

The Stewardship JOURNAL

May 24, 2021

**From the Desk of Our
Executive Director**

**The Worldwide Web of Giving:
Giving Your People New Ways to Give**

**Raising Digital Dollars in
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A Memorial Gift

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From the Desk of Our Executive Director

Is online giving biblical? We thought we would tackle that question in this issue of *The Stewardship Journal*. Who better than long-time Missouri Baptist leader and former pastor of First Troy, Richard 'Richie' Rhea? Richie's ministry has spanned across the years, and he brings his unique style to this issue in an article entitled, ***The Worldwide Web of Giving: Giving Your People New Ways to Give***. One thing I always appreciate about Richie is how he bases everything on the Word of God. Be sure to read to the end as his brief exposition of Philippians 4:17-20 will preach!

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

Raising Digital Dollars in a Material World is the title of Mark Brooks' post that walks us through some of the basics of using digital giving as a tool for increasing generosity. This is a great post to help offset the traditional slump in summer giving. I love how Mark points out that the offering is not dead; it is simply different. This post shows you how to raise digital dollars even while your members are at the Lake of the Ozarks camping!

The **Bonus Section** picks up the theme that a picture is worth a thousand words by pointing out how we can use social media to show our story. The strategic questions listed in this piece are good, thought-provoking questions for you and your team.

This week's **Missions and Ministry Moment** (aka Offering Talk) is entitled, ***A Memorial Gift***, focusing on the true meaning of Memorial Day and linking it back to giving. It's a timely talk to kick off the 15 offerings of summer. We will provide you with a Missions and Ministry Moment for each week of the 15 offerings of summer.

Our prayer is that this Journal proves helpful towards making this your best summer of giving ever! Remember, if you know of someone that would like to receive the Journal, please send them this link for easy signup <https://mobaptist.org/stewardship/stewardship-journal/>.

Advancing the Gospel!



Dr. John Yeats

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The Worldwide Web of Giving: Giving Your People New Ways to Give Richie Rhea

There is a “www” that most of your people use every day. It’s a digital worldwide online connection. There is also God’s worldwide church connection. Additionally, there is our connection to the Lord Jesus no matter where in the world we are, night or day. All these connections are invisible. But real. Part of our daily experience. When it comes to giving, all three of these amazing connections increasingly intersect.

For many years now, I have enjoyed this trilogy. When I was a little boy, I would put my dime in the offering envelope each Sunday and turn it into my Sunday School class. It was an okay experience. But back then, I would never have dreamed that I would give to the Lord Jesus through the air one day. Invisibly! Digitally. From a laptop on my kitchen table. Crazy. And it’s more than just okay. It’s a genuine moment of awesome worship.

Today, I go to my bank’s website to pay my bills. Pretty cool. I don’t have to buy stamps. I can control exactly when a bill will be paid. I also have the assurance the payment has been received, along with a record.

But then, while paying my bills—which can be a real downer—I get to have an amazing moment of faith and love. I have a moment of worship as I give an offering to Jesus, through my bank, to my church. With a single click (no envelope, no licking, no check writing, no cost), my bank gets my instructions, sends my money to a satellite somewhere in space, back down to my church’s bank account, and whammo bammo, I have given to Jesus, His Church, as well as missionaries and ministries all over Missouri and around the whole wide world. I love it!

There are people in your church who want to know how to do this. A while back, I met with one of our newest widows. She was in her early 50’s. Her husband was tragically killed in an automobile accident. Along with grief, she was also dealing with all kinds of changes in her life. One change had to do with paying her bills. I showed her how to access her bank account and how easy it was to pay all her bills easily and in an organized way. She was so grateful. She also discovered an awesome, worshipful, private, and comforting way to give to Jesus.

New Ways to Give - There are many new ways to give. We need to regularly show our people how to enjoy each of these new digital avenues of giving. Let me list some suggestions:

1. Research and set up an online digital giving platform.
 2. Take a minute in your regular worship service (during Livestream, too) and show your people how to click on your giving QR code. If you use a projection screen in worship, consider putting up a clear, large version of your QR code that can be utilized during the service. Print business-size cards with your QR code on them with instructions on how to give. These cards should be readily available every Sunday.
 3. Show them how to use your giving platform with practical information about accessing your website giving tab. Answer questions about security and safety.
 4. Teach your people how to have a genuine worship experience when giving online.
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The Worldwide Web of Giving: Giving Your People New Ways to Give

5. Ask the Lord of the Harvest to send you a stewardship ministry leader who can focus his/her energies on communicating how to use your online giving platform.
6. Send a freshly worded message of thankfulness to those who give.

