

# Twelve Gardens of Stewardship - Suggestions for Parish Weekly Bulletin



## The Twelve Gardens of Stewardship

*Applying Christian Stewardship to Every Area of Our Lives*

**Being good stewards includes recognizing God's gifts in every area of our lives and using these gifts responsibly, in love and justice toward ourselves as well as toward others. The 'Twelve Gardens of Stewardship' is a concept which identifies twelve different areas of our everyday life in which we should be mindful of conducting ourselves within the will of God.**

### In This Document:

Garden of the Arts  
Garden of the Body  
Garden of Citizenship  
Garden of Creation  
Garden of Decisions  
Garden of Emotions  
Garden of History  
Garden of Money  
Garden of Relationships  
Garden of the Soul  
Gardens of Technology & The Mind

## GARDEN OF THE ARTS

Creativity is a gift from God and is manifest in every form of art. Stewardship of the arts includes recognizing that we have each been given a measure of this gift, and are called to nurture and use our creativity, as well value the creativity of others.

### Scripture and Prayer Meditations

- **Parishioner Meditations - Cultivating our Garden of the Arts**

Do I take time to notice and appreciate the art all around me? Am I grateful for God's gift of artistic creativity? Do I want to explore and develop my artistic creativity? Do I appreciate and support the creativity of others? How may I see God in the artistic creativity of humanity?

- **Scripture**

"Praise the Lord! . . . Praise him with the lyre and harp! Praise him with the tambourine and dancing; praise him with strings and flutes! Praise him with a clash of cymbals; praise him with loud clanging cymbals. Let everything that breathes sing praises to the Lord!" *Psalms 150*

"David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brothers as singers to sing joyful songs, accompanied by musical instruments: lyres, harps and cymbals." *Ch 15:16*

"Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth." *Psalms 96:1*

"Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy." *Psalms 33:3*

"Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make music to our God on the harp." *Psalms 147:7*

## **GARDEN OF THE BODY**

Our physical bodies are gifts from God and temples of the Holy Spirit - to be respected and cared for.

### **Scripture and Prayer Meditations**

- **Parishioner Meditations - Cultivating our Garden of the Body**

Do I nourish myself with a nutritious diet? Do I maintain a healthy weight for my body type? Do I exercise regularly? Do I receive a healthy amount of sleep? Do I care for myself when I become ill and see a doctor at the appropriate time? Have I considered programs or practices for my body's health, such as yoga, chiropractic sessions, exercise classes, regular walks?

- **Scripture**

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body." *1 Cor 6:19-20*

## **GARDEN OF CITIZENSHIP**

We sometimes take for granted the blessing of living in a country in which we can share our opinions and speak our minds. We have the opportunity to vote and we have people who represent us in our government. We have a tremendous amount of influence when we work together as a city, state, or country. These blessings of civic participation and influence are gifts that we must use wisely.

### **Scripture and Prayer Meditations**

- **Scripture**

*"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." Psalms 33:12*

*"First of all, then, I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgiving be offered for everyone, for kings and all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity." 1 Tim 2*

- **Parishioner Meditations - Cultivating our Garden of Citizenship**

Do I vote in all elections? Do I consider how my faith could influence my political decisions? Have I ever contacted a company to influence their decisions for a better world? Do I inform myself about political issues? Local, city, state, country, and worldwide? What political or social justice issues are most important to me? Have I ever contacted one of my representatives to influence them on any of these issues? Have I considered what small steps I can take to create a more just world? Large steps?

## **GARDEN OF CREATION**

In our secular world, we hear much about taking care of earth's environment. But being good stewards of the earth and God's creatures on it has always been humanity's particular duty. God gave us dominion over creation – the authority and the responsibility to take good care of the physical world that He gave us.

### **Scripture and Prayer Meditations**

- **Parishioner Meditations - Cultivating our Garden of Creation**

All creation is a gift from God, and we are all called to revere and respect this gift. The Church teaches that misusing God's creation betrays the gifts He has given to us for the good of all humanity. How do I revere and respect God's gift of creation? Do I keep myself informed about environmental issues? Do I allow concern for the world to influence my purchasing decisions? What simple steps could I take to reduce the impact I have on the environment? Buying reusable grocery bags? Lowering my thermostat a little? Have I considered supporting organizations that protect land, wildlife, and the overall environment?

