

The Stewardship JOURNAL

May 10, 2021

**From the Desk of Our
Executive Director**

**Pastors Share Their Thoughts
on Stewardship Preaching**

**The Forgotten Sermon:
How to Preach Effectively
on Giving**

**Making the Case for the
Forgotten Sermon**

Make This *Your* Graduation Day

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From the Desk of Our Executive Director

How long has it been since you last preached on stewardship? Years ago, there was a commercial that asked a question about how long had it been since you had eaten a bowl of their chili? The actor asking the question would then say, "Well, that's too long!" When it comes to preaching on stewardship, if you are like the average pastor, your answer was a long time ago. One easy way to increase giving at a church is to preach stewardship. In this edition of *The Stewardship Journal*, our focus is upon preaching on stewardship. I asked several pastors across our state to weigh in on a series of questions about how they approach preaching. We believe you will benefit from their answers in our lead post.

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

"In many ways, I believe that the decline in giving is attributable to the lack of preaching on stewardship." That is the opening sentence of long-time stewardship coach Mark Brooks' piece entitled, ***The Forgotten Sermon – How to Preach Effectively on Giving***. Mark shares with us key concepts on how to effectively preach on giving.

In our **Bonus Section**, you will find more information on sermon planning for a stewardship series. It's entitled, **"Making a Case for the Forgotten Sermon."**

This week's offering talk is entitled, **"Make This Your Graduation Day."** The talk's focus is on graduating people up the generosity ladder. It also helps you put a focus on recurring giving, which is one key way to head off the summer slump in giving.

If you have a thought on stewardship that you would like printed in the Journal, contact us. By all of our leaders pooling their thoughts, we can better help each other. We look forward to your thoughts.

Advancing the Gospel!



Dr. John Yeats

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Pastors Share Their Thoughts on Stewardship Preaching

Rob Phillips

32%. That is the percentage of people who said they had heard a sermon on faith and personal finances in the last year. That survey was taken in the 1990s. We would guess that if we polled church members today, the percentage would be even smaller. As Mark Brooks explains later in this Journal, the decline in *preaching* on giving produces a decline in giving.

We wanted to find out how other Missouri Baptist pastors approach preaching on stewardship. In this edition of *The Stewardship Journal*, our Executive Director of the MBC, Dr. John Yeats, reached out to several pastors across the state about their views on preaching on stewardship.

Dr. Yeats: Many preachers fear preaching on stewardship. How have you overcome those fears?

Jeff Anderson of Calvary Hannibal said, "Like many other issues in the church, it took me a while to learn, and trust, that as a pastor I *must* fear God rather than man. As a pastor, I am called to 'shepherd the flock of God' entrusted to me. And I *must* preach/teach the 'whole counsel' of God's Word."

Brad Delaughter of First DeSoto said, "We must change *our* perspective of giving from viewing it as something that is just commanded as an outdated practice, to one of our greatest acts of worship. When we have a proper view of stewardship, it will change how we approach preaching on stewardship."

Dennis Gard of Central Eureka said, "Stewardship is part of the Christian life. We should not fear preaching about stewardship any more than we fear preaching about sexual sins, lifestyle choices, or proper Christian behavior. Pastors are called to preach the truth of Scripture, and stewardship is simply part of that truth."

Richie Rhea, retired Sr. Pastor from First Troy, said, "I have to keep in mind that giving is a big deal in the light of who God is and in the light of eternity. How in the world can we love the gospel and not give?"

Dr. Yeats: What do you see as a pastor's biggest challenge when it comes to preaching stewardship? How would you recommend overcoming these?

Gard: "Compassion is the greatest challenge. Whenever you ask people to give money, you have to have compassion in your words and instruction. Without compassion, it can appear demanding, needy, or offensive. Using compassion allows the listener to feel connected to the call."

Anderson: "To make sure that we are not preaching the subject for the purpose of fundraising, but rather for the purpose of obedience and blessing according to the Word of God. I would recommend to start using the abundance of sources that create sermons for fundraising and to take the Scripture and exegete it."

Dr. Yeats: How would you describe your approach to preaching on stewardship?

Delaughter: In establishing a biblical theology of giving, we must understand above all else that giving is a supreme act of worship. I follow Paul's words in **Phil. 4:18**, "*But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.*"

Gard: "I like talking about generosity rather than giving. Generosity is an expression of the heart rather than an obligation of duty."

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Preaching on Stewardship

Anderson: "I will intentionally preach a stewardship series every few years. Otherwise, I preach the Word in long series (most times all year long) so I simply address stewardship if it comes up in the series."

Rhea: "Stewardship has to be a response of love to Jesus, as a result of His grace at work in us. Giving gets weird and even anti-gospel when it is all about the giver. Or the budget. Or the building. Or anything but the Lord Jesus."

Dr. Yeats: **Do you mostly use stand-alone sermons, or do you use a sermon series approach to stewardship preaching?**

Rhea: "I mostly used sermon series. Stewardship goes against the grain of our selfish nature. It takes some time to think through the Word of God, for most of us to make changes that allow for biblical responses."

Anderson: "I almost always preach in series, mostly annual series but sometimes quarterly."

