

# The Stewardship JOURNAL

March 29, 2021

**From the Desk of Our  
Executive Director**

**Missionary Musings**

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# THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

## From the Desk of Our Executive Director

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**Happy Easter!** With many of our churches holding both on-campus plus live streaming of their services, you could engage more people than ever before. We are praying the gospel message of hope resonates with those you impact and many lives will be changed for eternity. We know you are busy this week, so thank you for reading this edition of *The Stewardship Journal*.

Please read my opening post, "**Help Is On the Way.**" I share the concerns we in leadership have about the state of giving to our churches. Across the SBC, state and denominational leaders are working to provide the tools our churches need to increase our giving. I share more on this in my post. Our commitment is to you, the local church, the backbone of our state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. *The Stewardship Journal* is one of many tools we are providing for our churches to increase stewardship. I am so excited to share with you that help *is* on the way!

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

Have you thought out and planned your Easter offering? Mark Brooks, The Stewardship Coach, writes this week about the importance of spending time setting up your Easter offering in his article, *Last Minute Easter Offering Planning*.

Our **Bonus Section** follows up on Mark's thoughts, giving an easy checklist of suggested ideas for holding your best Easter offering ever.

**Offering Talk** – This week's talk is entitled **We Bring Hope**. The talk is timely given all that our people have been through in the last year. This talk sets up your Easter offering as a means of providing hope to our communities and our world.

Our prayer is that these tools will help you have a great Easter week.

Advancing the Gospel!



Dr. John Yeats

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## Missionary Musings

Dr. John Yeats, Executive Director, Missouri Baptist Convention

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You have probably heard the phrase, "rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic." It is interesting when you search for that phrase on the Web. Here is how The Free Dictionary explains the phrase,

"To partake in or undertake some task, activity, or course of action that will ultimately prove trivial or futile in its possible effect or outcome." <sup>1</sup>

That is a nice way to say you wasted time on the trivial and ignored the vital. The bottom line, though, is when you have a gaping hole in the hull of the ship, no amount of rearranging the deckchairs will help. You have to act and act quickly. The crew of the Titanic did not react soon enough, and lives were lost.

To be fair to the Titanic's deck crew, they worked to straighten the only problem they could see. Those on the bridge of the Titanic initially minimized the damage. The Titanic was thought unsinkable. Sinking was the furthest thing from the minds of those on the bridge that night. They failed to see the danger they were in and failed to act. That failure to act quickly not only doomed the ship but cost over fifteen hundred lives.

The failure to act or, more sadly, do "something," thus rearranging the chairs of a sinking ship, can sadly describe many church's plans when it comes to increasing stewardship. The "decks" of our churches look fine. Yet, there are gaping holes in our stewardship hull. We have seen small incremental leaks and declines in giving for years that COVID blasted wide open.

Why have so many churches failed to act? One obvious explanation for this lack of planning was how easy it was in the past to "make budget." Then the pandemic and its aftermath have shown us the holes in our hull. You will be happy to know that many across our convention saw these holes before the pandemic and began working on solutions.

In my opening in the March 22<sup>nd</sup> edition of *The Stewardship Journal*, I wrote the following,

Dr. Ronnie Floyd commented in a Baptist Press release on March 5<sup>th</sup> about the decline in Cooperative Program giving. Dr. Floyd stated that one problem this revealed was that the Convention is "not providing churches with a concise and compelling Great Commission vision that will move them to support it." After stating that, his next sentence says, "However, to pastors and churches, help is on the way." To that, we say, Amen!

As your Executive Director, I want you to know we have been working on this and will continue to help our Missouri Baptist churches stay financially strong.

Let me also say that your MBC staff is focused on doing all in our power for each of the 1,700-plus churches. Without *you*, there is no Cooperative Program! Our goal is to see each church have the tools it needs to build a stewardship base.

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## Missionary Musings

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We see two immediate needs. First, we must disciple the next generation of faithful stewards. Sadly, many churches have ceased to preach and teach stewardship. We must correct this. We are committed to providing you with the needed resources to address this need.