- **Scripture**

"The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows forth his handiwork." *Psalms 19:1*

"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it . . ." *Psalms 24:1*

"For by him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth . . . all things were created by him and through him." *Col 1:16*

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." *Gen 2:15*

## **GARDEN OF DECISIONS**

The opportunity to make decisions is a gift from God and a great responsibility. This is our gift of free will. Old Testament scripture shows a long history of God's faith community being called to make decisions – to follow Him and His ways, or to neglect God's ways, choose their own and suffer the consequences of those decisions. Similarly, we in the modern world are also called to make decisions that follow God and not that turn us away from Him.

### **Scripture and Prayer Meditations**

- **Scripture**

*Wisdom shouts in the streets . . . "Come and listen to my counsel. I will share my heart with you and make you wise." (Proverbs 1:20)*

*Get all the advice and instruction you can, so you will be wise the rest of your life. (Proverbs 19:20)*

- **Parishioner Meditations – Cultivating our Blessing of Free Will**

Do I bring God into my decision making process? In my large decisions? In my small decisions? How does my faith affect the decisions I make in my work environment? Have I considered spiritual direction or counseling to help discern how God is leading my actions? Was there a moment today when God was challenging me to do something? Is there a significant decision I am being called to make in my life now? What part of my life do I try to keep God out of? How does this affect my decisions?

## **GARDEN OF EMOTIONS**

Our feelings and emotions are an integral part of us as human beings. God calls us to deal with our emotions in ways that focus on healthy, positive thoughts and feelings, while avoiding the patterns of thought and behavior that may disrupt our happiness and well-being.

### **Scripture and Prayer Meditations**

- **Parishioner Meditations - Cultivating our Garden of Emotions**

Do I recognize when I may need help with my emotions? Do I ask my family or friends for support when I need it? Do I pray and participate in the sacraments to seek spiritual help? Have I considered counseling during times of emotional distress, to help understand myself better and move forward? Is there a particular emotion I have that I want to understand or handle better?

- **Scriptures**

“A fool is quick-tempered, but a wise person stays calm when insulted.” *Prov 12:16*

“Sensible people control their temper; they earn respect by overlooking wrongs.” *Prov 19:11*

“A wise man controls his temper. He knows that anger causes mistakes.” *Prov 14:29*

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” *Phil 4:6*

“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.” *Prov 17:22*

## **GARDEN OF HISTORY**

God calls us to understand our past and to use that knowledge for a better future. The history of God’s people in scripture shows us the consequences of disobeying God, as well as the rewards of living according to His will. This history, along with all of humanity’s known history, is meant to be used for our benefit, as a guide.

## Scripture and Prayer Meditations

- **Scripture**

*"I will teach you hidden lessons from our past - stories we have heard and known, stories our ancestors handed down to us. We will not hide these truths from our children; we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord, . . . so the next generation might know them . . . and they in turn will teach their own children. So each generation should set its hope anew on God, not forgetting his glorious miracles and obeying his commands." Psalms 78*

- **Parishioner Meditations - Cultivating our Garden of History**

Do I appreciate that the historical past is a gift to be used as a guide? Do I take advantage of books, documentaries, and other resources to gain a perspective on history? Do I consider history, including recent and current history (news), critically – in order to apply its lessons to my own actions? Do I reflect on my own history and what I have learned from my personal experiences? Do I reflect on my spiritual history and the ways I have experienced Christ throughout my life?

## GARDEN OF MONEY

A central insight of stewardship is that the material 'possessions' we have are not really ours. They belong to God, who has entrusted them to us so we can nurture, tend, and share them. Even the money we earn from our own hard work is a gift from God. How does God want us to use these gifts?