Gard: "If I'm preaching through a book and come to a passage about stewardship, I will preach an individual sermon. However, I typically will do a sermon series annually to remind everyone of our responsibility to the Lord."

Dr. Yeats: **How often do you feel a pastor should preach on stewardship? Do you meet that standard or find it difficult?**

Gard: "I believe pastors should preach on stewardship annually. Not all stewardship emphasis' have to be full sermons. You could use a month of testimonies or write a series of articles in your newsletter or blog about stewardship."

Rhea: "About once a year. Although, I failed at this at times. Faithful believers need to be refreshed. New believers need instruction."

Anderson: "I am not really sure that we should feel a need to preach on stewardship to any particular standard or how often. It *is* an important subject like every other subject in the Scriptures. My main thought is that we ought to preach on the major things that Jesus centered on, more often than other things, and stewardship is definitely one of those major subjects."

Dr. Yeats: **Has your approach to preaching on stewardship changed since you started ministry? If so, how, and if not, why?**

Anderson: "Drastically!!! I used to preach "how-to" sermons and short topical series only. Although I occasionally do that, I preach an annual series after an annual sabbatical-type retreat seeking the Lord's guidance in a far greater way. The series can be on a book or a subject such as stewardship or a series of characters but with a unified theme."

Rhea: "I don't know if it has changed much, but my convictions about stewardship have deepened."

Gard: "Yes, I used to drive a stewardship emphasis with force and obligation. Now I focus on generosity and the willingness of the heart. You have to make the followers understand it's our gift back to God, not our obligation for his grace. We are good stewards unto the master out of love, not obligation."

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Preaching on Stewardship

Dr. Yeats: What would you advise a young preacher just starting in ministry about preaching on stewardship?

Delaughter: "I would remind them that there are three reasons to preach on stewardship: God speaks to it; it is an inescapable part of our lives; and it is a matter of discipleship. As disciples and stewards of what God has given, we must understand that all things ultimately belong to him."

Gard: "Preach on the positive side of stewardship. Generosity, compassion, demonstrated love, the joy of giving, seeking God's results, watching for blessings, etc. Stay positive about what God can do with your gift."

Anderson: "Preach what God's Word says, preach it with love for Jesus and your flock as your *only* motivation. Don't go out of your way to preach a financial agenda. People don't respond to sermons based on some unspoken but obvious agenda."

Rhea: "Study 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. Outline these 2 chapters. Develop a biblical theology of stewardship. Preach on each of the principles. Trust the Word of God to work in hearts - yours first and then theirs."

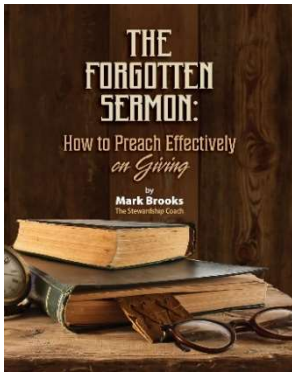
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Current Events and Relevant Thoughts From:

The Stewardship Coach

Mark Brooks

The Forgotten Sermon – How to Preach Effectively on Giving



In many ways, I believe that the decline in giving is attributable to the lack of preaching on stewardship. A study was done in the mid-'90s where only 32% of American church members reported that they had heard a sermon on the relationship between faith and personal finances in the previous year.¹ If it was 32% in the '90s, what do you think that percentage is today?

The Forgotten Sermon – How to Preach Effectively on Giving was the title of an online book of stewardship sermons that I put out a few years ago. It is also the name of this edition of *The Stewardship Coach*. I chose the title of that e-book deliberately because that is what sermons on stewardship are today, forgotten. Which is why I stand by my opening sentence.

It's called causation. I fear (I'm trying to be nice) that we care more for attracting a crowd than we have been in making disciples. Thus, we have pushed what we feel is a difficult subject to the back burner of our attention and interest, stewardship. Each year's fractional decline or plateau in giving isn't drastic enough to get our attention. So, why preach on something that no one wants to hear? Maybe a small group topic next fall.

We are raising the next generation without teaching them a key component of discipleship, being a good steward of what God entrusts us with. Both they and the church they attend will suffer for this lack of biblical teaching.

Let's be honest. Preaching on giving, for 90% of pastors, is not something they love. The other 10%? They are probably doing it wrong. Doing the right thing the wrong way is the typical path of how pastors approach stewardship. *If* they ever preach on it at all. When was the last time you preached a sermon on stewardship or heard one preached?

My entire stewardship strategy runs on two tracks: a leadership track and a discipleship track. A Senior Pastor must have their eye on both. Leaders primarily fuel your present and, hopefully, your future. Making disciples assures you have leaders in the future to continue the process. One is about harvest. The other is focused upon sowing. We must raise up the next generation of donors. Let's start from the platform and use preaching to help lead the conversation.

In 2018, I wrote the following about discipleship being the key to building financial stability.