Are these new ways biblical? When online giving first appeared, there was discussion about whether or not this new approach was biblical. The Apostle Paul sent a thank you message to some givers. It was an important message that God Himself inspired, so important that He made it part of His eternal and sacred word, Philippians 4:17-20. This passage contains so much truth that can be applied to online giving. First, read the passage:

“Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen” (Philippians 4:17-20 ESV).

As you read Paul’s holy note, notice the following realities:

1. Paul wanted people to give, not for himself, but for the Philippians’ credit.
2. The giving happened not in an offering envelope but through a long-distance messenger. Epaphroditus was a guy who must have grown up in a sexually perverse and pagan household. His name was associated with the false goddess, Aphrodite, and temple prostitution. The Lord Jesus had redeemed this offering deliverer. And the Lord can use the www for redemptive purposes, too.
3. Giving, even very different ways of giving, is a fragrant sacrifice, acceptable and pleasing to God.
4. Giving done right involves the riches of God in Christ.
5. Giving gives glory to God forever and ever.

Since the time of Jesus, the offering has continually changed with the times. We have gone from coins to cash to checks and now to the Web. The how of the offering is continually changing. The why of the offering has never changed and never will. In our haste to use the latest and greatest technological advances, let’s never forget that, no matter how we give, the offering is an act of worship and obedience to our Lord.

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Current Events and Relevant Thoughts From:

The Stewardship Coach

Mark Brooks

Raising Digital Dollars in a Material World



You are starting into one of your most challenging giving times of the year. At the same time, this summer will be your busiest, and probably most costly, since before COVID. So, here is my point. This might not be the most exciting thing you will read all week, but I promise if you follow my suggestions, you will raise more money to do all that stuff you have planned for this summer.

This week's edition of the Coach is entitled, ***Raising Digital Dollars in a Material World***. I know it's cheesy, but the title does have a point. The vast percentage of your summer giving will be digital. At the same time, you will be competing with our materialistic toys and places we so love to use in the summer. So...

Let's talk digital dollars. And yes, for *you*, that *is* all I think about. Those dollars will fuel all you do this summer. I can help you have more dollars to do more missions and ministry. Plus, you'll get paid.

The How and the Why – I'm going to talk about using a digital strategy to increase giving throughout the summer. That's the *how*. But, behind the gears and mechanisms is the most important part, the *why*. We want to show them *why* they should give by showing them what this summer will accomplish due to their generosity. The missions and ministry initiatives you undertake this year, virtual or on-site, is the story you use to move hearts to *want* to give. Then, we make it easy for them to respond. That's the *how* part. Let's get started.

First, let's get the tools we need, and those we already have, ready for use—two things specifically here, your online giving platform and your church website.

- ✓ **Digital Giving Platform** – It's not enough to only provide online giving through your webpage. We must give multiple options by which people can give. While also providing for them all the ways possible to give. For instance, if you want to connect with younger generations, you better provide texting-giving options. If you don't have all the current up to date options, contact <https://gyve.com/>.
- ✓ **Website** – Think of your website's giving page as the main platform of your digital giving strategy. Spend time updating it, telling the "why" behind summer giving. As you will see in what follows, I recommend regular and consistent social media posts, telling your story and providing the URL link back to your website's giving page. I recommend using the same URL across all digital platforms. Here is a tip, take time yourself to look at the site on all your smart devices. An increasing amount of your giving is coming through handheld devices. Make sure your site is enhanced for mobile giving.

The next thing you need is a plan for communicating the message, the *why* of the offering. And every click, enter, and a touch of a smart device through online giving *is* an offering. Since most of our summer offering is coming in digitally, we must think digitally when it comes to communicating the *why* behind our offering. Right now, there is no better place to get your message out than social media. Not only is this now America's Front Porch, but also ...

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Raising Digital Dollars in a Material World

In the world of social media, there is no day or night. It's always open and always on. We, the Church, need to think 24/7/365. After all, technology has now created for us a 24/7/365 day offering "plate." So, let's get social, social media.

What does the rise of social media mean for giving to your church? Social media gives you the perfect place to show and tell the amazing stories of life change your church does every day. When you show *what* your church is doing, it better positions you to ask people to support your work. That is your why.

When it comes to increasing giving through social media, I have developed what I call the three A's of social media strategy for my clients. When it comes to increasing giving, we use social media to:

Raise Awareness of what your church is doing and will be doing. We start telling the story of what we are attempting to raise funds for weeks in advance. We post pictures of the ministry or mission endeavor for which we will be asking for donations. We are helping your people become aware of the need you are going to ask for donations. What do you want your donors to be aware of this summer that might touch their hearts?

Call to Action in support of what your church is doing. During the period of our offering push, we post pictures with captions like, "Your generous gift now will enable us to _____. Please donate at..." We then put the link to our online giving page, the URL, making it easy for them to give immediately. What can your donors do right *now* to help make a difference in lives this summer?

