

Wise Stewards

Living Mission toolkits are provided to help you facilitate formation experiences. Use whatever combination of behaviors, discussion questions, activities or talking points that will create a meaningful formation experience for your team.

OBJECTIVES

- Understand our call to be stewards in line with Mercy's values
- Identify ways to best steward what is entrusted to us for the good of the ministry

FORMATION52: Mercy Values on Deck

Mercy Formation cards **Stewardship 1, 4, 5, 9, Service 7, and Excellence 2 and 5** align with the Mercy Formation: Path to Excellence content.

Pray

Use this or another prayer with your team

"God, source of light, truth and eternal goodness, transform this present moment into one of vision and wisdom. Give us the strength to think objectively, see clearly, and share in your dream for our lives. Amen"

Reflect

Use the talking points below to introduce the concept to your team

- A steward is someone entrusted with the responsibility to oversee, capitalize on and safeguard the resources of another. Stewards don't own things; they manage them on behalf of others. At Mercy, we participate daily in God's healing ministry and manage the resources which have been entrusted to us by God for that ministry. We are caretakers with a responsibility to position our operations to exist well beyond us and our time.
- Stewardship isn't always about decision-making and cost-cutting. It is about our daily behaviors, growing, and building, providing, and reinvesting what we have to be more efficient and effective to provide care for our community. Stewardship involves the time and talent of each Mercy co-worker.
- Catherine McAuley was a realist when it came to finances. She said, "Since very little good can be accomplished without money, we must look after it in small as well as in great matters."

Share

Use these questions to explore Mercy Culture with your team

1. What do the words, 'steward' and 'stewardship' mean to you?
2. What resources are yours to steward within the ministry (consider physical and financial resources as well as skills, talents, and character traits)?
3. How can you balance the needs of your department with the needs of the wider ministry?
4. How will you bring the Mercy values and charism into team stewardship conversations, particularly as we begin annual budget conversations?
5. Imagine your resources were frozen today; without any new co-workers or budget increases on the horizon, how could you work differently to reach your goals?

Serve

Use these behaviors to bring Mercy Culture to life with your team

- Affirm and cherish the talents of co-workers as our number one ministry asset
- Begin all stewardship conversations with a discussion of our mission, values, and charism
- Connect your team with Mercy charity and outreach services to make direct connection with why we must be such careful stewards
- Discuss and model how to effectively use resources
- Encourage growth in skill development



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Optional Activity - More than Less

Activity explanation

We often get the idea that good stewardship means doing more with less. While this is sometimes true, good stewardship can also mean spending to grow, thinking or doing things in entirely new ways. Read the Parable of the Talents from the Gospel of Matthew and have a discussion around the meaning and practice of stewardship. Note: A talent is a sum of money equivalent to a year's salary.

Read: *The Parable of the Talents* Matthew 25:14-30 (NABRE)

It will be as when a man who was going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one—to each according to his ability. Then he went away. Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them, and made another five. Likewise, the one who received two made another two. But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money. After a long time the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. He said, 'Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.' [Then] the one who had received two talents also came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two talents. See, I have made two more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.' Then the one who had received the one talent came forward and said, 'Master, I knew you were a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter; so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back.' His master said to him in reply, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter? Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return? Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten. For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.'

Share: This seems like a harsh parable. Yet, it illustrates an important truth that *fear destroys opportunity*. Afraid of failure, the third servant doesn't even try. As a ministry we cannot shrink to greatness, we must remain confident in our abilities and God's providence. Sometimes, "What would you do if you were not afraid?" is the most engaging question of all.

Discuss:

1. What does this narrative have to say about the times stewardship is uncomfortable (asking for payment before service, choosing to end a line of service, or eliminate a position)?
2. Was the master too harsh with the third servant, considering the resources in question belonged to him in the first place?
3. What lessons about stewardship are embedded in this parable?
4. Who do you identify with in the parable?

The simplest and most practical lesson I know is to resolve to be good today and better tomorrow.
Catherine McAuley