

# The Stewardship JOURNAL

March 15, 2021

**From the Desk of Our  
Executive Director**

**Love and Give**

**The Direct Appeal Lane:  
Using Email and Texts  
to Build Stewardship**

**10 Key Tips for  
Improving Your Emails**

**You Are Richer Than You Think!**

# THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

## From the Desk of Our Executive Director

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"**And the survey says...**" Last week, I shared with you that we were sending a survey out to get your perspective on *The Stewardship Journal*. While the response thus far has been light, the input we have received is valuable. We decided to leave the survey site up for another week. Your responses help us better serve you with this tool.

If you have not yet taken the survey, please do so at the following link:

<http://survey.constantcontact.com/survey/a07ehkvwotekx0rffo/start>

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

Pastor Richie Rhea, who recently retired from Troy First, writes our lead post for this Journal entitled, "**Love and Give.**" This article contains great thoughts on the motivating factor leading to stewardship and generosity: love. Don't miss Richie's gauge for preaching on stewardship that he calls, A Love and Give Audit. Thanks, Pastor Rhea, for giving us your wisdom.

Mark Brooks, The Stewardship Coach, continues his series on helping churches build the "lanes" a church needs to build for a successful stewardship platform. Mark's post this week is entitled, "**The Direct Appeal Lane: Using Email and Texts to Build Stewardship.**"

Our **Bonus Section** follows Mark's main post, giving us **10 Key Tips for Improving Your Emails**. Using these tips should increase your open rate, and that can lead to seeing more giving to support your church's life-changing work.

**Offering Talk** – This week's talk is entitled, "**You Are Richer Than You Think!**" It's an interesting look at how Americans are indeed rich compared to other parts of the world. The talk then issues a challenge to use our wealth to help others.

**Do you have a story or thoughts on stewardship?** *The Stewardship Journal* is looking for great inspiring stories, ideas, and thoughts on how we all might improve giving. Let us hear from you.

Advancing the Gospel!



Dr. John Yeats

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# THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

## Love and Give

Richie Rhea, Pastor

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In 1984, rock legend Tina Turner released her most famous song entitled, "What's Love Got to Do With It?" Sadly, if you know much about her tragic life, the answer would be not much. Yet, despite the lyrics' claims, in actuality, love has everything to do with it. Nowhere is this truer than when it comes to giving and stewardship. I learned, after years of ministry, that a gift given through love is greater than a gift given out of guilt or manipulation. Let me unpack that for us.

Love is a thing. Even though we can't see it, touch it, or smell it, we can't live without it. In our world that seems to want to say, "if it can't be verified scientifically, it can't be known with any certainty," love is needed as much as ever. Even though you can't put love in a test tube, love is a critical exception to the "materialistic," "show me" philosophy.

Children who grow up in a loving environment tend to thrive. Everyone agrees abandonment is tragic. Children need to be loved freely. They should never be made to feel they must work to earn their parents' love. Children who grow up to be healthy achievers tend to be children who've grown up secure in the love and care they experienced.

Here is the core of the gospel. Jesus loved us. We didn't do anything to deserve it. Motivated by His love, He caused us to be made a new creation. His death in our place, the payment of His blood for our sin, means that God can now be just in His forgiveness of our sin and in reconciling us to Himself. This is all verified by the awesome resurrection of Jesus.

Like in the home, in Christ's church there must be a foundation of love. We then do what we do, not to earn something from God, but because of what the love and grace of Christ have done in our lives.

What does any of this have to do with giving? Giving must be the response of Christ's love at work in our lives. Giving must not be something we do because we think we are proving our worth to God.

If a church teaches that in order to receive God's favor you must give, if a church implies that giving causes you to be accepted by God, then that church has turned the gospel on its head. That church has joined the works-oriented "gospel," empty religions of the world. That church has abandoned its people like loveless parents who brutally abandon their children. The result may be glorious, gold-plated buildings built with massive giving by fearful, faithless, insecure people who are not "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 3:17 ESV). The result is souls that are abused.

But, when Christ dwells in the hearts of our people so that they are rooted and grounded in love and therefore can comprehend just how big His love truly is, then God gets the glory. Then what is accomplished is a giving that is exceedingly abundantly more than we can imagine because it is a generosity that is empowered by the loving power of God. Ephesians 3:16-21 offers us these magnificent, holy words:

. . . that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints

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## Love and Give

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what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (ESV)

Loving and giving always go together. But, in the order of John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave . . ." And we give because we are loved. We give because we now love. All the giving in the world means nothing if it doesn't come from a heart of love, a love that is the awesome gift of God's Holy Spirit. "If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor. 13:3 ESV). If giving is not a joyful act of love, it won't last, and it won't matter.