Here are some key things you should be doing right now:

- **Teach the stewardship of life.** I know stewardship is not the cool, in buzzword. Yet, it encompasses what we in the Church MUST teach. Stewardship of life pertains to more than just giving. It's why I like it better than the new buzzword *generosity*.
Stewardship of life pertains to every area of your life being dedicated to the cause of Christ. When you have a Stewardship of Life concept, you escape the money and possession trap. Thus, you are positioned to be able to afford to be generous. Let's teach that from the womb to the tomb. To sum it up, it's called discipleship.
- **Get them out of debt!** From Baby Boomers to Millennials and Gen Z, debt is strangling the life out of our members, keeping them from living a generous life. I believe that every church, yearly, needs to offer some type of program like Financial Peace or others to help your members escape the bondage of debt. You'll do them a favor, and in return, it will help your church as well.

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The Forgotten Sermon: How to Preach Effectively on Giving

Discipleship is your long game. In baseball terms, it's your minor league prospects. You're grooming them for the future. So, here is my great novel plan for how to offset the decline in giving.

Put stewardship sermons on the top of your sermon planning list! How often should you do a series on stewardship? First, if you have to look up when your last one was, I think we have your answer, ASAP! My preference is at least every twelve to twenty-four months.

What should your approach be on stewardship preaching? Here are some key thoughts...

1. **Don't run your people through the guilt gauntlet!** Guilt never works!
2. **Get them to focus on their priorities.** This deals with the "I can't afford to" argument. I do think it is instructive to show them the real reason many members do not give is because they have misplaced priorities to begin with. Before you plan this series, see point number one above.
3. **Teach total stewardship.** You have to have a long-term plan to teach total stewardship. Teaching stewardship is not going to drive people away if you do it correctly.
4. **Dedicate a whole series to stewardship.** Barna studies have shown that series on stewardship are always more effective than a stand-alone sermon. See the Bonus Section.
5. **Inspire them to give.** If you show your members why giving will benefit them, you will see them give more. Here are a couple of thoughts to that end.
 - **God's blessing** – Jesus said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you..." Malachi says with regards to giving, God will "throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."
 - **Making a difference through their gift** – Studies have consistently shown that people give when they see the need and feel their gift will make a difference.

How long has it been since you last preached on series on stewardship? Put that thought out there.



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach
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1. Smith, Christian, and Michael Emerson. *Passing the Plate*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 2008. 83.

Get *The Forgotten Sermon* at <https://acts17generosity.com/shop/the-forgotten-sermon/>.

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Bonus Material

The following is from *The Forgotten Sermon: How to Preach Effectively on Giving*.

<https://acts17generosity.com/shop/the-forgotten-sermon/>

Chapter Three: Making the Case for the Forgotten Sermon

One thing that I do whenever I work with a church wanting to raise significant funds, is help them craft a vision for why they need those funds. In fundraising circles, the initial vision is called a Vision Case Statement. In this brief chapter, I want to make a case for why you should preach regularly on money, possessions, and giving. I have two major reasons why.

1. **It's biblical!** Jesus talked more about money than any other subject. Don't let a few people talk you out of preaching the whole counsel of God. Jesus talked about it so much because he understood its power upon the lives of people. It truly is the god and idol of our age.

Consider that the New Testament has about...

- 500 verses on faith
- 500 verses on prayer
- Over 1,000 verses on giving
- 19 of Jesus' 38 parables deal with giving
- 1/10 of the book of Matthew deals with stewardship and giving!

If the Bible talks about it so much, why are you not preaching on it?

2. **It brings results.** In his book *How to Increase Giving in Your Church*, George Barna found that churches in which pastors preach...
 - Single messages about giving, raise more money than do churches in which no stewardship takes place.
 - Two or more nonconsecutive messages do not have any advantage over churches that only preach on stewardship once a year.
 - Two or more consecutive messages about stewardship raise more money than do those churches that only hear one message a year.
 - Churches in which pastors preach two or more consecutive messages about stewardship matters raise significantly more money than churches that hear two or more nonconsecutive stewardship messages.
 - A series on giving is nearly two and a half times more likely to experience an increase in giving than preachers who only talk about stewardship once a year or on two nonconsecutive times in a year. ⁽¹⁾

The bottom line is that the more you preach on giving, the more dollars you will raise. Don't shy away from preaching on stewardship. The challenge is to do so effectively.

1. Barna, George Barna. *How to Increase Giving to Your Church*. Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1997. 92, 93

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Missions and Ministry Moment: Setting Up Your Offering

Every week we provide 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 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.

Make This *Your* Graduation Day

Anyone in your family graduating this year? Virtual or in-person? Hopefully, soon all graduations can go back to that pomp and pageantry of days gone by. All the way back two years ago. Virtual or in-person, at least we are celebrating graduates' great achievements. So, congratulations, Graduates! And, good luck, mom and dad, in paying for it!

CONSIDER PICTURES OF GRADUATES FROM THE CHURCH IN THE BACKGROUND IF POSSIBLE.

Graduating means moving to the next level. Our graduates are moving to another level of life thanks to your generous financial support. Your support provided them a spiritual foundation that will ground them for the rest of their lives. So, thank you.

Why not make it *your* graduation day? One way to assure you never forget to give is to set your giving up to be automatic. You can go to our website to find out how. It is the best way to graduate your giving up to the next level.
