

The Stewardship JOURNAL

February 15, 2021

**From the Desk of Our
Executive Director**

Do You Trust God?

**How to Use Your Campus
and Platform Lanes to
Increase Giving**

**Making Your Campus
Giving Friendly**

**Your Security Begins
With Your Generosity**

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From the desk of our Executive Director

I miss testimonies. Back in the day, churches would hold testimony services where members would share about God's blessing in their lives. Those testimonies served as a reminder that our God is not dead but alive and active. One thing we want to do with *The Stewardship Journal* is to provide you with great examples of God moving in the area of stewardship. Do you have a story of God's provision that would encourage others?

Dennis Gard, the pastor of Central Baptist in Eureka, has a great story of God's provision. It's our first of what we hope will be many stewardship testimonies. Dennis tells a story of God's provision at a crucial time of ministry in his post, "**Do You Trust God?**" It's a great question for we preachers to ask ourselves. Our prayer is Dennis' story will encourage you. If you have a story that you feel would add value and encourage others, reach out to Rob Phillips at rphillips@mobaptist.org.

Now here is a preview of what else you can expect in the pages that follow.

The Stewardship Coach, Mark Brooks, returns to sharing the various lanes a church needs to establish to build a successful stewardship platform. Mark's post is entitled, "**How to Use Your Campus and Platform Lanes to Increase Giving.**" Mark's thoughts help you build out your stewardship platform.

Bonus Section. In this week's Bonus Section, you will find ideas and tools for making your campus more stewardship friendly. Our hope with the Bonus Section each week is to provide you with actionable tools that you can apply immediately.

Offering Talk – Have you worried that any talk about money in the times we live in might seem tone-deaf?

This week's talk, entitled "**Your Security Begins With Your Generosity,**" addresses that concern with a positive message of the benefits of living a life of generosity.

We would love to know how *The Stewardship Journal* is helping you increase stewardship at your church. Let's share our testimonies of what God is accomplishing in stewardship to encourage one another!

Advancing the Gospel!



Dr. John Yeats

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Do You Trust God?

Dennis Gard, Pastor, Central Baptist Church, Eureka, MO

Sometimes it is a challenge to practice what you preach. We, preachers, like to tell our members to trust God. Then some difficulty arises, like not being able to make budget, and all of a sudden, *you* have to trust God. I recently found myself in exactly that kind of situation.

When I became pastor of Central Baptist Church in 2018, the church was financially stable, except for a sizable debt on the gymnasium built in 2004. The church did a good job of managing our funds, but throughout 2019 the church giving began to decline. Each month we dipped into reserves and were running on empty by the third quarter of the year. The finance team and the church began to pray for God's provision to ensure we didn't have to cut staff or end programs. We called on the church to pray and seek God's support and direction.

"I only saw the problem, not the solution."

At first, things seemed hopeless, but several finance team members kept saying, "Trust God, He will provide." To be completely honest, this did not bring me much comfort. I only saw the problem, not the solution.

I had been through church financial problems before and had gone without a salary for several weeks twice in my ministry. I was not excited about doing it again. While we looked for solutions, I felt more and more burdened and stressed about the church finances. The finance team met and began looking at options. The only avenue we had was to pray and ask God to provide as we paid our bills from week to week.

In late October, I got a call from a church member inviting my wife and me to dinner. While eating, they began to talk about God's blessing and how they were excited because God had blessed their business. They told me they wanted to pass on God's blessing to the church. I was excited at the possibility but was shocked when they informed us they wanted to give \$1,400,000 to the church. What! \$1,400,000! I thought I'd heard them incorrectly. I about fell out of my chair, while trying to act like it was no big deal and that this kind of thing happened all the time.

You see, God had a handle on the church finance problems. All my worry and frustration were for naught because I had forgotten just how big God is when we rely on Him. I must admit, I was not completely trusting God. I'd been trying to find ways to solve the problem, but there was no problem for God. He had already solved the problem.

We immediately informed the church and paid off all our debt. We passed our portion of the blessing on to the Cooperative Program and our local association. Because of the blessing we received, CBC gave \$126,000 to our local association to help pay down the debt on their gymnasium/offices and contributed an additional \$75,000 over our typical CP giving. God used one blessing to be distributed to multiple ministries. Not only was our local church blessed, but the blessing extended throughout God's kingdom. The remainder of the money was set aside for ministry needs and future events.

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Do You Trust God?

I know what some might be thinking, “**Dennis, I don’t have anyone who could give my church that kind of money.**” The point isn’t the amount of the gift. The point is that God *always* provides. Every time He does, it builds our faith to trust Him more the next time we face a challenge.

An unintended benefit came our way; as a result of that gift; our giving increased. When COVID hit, I feared we would have to use some of the blessing for general expenses, but God’s people have remained faithful, and we have had one of our best financial years to date.

