

The Stewardship JOURNAL

May 3, 2021

**From the Desk of Our
Executive Director**

Missionary Musings

**How Your Vision Can
Accelerate Generosity**

**The 15 Offerings of Summer:
How to Reverse the Summer
Slump in 60 Seconds**

How is Your Vision?

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From the Desk of Our Executive Director

Prioritizing, Elevating, and Accelerating Generosity was the subject line of an email sent out Convention-wide by Dr. Ronnie Floyd on April 21st. I am so grateful for the leadership of Dr. Floyd as he leads us through these challenging times. How do you prioritize, elevate, and accelerate generosity? By casting a compelling vision, and what is more compelling than The Great Commission? In this edition of *The Stewardship Journal*, I want to expand upon Dr. Floyd's thoughts in my Missionary Musings.

Here is a preview of what you can expect in the pages that follow.

How Your Vision Can Accelerate Generosity is the title of Stewardship Coach Mark Brooks' main post. He, too, talks about how the SBC is handling the challenge of post-pandemic giving. Here is a sample from his post: "How do you correct a nearly 21% decline? You do what Dr. Floyd is leading the Southern Baptist Convention to do. **You share a compelling vision of a preferable future!** Ronnie Floyd is leading with vision." Mark then goes on to share how we can use vision to accelerate generosity for your church.

In our **Bonus Section**, you find more information on planning out your summer giving. We know that the summer months are always a giving challenge for us, so let's work to get ahead of that problem with a summer giving plan. The Bonus Section provides that for you.

This week's offering talk is entitled, "**How is Your Vision?**" It is a great talk to help people focus on the vision of fulfilling Acts 1:8. While you might not pass a physical offering plate, it is still important to make the offering moment impactful and worshipful. This offering talk helps set the stage for a fully funded summer.

Let us know how we can better serve you through this Journal. Our prayer is that these tools help you accelerate generosity at your church.

Advancing the Gospel!



Dr. John Yeats

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Missionary Musings

Dr. John L. Yeats, Executive Director, Missouri Baptist Convention

Prioritizing, Elevating, and Accelerating Generosity was the subject line of an email sent out Convention-wide by Dr. Ronnie Floyd on April 21st. Of course, I read every email out of Nashville, but this one especially caught my eye. If you missed it or have not read it, here is the link: <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/first-person-prioritizing-elevating-and-accelerating-generosity/>.

Reading Dr. Floyd's email started me musing on the fact that from denominational executives to the smallest SBC church treasurer, we are all wondering how to recover from the giving setback COVID has forced upon us. The principles of the leadership of the largest Protestant denomination in the world are the same principles that work for your local church. With Dr. Floyd's email as a background, here are my musings.

First, it's obvious that COVID has forced everyone to re-evaluate, well, everything. From buildings to programs, everything is on the table for re-evaluation. While it might not seem spiritual, one area we must re-evaluate is our approach to stewardship. Giving has stabilized, but current giving has not yet caught up with pre-COVID numbers. We have an aging donor base, and we are struggling to keep and attract younger generations. At the same time as this decline in giving, the need for missions and ministry has increased, while the dollars on hand to do that work is declining.

All of us are experiencing the same thing. Every one of us is trying to figure what the future missions and ministry will look like. But, one thing is certain: we need funding to do the work to which God has called us. The question is, how do you prioritize, elevate, and accelerate generosity? Dr. Ronnie Floyd's April 21st email shows us how. You cast a compelling vision.

For the last few months, we have seen Dr. Floyd's leadership keep the Convention's focus on The Great Commission. He summed it up well in his email, "Taking the gospel to the nations still moves our churches. When we focus on the vision to advance the gospel to the nations and communicate it in a relevant and current manner, I believe churches will desire to join together to see this vision fulfilled."

Amen! It *is* time that we come together. As we see our nation continuing to spiral downward, we must unite behind what unites us, The Great Commission. What does that have to do with generosity? Dr. Floyd answers that question by writing, "I believe generosity always follows the clear and compelling vision of reaching the world for Christ." Simply put, dollars follow vision.

While I am not a marriage counselor, in my years of ministry, I have often met with couples who seemed to be at an impassable divide in their marriage. How can two people who have committed to lifelong devotion fall out of love? While there are many reasons, one main reason is they have forgotten what drew them together in the first place. I would always attempt to find what that original spark was in an attempt to rekindle that flame. Biblically, that is called returning to your first love.

If you spend any time on social media, it is apparent that many have forgotten we are called not to win arguments but to win souls. Theological debate is important, but our debates must not take us away from The Great Commission. The Great Commission is a vision for eternity that must unite us all. Like a marriage

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counselor, Dr. Floyd's April 21st email points us back to that which unites us, winning our world for Jesus! That is a vision worthy of support.