Give Appreciation for the impact their gift made to the Kingdom of God. Take the time to report back on how the generosity of your members allowed you to meet the need of the appeal. We try to have pictures of the result of the appeal. Simple text attached to those pictures says in essence, "Thanks to your generosity, _____. Thank you, church!" Thanking your donors and showing them the results of their gift with pictures helps you set the stage for the next appeal.

I use social media to provide education, inspiration, and especially as a call to action. The number and degree to which you post giving related material depends upon each church's culture and context. However, when we are attempting to offset a decline in giving during summer, at a time when we need more funds, you had better have a social media plan to support your now 24/7 offering plate.

So, this summer, you will have members that could potentially be sitting in their tents, like the picture above, while fiddling with their smartphone. And, if you don't think that will happen, you aren't paying attention to Americans! My point is that we must take our message to where they are. Like it or not, we are raising digital dollars in a material world.

You need to plan for this because this is our future. Remember, the offering is not dead, but it is different.



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach
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Head off the summer slump in giving with my newly released playbook, *The 15 Offerings of Summer: How to Reverse the Summer Slump in 60 Seconds*. You can find it at <https://acts17generosity.com/store/>.

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Bonus Material



A picture is worth a thousand words. Social media, especially Facebook and Instagram, are all about pictures. How might you and your team use social media to paint a picture of your summer vision? Here is how one church staff did that, along with some strategic questions for your team to think through as you build your social media strategy for increasing stewardship and generosity.

"Like this?" A few years ago, I was in a planning meeting with Dr. John Cross, pictured here in sunglasses. I told him I had seen their FB post of beach baptisms. I told them how moved I was by their beach baptism pictures. I said, "You ought to use a picture with a link back to your giving page. Thank people for their supporting life change like that." I continued to talk when two minutes later, one of the staff turned his iPad around and showed me this picture with their giving link and said, "Like this?" Exactly!

Strategic questions to think through in planning out your social media strategy and focus – Before you sign your church up and start posting all sorts of things, ask a few probing questions.

- **Where should you be?** Build out your social media platform. Determine what platforms are used most predominantly by your members and guests. Don't try to be everywhere; be where your community is.
- **What's your purpose for being there?** Establish the purpose behind social media. What are you trying to accomplish with your social media platforms? What is the message behind the posts? Having a clear, well-thought-out purpose will better ensure success.
- **What's your plan?** Develop your social media plan. The vast majority of churches don't have an overall plan to use social media, let alone think of using it to increase giving. The frequency of posts will be flexible, depending upon the time of season or need.
- **How are you going to get the word out?** Drive people to your sites. Advertise your social media sites regularly across all your platforms. People will not magically appear on your site.
- **Who owns this?** You must continually work on your plan. Social media's shelf life is minutes. Make sure you not only have a plan for your posts but someone in charge of ensuring implementation.

For more information on using social media, see The Stewardship Coach Volume 8 Issue 9, *Using Social Media to Enhance Your Digital Lane*. Be sure and check the Bonus Section of that edition entitled, *The Digital Lane Social Media Checklist and Suggested Action List*.

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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 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.

The following Missions and Ministry Moment is the 1st of the 15 offerings of the 2021 Summer.

A Memorial Gift

This weekend is Memorial Day. The sad thing about a lot of our holidays is that we have forgotten why they exist. Memorial Day, celebrated on the last Monday of May, was first started to commemorate fallen Union soldiers who died in the Civil War. By the 20th century, it had been extended to honor all Americans who have died in all wars. It developed from there into a day for general expressions of memory for deceased relatives whether they had served in the military or not. So, the day is supposed to be a day of remembering and honoring those that have gone before us.

The Christian singer, Steve Green, sang a popular song a few years ago, entitled *Find Us Faithful*. That song says, "We're pilgrims on the journey of the narrow road, and those who've gone before us line the way. Cheering on the faithful, encouraging the weary, their lives a stirring testament to God's sustaining grace. Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run the race not only for the prize, but as those who've gone before us. Let us leave to those behind us, the heritage of faithfulness passed on through godly lives."

The song is based upon Hebrews 12:1 that says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

Think about where we would be without those that have paid the price for our freedom. We owe so much to so many. We should take time out to remember their sacrifice. We should memorialize those who served our nation and family members who served us.

Many times, we give a memorial gift in honor of someone. You may have noticed plaques in churches where pews or windows were given in the memory of someone. The focus of our giving should always be obedience to the Lord. Yet this morning, as we approach our time of offering, wouldn't it be special if our gifts were given as a memorial statement of gratitude for those who have invested so much for us? Find the way that's easiest to give, but let's worship the Lord through our giving.
