

Additional Thoughts About Stewardship and its Meaning in Our Lives

Stewardship is not a program. Stewardship is a process, a process of conversion. When God breaks in on a sufficiently prepared people, a new belief and practice of stewardship is developed, and a joyful generosity emerges.

Good stewardship centers upon the conversion of people, not the collection of more dollars. Good stewardship enables church leaders to talk about money in ways that transform lives. God loves us just where we are in our spiritual journey, but doesn't want us to stay there. More people act their way into a new way of thinking than those who think their way into a new way of acting. Do we look at life from the viewpoint of scarcity or abundance? If you want to be rich, give. If you want to be poor, grasp.

We know:

- Money represents power, security, and identity in our culture
- Our relationship with money is a powerful force in our lives
- Money can control our lives

We also know:

- Many people come to hear about stewardship feeling defensive
- Congregations often are looking for a “quick fix” for what they believe are their financial problems
- Many “stewardship programs” do not work because they focus on moral imperatives – “shoulds” and “oughts”

We believe:

- God gives us choices about how we use our money
- The use of money has spiritual as well as material implications
- It is important to create a safe place for people to experience acceptance, forgiveness and understanding over the sometimes tough issues of money.

If we are to assist people in their spiritual journeys and help them to make the “conversion connection,”

We will offer:

- Opportunities for grace-filled experiences that will allow people to choose to reorient the way they use money
- Opportunities that will break the conspiracy of silence about issues of money and faith
- A process that provides people the opportunity to think about the role of money in their lives in an entirely new way
- An effective stewardship formation program that will bring about transformation in people's spiritual lives

What are some of the Words of Conversion, the words that describe our stewardship journey, the words that may invite others to join us in the journey?

Thanksgiving

Grace, Gratitude, Generosity

Abundance

Offering

Gifts, Giftedness

Life-changing

Spiritual health

Discipleship, Not Membership

A suggested mission statement for your congregation's stewardship ministry:

The goal of our stewardship ministry is to help God's people grow in their relationship with Jesus through the use of the time, talents, and finances God has entrusted to them.

As opposed to:

The goal of our stewardship ministry is to raise enough money to pay the bills next year.

Discipleship Focus: Primary relationship with Jesus Christ

Membership Focus: Congregation; the institution

Discipleship: How is Jesus Christ active in my life? How am I growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Expectations:

1. Doing the ministry is a partnership that belongs to all God's people.
2. Giving is part of a growing relationship to Jesus Christ.
3. Living life in community – small group and congregation

Assumptions:

1. The mission field starts at the front door of the church.
2. The goal of the congregation is to make disciples for Jesus Christ, prior to church programs.

3. There are high expectations for a disciple of Jesus Christ.

If stewardship ministry focuses on the givers need to give, not the church's need to receive, then:

- a. We will help people grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ through the use of the time, talents, and finances that God has entrusted to them.
- b. We will use the language of discipleship, not membership.
- c. We will find in God's Word an invaluable wealth of resources to enrich our understanding.
- d. We will ask the right question, not —How much does the church need? || but, — How is God calling me to respond to God's presence in my life? ||

Focus is the Congregation / Institution /
Needs / Activities

Dichotomy between spiritual & business

Stewardship is a business venture

Congregation is a club

1. I give money so that other people, ministry professionals can do ministry.
 2. I pay to maintain the institution, keep the utilities on, staff the committees, run the youth programs.
 3. Church member is a good citizen in the community. Live an upright life.
1. Mission field is someplace else, often far from where we live.
 2. The goal of the congregation is to get and keep members.
 3. There are few expectations of members so that you won't drive them away.