How does a focus on what our Cooperative Program giving accomplishes benefit your church? Consistent studies have shown that people give to causes that make an impact and a difference. When you give through a Missouri Baptist Church, your gift makes a statewide and worldwide impact. Dr. Floyd addresses this when he says, "Each church has been appointed and anointed to take the gospel to the entire world; yet, together we can cooperate through our network of churches and do much more for Christ throughout your state, our nation, and around the globe." Telling that story will spark generosity among your members.

Dr. Floyd's April 21st email ends with a great summary of the impact of our cooperative giving through the Cooperative Program when he states,

The Cooperative Program is:

- More about *mission* than *money*
- More about *unifying* us than *dividing* us
- More about *working together* than *working alone*
- More about *your church* than *our Convention*

He sums it all up by saying, "This is the kind of generosity we must prioritize, elevate, and accelerate if we are to advance the Great Commission across every state, throughout our land, and around the world."

The answer to how you prioritize, elevate, and accelerate generosity at your church is to cast a huge vision. There is no greater vision than obeying The Great Commission. When we prioritize winning souls for Jesus, people will willingly give to support that work. We prioritize, elevate, and accelerate generosity by prioritizing, elevating, and accelerating The Great Commission.

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Current Events and Relevant Thoughts From:

The Stewardship Coach

Mark Brooks

How Your Vision Can Accelerate Generosity



How would you like to have ended this past February 20.76% below February's 2020 giving? You might have had a similar percentage decline but the 20.76% decline I have mentioned here amounted to over \$4 million dollars less in one month to be used for missions and ministry. That is what my friend and fellow seminarian, Dr. Ronnie Floyd, faces as he attempts to lead the Southern Baptist Convention through the pandemic.

How do you correct a nearly 21% decline? You do what Dr. Floyd is leading the Southern Baptist Convention to do. **You share a compelling vision of a preferable future!** Ronnie Floyd is leading with vision. He understands that **dollars follow vision**. He summed up his approach in a recent email to the

SBC, entitled *Prioritizing, Elevating, and Accelerating Generosity*, where he wrote, "I believe generosity always follows the clear and compelling vision of reaching the world for Christ."

In other words, **dollars follow vision**. In twenty-five years of raising funds, I can tell you that vision is the key driver between success and failure. This is why I wanted to take time in this edition of the Coach to share with you, "**How Your Vision Can Accelerate Generosity**." The concepts I share work for any season in the life of your church. But I want to especially think about how you can visioneer your summer giving using the principles listed here to accelerate generosity and stewardship.

What is vision? My friend, Herb Buwalda, came up with what I think is the best definition. He says, "Mission" answers the question, "Why are you here?" "Vision" answers the questions, "Where are you going? What is God asking of you now to impact the mission?"

Your first step is to craft a message that matters. Dollars follow a vision. Your vision is what drives people to give you more money. Thus, every appeal needs a driver for the vision to penetrate and capture the hearts and, ultimately, the wallet of your donors. The more compelling the driver, the more likely you are to get a response.

Every "ask" needs a driver. What's a driver? The driver is the message or story you are communicating about *why* people should give to your appeal. There is no better driver to achieve generosity than a vision, *if* it is communicated effectively.

Let's make a case for your vision! When I work with a client for a significant giving initiative, I start by asking the pastor to write out the vision behind whatever we are raising money for. Technically this is called a Vision Case Statement. I want a broad overview of what we are raising money for on one page, front and back. I advise you to do the same thing for special offerings or for overcoming a summer slump in giving.

The 3 C's of Vision Casting – Your vision must contain these three C's to be heard. When it comes to your vision:

1. **Make it Clear** - Above all else, do your members clearly understand what it is you are attempting to do? Is your vision clear? Can your members easily tell their work associates, neighbors, and friends what you are doing and why? When visions are not clear, people will not donate, even in the best of economic times.

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2. **Keep it Concise** - Donors have basically two questions: does this make sense, and can you pull it off? Answer those questions and you will get their dollars. Remember the old KISS acronym? It stands for Keep It Simple Somehow. KISS is good advice for communicating your vision.
3. **Cast it Compellingly** - The most important thing of all is to make your vision matter in the hearts of your members. A compelling vision that motivates the heart will, even in the worst of economic times, cause dollars to come to your ministry. Show your donors how their gift will make a difference and they will rise up to support it financially.

If you don't hear anything else, hear this. Have you ever said that in a sermon? Well, here is my "if you don't hear anything else hear this" statement. To raise the money you need this summer, you must...