A few years ago, I came up with a gauge for my preaching on stewardship. I call it **A Love and Give Audit**. Ask yourself these questions:

- 1. Is the gospel front and center in my preaching and leading?**
- 2. Am I asking people to give to a need or in response to Christ's love?** ". . . a willing gift, not as an exaction . . . not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:5-7 ESV).
- 3. Am I asking people to give to Jesus or a budget?**
- 4. Are we growing in giving as a grace given by the Lord?** ". . . see that you excel in this act of grace also. I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:7-9 ESV).

**What's love got to do with giving?** Everything. Let's first preach stewardship from a heart of love to motivate our people to give from love. With love as our base, we have a better chance of developing disciples that live a life of stewardship and generosity.

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Current Events and Relevant Thoughts From:

## The Stewardship Coach

Mark Brooks

### The Direct Appeal Lane: Using Email and Texts to Build Stewardship



The picture on the left is a mirror into modern day life. Everywhere you go people have their heads down looking at their phones. If you want to connect with people, you had better be thinking mobile. We do *everything* through our phones. If you want the story of your message to be heard, then you need a Direct Appeal Lane focused upon mobile delivery of your appeals.

I am continuing my focus on building out the various Lanes we need in your stewardship platform. Last week I dealt with snail mail. This week, my focus is on direct appeals by email. This week's Coach is entitled ***The Direct Appeal Lane: Using Email and Texts to Build Stewardship.***

Let's start with some email stats from around the Web. Consider ...

- 76% of all US adults use email.
- 85% of users check their emails on a mobile phone.
- 90% of users aged between 25 and 34 check their emails on a cell phone.
- The average office worker receives about 121 emails daily.<sup>1</sup>
- We read almost half (49%) of all emails on mobile devices.<sup>2</sup>

Reading the above stats should show you the value of a well-placed email. Yet with your members receiving hundreds of emails a day, how do you get your message to stand out in the crowd of messages? First, by avoiding the top mistakes churches typically make when sending out email appeals. Here is my list of ...

#### Top Mistakes of Church Email

1. **Boring!** Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. That is what most people hear when they read church emails. Your work is far from boring so don't make your email boring!
2. **Too long.** Perhaps one of the most difficult tasks I have in terms of helping pastors is to get them to be brief in their emails. Remember the old joke: no one dislikes a short sermon? The same is true for your emails.
3. **Poorly laid out.** If your email is not easily readable, people will not read it. **Studies show that incorrectly displayed emails get deleted in 3 seconds on average!**
4. **Rambling on and on.** Again, remember, most of your emails are going to be read on a smart device. If you go on and on people will not read it. Have a point and get to it!
5. **Non-Existent!** Why in this electronic age are you not using the tool most of your people use to gain and process information?

By avoiding these mistakes, you are ahead of the vast majority of emails that are sent. Let me share with you a couple of successful emails from clients.

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## The Direct Appeal Lane: Using Email and Texts to Build Stewardship

First a bit of background. I received a call in November from a long-time friend asking me about an end-of-year appeal for helping build birthing centers in Africa. I talked to the pastor about the process, encouraging him to write an email appeal. Here is his subject line and how he began his email:

**Subject line: “I cannot let that woman die...”**

“I cannot let that woman die.”...These were the recent words of Zambian medical missionary, Sal Marini, to his wife after receiving a call at 3:00 a.m. from a woman who had just given birth to a baby, but was unable to deliver the afterbirth.

**The results?** They easily raised the \$15K needed to build a birthing hut!

A few years ago, I worked with a church helping them raise funds for a new children’s educational wing. For one of our emails, I wrote the following:

**Subject line: What does 83% mean for the destiny of children?**

**83%.** That is the percentage of all Christians that make their commitment to Jesus between the ages of 4 and 14, according to a study by the International Bible Society. This is a major reason why our church puts so much emphasis on children and students.

**The results?** They raised the money needed for the facility and now more than ever they are poised to reach more children and students for Christ.

**The best emails tell a story and you have the greatest story ever told!**

One final word of advice, **don’t discount texting!** Consider this, 292 million people in North America use text messages — that’s 80% of the total population.<sup>3</sup> Texting gives you an opportunity to reach different segments of your congregation, especially younger generations. My view of texting is that it should be used on a limited basis. I view texting more as an emergency type of appeal. For instance, if a natural disaster hits your area and you want to raise financial support, texting can be effective. I also recommend the amount you ask for be smaller. One of my goals with text giving is to gain the first gift so we can start them on the generosity journey.