My story can become your story. If He can do it at Central Baptist, He can do it at your church. Even when things seem challenging or impossible, God has a plan. The question is, “**Do you trust God?**”

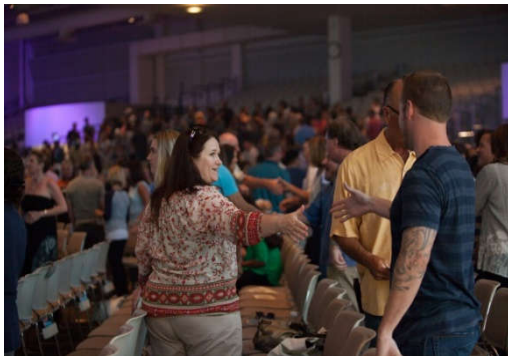
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Current Events and Relevant Thoughts From:

The Stewardship Coach

Mark Brooks

How to Use Your Campus and Platform Lanes to Increase Giving



Everyone agrees that the "physical" nature of our church just changed forever. It's against that reality that two of the "lanes" I use to build out giving strategies are physical. Here is another reality, you still need a strategy for both of those lanes. That is why this edition of the Coach is entitled *How to Use Your Campus and Platform Lanes to Increase Giving*.

If you have followed me for long, you know that every year around this time, we go over the stewardship basics. I started a few weeks back, going through the various lanes I use to build out giving strategies. I took a break from that last week to talk about the Easter offering.



Get your copy of the Successful Easter Giving Strategy at:

<https://acts17generosity.com/shop/successful-easter-giving-plan/>

Now I want to get us back on track developing the various lanes. However, since the two lanes we will be fleshing out are almost entirely physical, I want to make a case for their continued attention. Let me share a few observations that led me to keep these lanes functioning and alive.

- **Onsite attendance will continue to be significantly less.** 30% to 50%. The larger you are, the lower your percentage. The bluer your state, the lower your percentage of attendance. Online engagement will continue to fluctuate. In truth, we don't know yet how to quantify just how engaged our online audience is. The reality we fear to admit is that we are engaging fewer people than we think.
- **Thus, giving will be less. A lot less.** Thom Rainer is predicting a 20% decline in giving in 2021. *If* the economy falters or the lockdowns are prolonged, then I believe that is a realistic projection.
- **However, I do not believe we are seeing the end of the brick-and-mortar church.** Could there be a time we go underground like our brothers and sisters in China are forced to do? Absolutely. Yet, I don't see that happening this year or the next. I believe that you will be using your existing structures for years to come. I know the Digital Church is getting all the buzz. For you, however,
- **The question is not that we have brick and mortar churches but how best to use what we have and what future buildings will look like.** Even if you open up fully, the reality is you will not be near the attendance levels before the pandemic. Thus, you will have a lot of empty space that will need to be repurposed.
- **Though how we gather might change, no handshaking, we will gather again soon.** I believe we are seeing the beginning wave of churches opening back up. Like the surge that closed our churches, a surge will open them.

Therefore, you need a strategy that involves your campus and your platform. Let me give you a brief review from what I wrote in Issue 4 when I stated ...

When it comes to stewardship coaching, I think lanes. It helps me think clearly about the separate units, so to speak, of building out a stewardship plan. It's through these lanes that we work to build out giving strategies.

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How to Use Your Campus and Platform Lanes to Increase Giving

Here is a quick review of the lanes we are fleshing out in the editions of the Coach.

- **The Pastoral Lane** – Helping senior leadership advance stewardship.
- **The Platform Lane** - What do those in attendance hear and see from your platform that will enhance or detract from their desire to give their money to you?
- **The Campus Lane** – From the moment people walk onto your campus, they should be positively impacted and motivated to *want* to give to your church.
- **The Direct Appeal Lane** – This combines both snail mail and email strategies.
- **The Digital Lane** – From your website to online giving to social media, we now live in a digital age.
- **The Legacy Lane** - Your strategy for your top tier donors and others who have a heart for generosity.

Of all the lanes that I focus on, the second and third listed above are the easiest to flesh out. Let me give you a few brief thoughts on each lane.

The Campus Lane – The strategy revolves around setting the stage for generosity to happen. Banners, posters, even offering envelopes all play an important role. For instance, though their use is now on the wane, I have always recommended that they have a kiosk visible on campus. Even those walking by without giving are reminded *of* giving. I want subtle reminders throughout the campus educating about giving and multiple outlets on campus by which people *can* give. See more in the Bonus Section.

The Platform Lane – I'm focused on what happens each weekend on your platform. While the platform I am focused on is physical, its reach, digitally, is vast. That digital projection works best live or recorded live from the platform of your worship space. Thus, you need a Platform Lane. Let me give you three practical ideas for using your Platform Lane to increase stewardship.