The second immediate need is to help my generation, Baby Boomers, end well. Boomers are, by dollar amount, the largest group of donors in America. They are quickly retiring. Their retirement presents us with both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is we must replace them, which is why stewardship education is so key. The opportunity is to teach Boomers how to use God's blessings in a way that furthers the Kingdom. Dr. Neil Franks, president of The Missouri Baptist Foundation, is a frequent contributor here and will continue giving his advice.

These tools and more are here for your use, with more on the way. Please use them. By paying attention to what lies ahead and acting quickly, we have a better chance of navigating through the dangerous waters we are in. Our mission, The Great Commission, demands our best. Developing strong stewardship churches advances both the church and our Cooperative effort.

1. <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/rearranging+the+deckchairs+on+the+Titanic>
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# THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

Current Events and Relevant Thoughts From:

## The Stewardship Coach

Mark Brooks

### Last Minute Easter Offering Planning



**Do you ever get up to preach on like a Memorial Day Weekend and wonder why you are bothering?** My last church was about ten miles from one of the best lakes in Arkansas. The Sunday before Memorial Day, my members worked on their summer tan or tried to catch that elusive trophy bass. If I were smart, I would have held services at Beaver Lake instead. That was always the lowest attended day of our year.

**The feeling I have about the next two issues of The Stewardship Coach newsletter makes me feel like it's Memorial Day weekend!** Why? Because very few of you have a minute to spare this week and next Monday, you'll be exhausted. It's Easter Week! To keep your attention, I had better have my A game for this edition. **What if I could help you make this week's offering your best of the year?**

I will show you in this post how to increase the amount of money you bring in this Easter and how to gain new donors. This edition of the Coach is entitled ***Last Minute Easter Offering Planning***. I believe if you follow these quick steps, you can have your best Easter offering ever. Would that be worth a few minutes of your time? Great, here are the things I always remind leaders to focus on when planning their Easter offering.

**Don't blow the best opportunity you have all year to make a positive stewardship impact.** My ultimate goal is to produce stewards, not generosity. Let's use this opportunity by avoiding the mistakes most churches make when it comes to the Easter offering. Here are my top three mistakes:

1. **De-emphasizing the importance of taking up the offering.** Easter isn't the only time we do this. It is pretty much every week for the vast majority of churches in America. De-emphasizing the offering is a result of...
  - A. **Not seeing the offering as a crucial part of worship.** The offering IS worship, and when we downplay the offering, we cheapen worship.
  - B. **Worrying that it will turn off people.** It is *how* we talk about money that turns people off, not *that* we talk about money. If you do it right, people will respond.
  - C. **Business as usual approach.** If you approach your Easter offering as you always have, don't be surprised if it is not as successful as you would like. Now back to the list...
2. **Not planning out the offering.** I will have more to say on this later, but lack of planning is the death of any good idea. Start planning out *now* what you will do and say for your Easter offering.
3. **Not making a case for the offering.** This is true for each week's offering but especially true on Easter. You know you will have a lot of eyeballs on your service this year. If you announce an offering without an explanation, how will first-time engagers know what to do? Yet, that is exactly what many churches do.

So, let's not make those mistakes! Here is a thought, why not use the offering time as an educational experience to help attendees see the connection between generosity and life change? Let's cast a vision for the Easter offering to increase the amount you receive and increase the number of people giving.

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## Last Minute Easter Offering Planning

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That will take some work *and* valuable platform time. However, *if* in two minutes or less, you could change the course of someone's life while also helping fully fund your vision, wouldn't it be worth it? Helping churches improve their offering time is the first thing I work on. It is the easiest and most long-term productive way to increase stewardship. And again, on Easter, you will have more engagements than ever. Here are some thoughts to help you avoid these.

- **The more specific your "ask," the more impactful the response.**
- **Share one key area that giving funds that makes an impact.**
- **Since you know you have guests, make it outward focused on children and youth-driven.**
- **The more personalized the story, the more impactful the response.**

I believe that people give to a cause, not a budget. So, what we must do is show what a gift to your church accomplishes. If the "ask" is about helping you make a budget, show why that is important. Focus upon what you do with the money that people give you. Budget education should not happen only when you are trying to get the year's budget approved!