Here Are My Six Key Points on How to Craft the Message of Your Vision

1. **Don't make it about you. Make it about your donors.** Use lines like, "Because of your generosity..."
2. **Be positive, not negative.** Appeals that sound desperate for survival never work.
3. **It's not about making your budget; it is about changing lives!** The number one reason most summer campaigns do not maximize their potential is because the emphasis is not about vision but about making budget.
4. **So, make the appeal about missions and ministry, not making budget!**
5. **Focus on what you have done and what you have yet to do.**
6. **Make the appeal appealing by personalizing the message.**

To accomplish these points, you need to remember one of my Brooks' mantras...

Get a story, work your story, tell people about your story and people will willingly give to support that story!

Now is the time to craft your vision for summer so your every mission and ministry endeavor will be fully funded!



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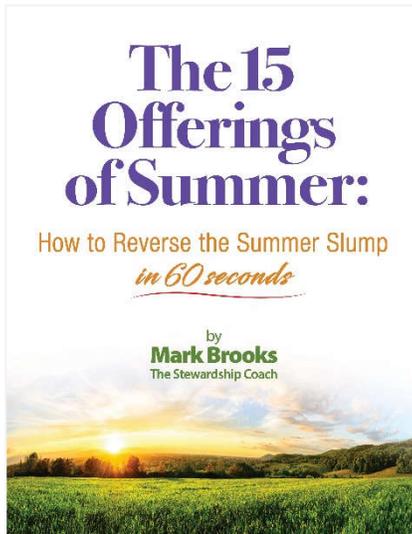
Find out how to access all of my playbooks at <https://acts17generosity.com/store/>.

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Bonus Material

Summer offering strategy - Here is an overview of a plan of action for summer offerings taken from my new playbook, *The 15 Offerings of Summer: How to Reverse the Summer Slump in 60 Seconds*.

<https://acts17generosity.com/shop/the-fully-funded-summer/>



What is your plan? The best message and tools, while essential, are worthless without a plan of action. Let me lay out my overall strategy when it comes to plans for summer offerings.

- At least one month out, craft the vision.
 - Set your giving goal for the summer. Suppose your operating budget is \$520K a year. That means you need \$10K a week to fully fund your operations. Count how many weeks from Memorial Day to Labor Day, typically there are 15, and then multiply your weekly need by that number. Using \$10K a week makes your summer offering giving goal to be \$150K.
 - Communicate beforehand with your leadership. Why? Their gifts will drive the success of your offering! I'll show you how in the tool section of this playbook.
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- Beginning in May, start showing the ministry's impact of the area of need across all your communication platforms. Show your story!
 - Each weekend in May, encourage people to sign up for recurring giving.
 - Craft a specific plan for each of the three Holiday weekends, Memorial Day, The 4th of July, and Labor Day.
 - Send a mid-summer direct appeal email or letter encouraging continued financial support of your summer mission.
 - Take up the offering with boldness! In two minutes or less, craft an offering talk that gives a positive take on the need your offering will meet. The tool section will provide you with a pre-written offering talk for this.
 - Thank those who gave to the special offering and update the offering's results and impact. Thanking your donors paves the way for the next "ask."

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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 as 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.

How is Your Vision?

Would anyone here admit to using tri-focal lenses? For you Millennials, tri-focal glasses are what we of the more mature generation need to be able to read your texts on our smartphones! Just wait. After years of reading that small print, you too will have to wear corrective lenses, and they just might be tri-focals.

If those of you under the age of 50 are not aware of what tri-focals are here is the Wikipedia definition...

Trifocals are **eyeglasses** with lenses that have three regions which correct for distance, intermediate (arm's length), and near vision.

It's easy to spot people who wear trifocals by the way they have to bob their heads up and down to get the text into proper focus. Sometimes we look and feel like chickens, but the good news is we can still read! So, whether we are looking right in front of us, a distance from us, or far in the distance, we can see clearly what needs to be done.

Our church has a tri-focal vision! Our vision statement is, **List your statement or simply pick up on this next sentence.** Our vision is driven by Jesus' last words to his disciples in Acts 1:8 where he said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

We view the world through the tri-focal lens of Acts 1:8. Our Jerusalem is our city and the surrounding area. Our mission is to impact our area for Christ. For us, our Judea and Samaria are our nation and of course the ends of the earth is missionary work abroad. To simplify it, we have a world-wide vision that begins when you leave our parking lot.

Like tri-focals, there are times where our vision is focused locally. At other times we are focused on missional work beyond our region. Yet, there is never a time where we are not considering and keeping watch on how we can work our vision whether near or far.

Every time you give here at YOUR CHURCH NAME you help keep in focus our vision of Acts 1:8. We use your generous gifts to be the best witnesses for Jesus we possibly can be. Our world is in great need and through the power of the Christ we have the Good News to share with the world both near and far. That is why we exist and that is why your gift is so important to us.

Looking at our world through the tri-focal lenses of Acts 1:8 keeps us on course. Your gift gives us fuel to keep moving forward!