1. **Elevator pitch every offering!** How? First, plan out every offering time. In two minutes or less, make a case for the offering. The best way to do that is to link giving to vision. We recommend you vary what you do for each offering. Sometimes you might read one of my offering talks. Another time you might use video or have a live testimony about giving. The point is to keep the offering time fresh. And remember, never EVER apologize for taking up the offering!
2. **Show and tell it!** – Most of my clients before COVID used screens for worship and announcements. By using screenshot announcements, plus video testimonies and appealing, giving appeals, you will increase giving awareness.
3. **Preach it!** I'll have a lot more to say here later but let me encourage you to plan your next stewardship series.

Even though no one knows what the future church will look like, for now, you can be sure you will need a Campus and a Platform Lane strategy. Let's start building that out.



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach
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Find out how to access all of my playbooks at <https://acts17generosity.com/store/>.

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Bonus Material

How can you make your campus more giving friendly? Let me share the following tips with you that I think can help you create an atmosphere on your campus that enhances giving.

Before I get started, let me ask you this simple question: **When I come onto your campus, am I reminded of the importance of giving?** That is what I want you to think about as you read this. Later, do a test for yourself. Walk around your campus and see for yourself how it might look to those that attend your campus.

We know how important appearances are. You make sure your campus is clutter-free and as clean and presentable as possible. Appearance matters. The same is true for building a culture of generosity. Generosity should APPEAR throughout your campus.

Here are some practical on-campus things you can do...

Rack 'em up! You know, the thing you put envelopes in. This is one of your easiest tools to use to increase giving. In every rack, I would have...



Postage Paid Self-Addressed Envelopes - A powerful tool for collecting money. Providing these types of envelopes allows donors to take one and mail you back a financial gift. Envelopes like this also give you more options to collect gifts through direct appeals and other means.

Electronic Giving Information – Many churches utilize small cards like the one here. Those that gave online can put it in the offering plate. It also contains a QR code, how to give via text, and the church's giving link. The easier you make it for people to give, the more apt they are to give!



Here is another idea...



Raise it up! Use posters and banners to highlight giving. The picture at the left is of a capital campaign. Simply seeing that banner keeps members focused. The banners at the top simply encourage generosity. This is a great way to keep generosity in the minds of your members.

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Bonus Material

Another idea is to...

Hook them up! As in electronic giving. **Use giving kiosks.** Can someone give to your church at your campus if they don't have a check or cash? I frankly think that the shelf life on physical terminals like the picture here is soon to vanish. Yet I think for the next two to three years, some physical way that members can give is important. My clients that use them are still seeing a high percentage of giving come through that portal.



One more idea is to...



Light them up! Here I am referring to a video looping message about generosity and how giving is easy at your church. Many churches have televisions in the entryways and hallways running announcement loops. Why not reserve space for a generosity message. Use those lighted screens to tell your story and encourage people to give to support that story.

I believe that if you will rack 'em up, raise it up, hook them up and light them up, your campus track will help you be fully funded!

So, get up from your desk and take a walk around your campus and ask yourself what, if anything, encourages me to give? Then put together a plan to make your campus more giving friendly!

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Missions and Ministry Moment: Setting Up Your Offering

Every week we provide what are called offering talks. We have found that the easiest way to see an increase in giving is to improve how you approach the offering time. Instead of telling people they don't have to give, we like to show them what giving to a church accomplishes. By showing people your mission and ministry focus, you will create a desire in your attendees to *want* to give to support that life change. That's why we call them Missions and Ministry Moments.

You can read it exactly how we write them or use them as idea starters for how the message would fit your culture and context. Our goal is to develop lifetime stewards, but we must get the first gift to begin them on the journey. Here is this week's offering talk.

Your Security Begins With Your Generosity

Every service, we give you an opportunity to worship through giving. We try in some way to show you the power of our giving by focusing upon some aspect of missions and ministry. (Around the office, we call them Offering Talks.)

Sometimes, the question comes up: Does asking for money during times of economic difficulty make a church seem tone-deaf? First, let me say we're in the same boat as you. **YOU MIGHT STATE ANY % CUTS STAFF HAVE TAKEN ETC.** Yet, a core value for us is that **financial security begins where good stewardship/generosity begins.**

We give for a lot of reasons, but one benefit is God blesses those who are generous. Consider these Proverbs:

- **"A generous man will prosper."** Proverbs 11:25
- **"A generous man will himself be blessed."** Proverbs 22:9

Consider the words of Jesus, **"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."** Luke 6:38

These verses are *not* teaching that we will get some multiplied amount back for every dollar we give. What they are teaching is that God blesses and takes care of those that give. How does that work out? Frankly, it is different for each of us, but trust me and we could fill the hour with stories from faithful givers of God's provision. Here is the thing, we give to be obedient and for the joy giving brings. It doesn't hurt that it helps secure our financial security.

Giving away a portion of your money before you pay the first bill might seem crazy to a financial planner. They might advise you work up to that. To them, it doesn't make sense. Yet, in God's economy, it makes perfect sense, but it takes faith and obedience to begin.

We give you multiple ways by which you can give now to build security for your future.