**This Easter, you *will* be taking up an offering. Why not make it your best of the year?**

The next edition of the Coach will be on The Legacy Lane. The Legacy Lane is a new approach to raising long-term funds for your church. So, while this week will be busy, take some time to think about how to continue building your stewardship platform. Come this summer, you will be glad you did!



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

**Did you miss my special announcement on The Digital Lane?** Data drives much of my strategy for churches. Our financial analysis, while very good, did not give us the instant ability to respond to giving challenges. Now, through our partnership with MortarStone, we can provide for you up to date analysis of your giving trends. Find out more at this special site on my webpage: <https://acts17generosity.com/giving-analysis/>

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## Bonus Material

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### Your Best Easter Offering

**It's late but not too late to prepare for your best Easter offering ever!** Here is a brief plan of action for an Easter offering taken from the Playbook entitled *Successful Easter Giving Plan*.

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

The focus is on showing how your church's impact extends beyond the walls, both physical and cyber. This broad overview introduces your church family to the possibilities of impacting their world and invites them to participate with you. The following is a two-week overview of suggested ideas from this guide.

**March 28th – The focus of this weekend is being hopeful.** Our world needs hope. In the New Testament, the word hope, when used as a noun, means "favorable and confident expectation, a forward look with assurance." By focusing forward on the future, we bring hope. We want to share at least three things moving forward that their generosity can help support.

- ✓ Send out the church-wide letter/email announcing the Resurrection offering information at the start of Easter week.
- ✓ Use social media accounts to highlight your Easter offering. Step up your social media campaign, highlighting all that you have accomplished in this past year. At times say, "Thanks to the generosity of our members..."
- ✓ Finalize the offering message and who will deliver it. Focus on what the church is accomplishing.
- ✓ Prepare any bulletin inserts, newsletter comments, webpages, etc.
- ✓ Make sure envelopes are in every pew rack or seat pocket! The goal is to make it easy to give.
- ✓ Send an email blast – Send an email blast Friday afternoon before Easter with an embedded link to your giving page, asking people to give right then!
- ✓ PRAY!!

**April 4th – The focus of this weekend is being grateful!** We want to give praise and say thank you. Announce the Resurrection offering results, share what that will mean for mission and ministry, and profusely thank everyone who gave.

- ✓ Monday, April 5th - Send thank-you notes/letters to those that gave to the Resurrection offering. Don't just thank them, tell them what their gift accomplished.
  - ✓ Monday, April 5th – Send one last email appeal.
  - ✓ Make the announcement next weekend a big deal. Plan out how you can celebrate the results and pour gratitude into your church.
  - ✓ PRAISE!!
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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 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 fits 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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### We Bring Hope!

**Hope.** That is what we desperately need in these days of uncertainty. That is what this day is all about, hope. Easter is the church's time of celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. He is the hope of all the world!

Often our hymn and chorus writers can say it so well. This week an old Bill and Gloria Gaither chorus came to mind that says:

*"Because He lives I can face tomorrow, Because He lives all fear is gone; Because I know He holds the future. And life is worth the living just because He lives!"*

That is what Easter is about, declaring that Jesus is alive! Because He *is* alive, we have hope!

That is what we here at YOUR CHURCH NAME are doing day in and day out amidst this crisis. While our physical doors might be closed or our attendance limited, we continue our ministry to our community and the world.

This past year your generosity has allowed us to:

**List one to three positive things you have accomplished.**

This year there are a few things we have upcoming that we believe will continue our message of bringing hope to our community ...

**List one to three things**

Your generous gift in today's offering will allow us to accomplish these ministries as well as all our other endeavors. Our world desperately needs hope, and our mission is to bring them hope in Jesus' name!

This would be our normal time of offering in our services. Obviously, we can't pass a physical offering plate. You can still give by going to, LIST ALL YOUR DIGITAL GIVING PLATFORMS.

Let me thank you for your continued generosity through this time. We know "this too shall pass." Your faithfulness in generosity helps us keep our ministries strong. We have not given up hope for the rest of our year, and we depend upon your generosity to help make this happen.

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