## Scripture and Prayer Meditations

- **Parishioner Meditations - Cultivating our Garden of Money**

Am I too attached to my possessions? What would I not be able to walk away from? Do I give 'from the top' of my material gifts, or from whatever is left over after I've spent on myself? Do I give financial support to local, national, and/or world charities? Have I pondered the value of my non-material blessings as compared to the value of my tangible possessions? Do I trust God to meet all of my needs?

- **Scripture**

*"What do you possess that you have not received?" 1 Cor 4:7*

*"So do not worry and say, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear?' All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom (of God) and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides." Mt 6: 31-3*

*"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth . . . For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be." Mt 6: 19, 21*

*"The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern." Prov 29:7*

*"If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him?" 1 John 3:17*

*"If you want to be perfect, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven." Mt 19:21*

*"It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35*

*"We must not make the pursuit of money the goal of our lives, nor close our hearts to the needs of the poor". Amos 8:4-7*

*"For he rescues the poor when they cry out, the oppressed who have no one to help. He shows pity to the needy and the poor and saves the lives of the poor." Psalms 72:12*

*"If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,' but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead." James 2:15*

*"You cannot serve God and wealth." Luke 16:1-13*

*"He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; He also saw a poor widow put in two copper coins. He said, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them.'" Luke 21: 1-3*

*"God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Cor 9:7*

## **GARDEN OF RELATIONSHIPS**

Being respectful to each other and caring toward one another is an integral part of our Christian faith.

### **Scripture and Prayer Meditations**

- **Parishioner Meditations - Cultivating our Garden of Relationships**

Are there any friends or family members I want to spend more time with? Do I prioritize spending time with the people most important to me? Is there someone to whom I should tell, or tell more often, that I love? Am I willing to take risks to reach out to others? Do I listen carefully when my friends or family are talking to me? Do I have any unresolved issues with a

family member or friend that is getting in the way of me loving them, or of them loving me? Do I need to forgive anyone? Do I spend time in prayer for my friends and family members?

- **Scripture**

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another . . . and overall these, put on love . . ." *Col 3: 12-14*

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." *Luke 6:31*

"Serve one another through love . . . bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ." *Gal 5:13, 6:2*

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself." *Mat 22:34-40*

## **GARDEN OF THE SOUL**

As people of faith, our ultimate desire is for our soul to attain the eternal life that God has promised to those who remain His sons and daughters. It is important for us to take time to care for our soul through prayer, worship, and actively maintaining our relationship with God. Tending to our souls should hold a place of highest priority.

### **Scripture and Prayer Meditations**

- **Parishioner Meditations - Cultivating our Garden of the Soul**

Do I regularly spend the time I want to with God in prayer? Do I take advantage of liturgies, retreats and other opportunities to grow in my spirituality? Do I use prayer, fasting, and almsgiving to cultivate my relationship with God? Do I allow myself quiet time to just listen to the 'still, small voice' of God?

- **Scripture**

" . . . Draw your strength from the Lord and from his mighty power." *Eph 6: 10*

"With all prayer and supplication, pray at every opportunity in the Spirit." *Eph 6: 18*

"But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit." *Jude 1:20*

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." *John 3:16*

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." *John 5:24*

"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." *John 6:54*

## **GARDENS OF TECHNOLOGY AND THE MIND**

We are created in the image of God. Our minds are extraordinary gifts that allow us to have fellowship with our Creator. And we know from scripture that God has called us to have a spirit of 'love, power and a sound mind.' We should always be learning, questioning, and thirsting for knowledge, in both our spiritual and temporal worlds. Technology can be very useful toward this purpose, when used responsibly.

### **Scripture and Prayer Meditations**

- **Parishioner Meditations - Cultivating our Gardens of Technology and the Mind**

Do I use the technology as a gift from God, to learn and expand my mind? Do I thank God for the technologies of modern life available to me, such as a computer, digital camera, car, etc.? Do I use technology in my life to become a fuller person, according to God's will?

- **Scripture**

"Intelligent people are always ready to learn. Their ears are open for knowledge." *Prov 18:15*

"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things." *Phil 4:8*