are gifts given to us by God, and we have a responsibility to use our time to serve others and share our gifts with our communities out of love and a spirit of gratitude. Stewardship is not always easy or convenient, but it is always rewarding.

Ryan: Serving our communities - both inside and outside the parish - has been extremely important to both Liz and me. We both serve as lectors and greeters and have volunteered for the Parish festival; I have participated in "That Man is You", and Liz has participated in the Social Justice Committee and the MOMS group. Outside the parish, Liz have served on the board of directors at the Multicultural Family Center and has volunteered at the Almost Home shelter and at the Presentation Lantern Center, and I have served on the foundation board at the Carnegie Stout Public Library. While neither of us is quite as active in our volunteer efforts during this season of our life as parents of two very young children, we value giving back to our communities and modeling for our sons what it means to be good stewards of our time, talent, and treasure.

We also feel called to contribute financially to our parish community and to causes near and dear to our heart. We are fortunate to have been blessed with financial treasure, and as Father talked about in last week's homily, this currency is not something that we can take with us after we pass from this life. Contributing financially to assist in causes that we are passionate about is a way that we can "give back" our treasure to continue building up the kingdom of God.

Stewardship looks different for all of us, and it looks different for each of us at different stages in our lives. Stewardship is more than just an accumulation of isolated events like lecturing or greeting, but rather it is an orientation of the heart, a way of life. And it takes constant renewal and reflection to keep our hearts and minds focused intentionally on what matters most.

There are many obstacles to stewardship, such as busyness and a "me-first" culture. We admit that we, too, are often tripped up by these obstacles. Again, that is why we must turn to prayer and reflection, so that we do not lose sight of what it is we are here to do in this life.

Liz: One form of prayer that is particularly powerful for me is prayer through music. One song that I love to listen to and reflect on on my way to work or while running is Nichole Nordeman's "Legacy." Many of you may be familiar with the chorus of this song, which sums up the stewardship way of life perfectly:

*I want to leave a legacy,
How will they remember me?
Did I choose to love?
Did I point to you enough?
To make a mark on things
I want to leave an offering
A child of mercy and grace
Who blessed your name unapologetically
And leave that kind of legacy.*

The call to stewardship is a call to point to God with our lives, through our actions and the way we spend our time, talent, and treasure. Asking ourselves each day, "did I point to God enough?" and "what kind of legacy do we want to leave?" can help us maintain a spirit of stewardship in our lives. We are all called to leave a legacy and to make a mark on things in our own unique ways. One of the great enemies of stewardship for me has been saying "yes" every time someone asked me to do something or get involved in something. Over the years I have come to realize that saying yes to things that simply put multiple demands on my time rather than bringing God's grace into my life and the lives of others means that I risk saying "no" to things far more important. I have learned that spending time in prayer and reflection to discern how I can best use my time, talent and treasure to serve the world is crucial in being an effective steward of the gifts God has given me.

Ryan and I still have room for improvement when it comes to living as more perfect stewards of God's grace. And we certainly don't have all the answers. But we do have some questions for all of you to ponder and pray about.

- ***Do I make time for prayer, so that I can discern my gifts and reflect on how to best share my gifts with the world?***
- ***What talents and abilities has God given me? Do I use them in service to others?***
- ***If someone else looked at the way I spend my money, what conclusions could they make about my values?***
- ***Am I being thoughtful about what I say "yes" to, so that I have time to say "yes" to God's call to fully share my time, talent, and treasure with my communities?***

May our lives be a reflection of the grace and generosity we have received. May we choose to love. May our lives be an arrow pointing toward God. May we leave a legacy of stewardship.