

Five Common Stewardship Challenges and Solutions

1. Giving Is Fragmented: In the past decade non-profit organizations have grown from under 600,000 to nearly 2 million. Most of these organizations are masterful at casting compelling vision and making an “ask”. Giving to these non-profits has been steadily growing while giving to local churches has steadily declined. The people in our pews are dividing what they have traditionally given to their churches among some of these other non-profit groups. Currently, the greatest amount of non-profit giving in the US is to animal causes and education.

Solution: Don’t assume people know what giving to the church supports. Cast a compelling vision for ministry, paint a face on everything you do, celebrate transformation, invite people to share what giving has meant to them and invite people to increase their giving so that God can do even greater things among them.

2. Preaching About Money Turns People Off. We often hear from pastors, “I don’t like to preach about money because it can turn people off especially if they are fairly new to the church.” This leads to neglecting an important aspect of Christian discipleship and hindering the greater release of God’s intended resources for ministry in and through the church.

Solution: Preaching about biblical stewardship is more than talking about money- although that is one important aspect of it. The use of one’s time and talent are also important facets of stewardship. Most of the people in our congregations struggle in one way or another with finances. This could be indebtedness, support of family, college tuition, selfishness, greed or simply a lack of good financial management and planning. To NOT talk about money as a spiritual issue is to keep people imprisoned in our culture’s warped notions

about these things. Studies have shown that good preaching and teaching about finances (beyond the annual fund drive) increases giving to the church. When people reform bad financial habits it often frees them up to be more generous toward God's work.

3. We Don't Expect New People to Give: "When we receive new members we don't ask them to pledge to the church. We believe that the more involved they are in the church the more they will want to support it without being pressured or prompted."

Solution: Studies have shown that when a new member is asked to make a financial commitment to the church as part of a membership class about 80% will do so. Each month that passes without being invited to do so will diminish returns by 20% or more. People generally do not suddenly wake up one Sunday and begin giving to the church. Faithful and generous givers have been intentionally cultivated and invited.

4. Many Pastors Don't Tithe: The majority of pastors polled do not tithe to their local churches. It's surprising and alarming that a fair amount of ministry professionals give little or nothing to the church's they serve rationalizing along the lines of, "They're just going to give it back to me in salary support" OR "I don't want the church to become dependent on my giving."

Solution: Unless you as a leader are practicing good stewardship in your own life it will be nearly impossible for you to encourage others to do so. Leaders go first! Unless you get there it is unlikely that others will. Pray about and make a plan to grow in your own giving. Share this journey with others for accountability.

5. Our People Are Tapped Out Financially: "We can't do a capital campaign because our people are tapped out in their giving."

Solution: Most people who give to the church do so out of one or two asset pools- the checking or savings account. When most of us consider giving to anything we think about these two pools and whether or not our cash flow can take on another thing. What a capital campaign does is help people identify other asset pools in their lives that will enable them to give “over and above” their current giving to the church without overtaxing their checking or savings account. Examples of these other asset pools include: generating other sources of income; gifts of real estate, rental properties, stocks, bonds, personal possessions, or private collections. Short-termed lifestyle changes can generate funds (e.g. delay a vacation, keep my current car for another 36 months, eat out less, decrease Christmas/holiday spending, etc.). The more stories we can tell and options we can share with people the greater the chance they will find to give more. People want to be generous!



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