Whether email or text, your Direct Appeal Lane is crucial towards helping your church be fully funded. Tell your story and make your appeal and people will respond. In this digital world, texts and emails are a must!



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

1. <https://review42.com/resources/how-many-emails-are-sent-per-day/>
2. <https://techjury.net/blog/smartphone-usage-statistics/>
3. <https://www.slicktext.com/blog/2018/11/44-mind-blowing-sms-marketing-and-texting-statistics/>

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## Bonus Material

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### 10 Key Tips for Improving Your Emails

Here are **10 Key Tips For Improving Your Emails**:

1. **Have an interesting subject line.** If they don't open it, your message is lost. So, create interest in your subject line that will make them want to open the email and read it. The more effective the subject line, the better the open rate of the email and thus, the better your results.
  2. **Personalize it!** 'Dear Church Member' is not personal. 'Dear Mark and Valerie' is. Work to make your appeals as personalized as possible. There are many mail programs like MailChimp, Constant Contact, and others that can easily and affordably do this for you automatically.
  3. **Be short and to the point!** People are multi-tasking as they work and walk. They won't read an epistle from you no matter how compelling the message. You can be longer in a snail mail piece but keep emails short and to the point. With that in mind think...
  4. **Two to four paragraphs.** This is hard for us preachers who can't say hello in under five minutes! Yet, in our fast-paced society, people will only give you a few brief seconds to make your point. So, make your point!
  5. **Use bold and underlined text.** People skim articles and emails. With that in mind, use bold and underlined text to draw your readers' attention to key points. This makes your appeals more readable and thus more effective.
  6. **Provide clickable links to your giving page.** We want people to respond because we believe in what we are doing, and we believe it is worth funding. So, if donations are a reason to send an appeal, make sure they can easily give. Use embedded links that go straight to your giving page such as this one from one of my clients... <https://www.crosschurch.com/give/>.
  7. **Use multiple links to your giving page.** Again, since people skim, you need to put your giving link in more than one place. Consider putting a link early in the text and another somewhere further into the text. Then put another link in the PS. Speaking of which ...
  8. **Always have a PS!** Studies have consistently shown that people almost always read a PS. Use the PS to focus on online giving or to sum up the gist of the appeal. The opening sentence and the PS might be the only two lines of your appeal a donor reads. So, make sure they are appealing and to the point.
  9. **Determine the best time to send the appeal.** Studies show that more charitable gifts come in online at 2 PM EST during the middle of the week. Pay attention to your past email sends to see what your best time is for sending.
  10. **Follow the three C's.** Great "asks" are clear, concise, and most of all compelling! Remember, at the same time you are making your appeal, others are doing the same thing to your members. The appeal that best tugs at their heart will be the appeal that gets the dollars.
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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 them 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.

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### You Are Richer Than You Think!

**Few of us here would consider ourselves rich.** Yet, the average American is just that compared to most of the world. Out of curiosity, I did some research to see just where we rank. You know what that means, I Googled it! Here is what I found out...

The median income for U.S. households for 2021 is estimated to be \$66,039. Some of us are higher than that and some lower. On a global scale, the vast majority of Americans are either upper-middle income or high income. Moreover, many Americans who are classified as "poor" by the U.S. government would be middle income globally according to the Pew Research Center.<sup>1</sup> You might not consider yourself rich but people in Zambia, where the annual salary runs around \$23K, might consider you rich.

So why is that important, and what does it matter? Sometimes the right perspective helps us establish what is important in life. It also helps us understand Scripture better. Consider Paul's advice to Timothy in I Timothy 6:17-19 from The Message...

"Tell those rich in this world's wealth to quit being so full of themselves and so obsessed with money, which is here today and gone tomorrow. Tell them to go after God, who piles on all the riches we could ever manage—to do good, to be rich in helping others, to be extravagantly generous. If they do that, they'll build a treasury that will last, gaining life that is truly life."

**Every time we take up the offering, we get a chance to do good and be rich in helping others!** One reason why we exist as a church is to help others. Your extravagant generosity helps us to do exactly that. You, by the wealth God has given you, can bless others who are less fortunate.

What is exciting is that when we are generous, God blesses us even further. Extravagant generosity builds for you a treasury that will last for all eternity. Let's be extravagantly generous this morning!

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1. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/09/how-americans-compare-with-the-global-middle-class/>