

The Stewardship JOURNAL

August 16, 2021

**From the Desk of Our
Executive Director**

**The State of Giving:
The Factors That Will Bring
People Into Giving**

Is It Too Late?

Capital Campaign Basics

Is It Worth the Cost?

THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

From the Desk of Our Executive Director

"Those who are giving to religious organizations are donating more per household, but fewer Americans are donating to charities — including churches." That is a quote from an article I read recently. I share with you my thoughts on why giving is declining and share with you three things you can do to reverse that decline in my lead post in this week's Journal entitled ***The Factors That Will Bring People Into Giving***.

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

Mark Brooks, The Stewardship Coach, continues his series on raising capital dollars. The series is entitled ***Raising Capital in a COVID World***, and in this issue he writes on ***Is It Too Late?*** Mark answers questions about timing. He states, "Timing is everything when it comes to a successful capital campaign!" If you are thinking about raising funds, this post is perfect for you.

Capital Campaign Basics is this week's **Bonus Section** topic. You will find a step-by-step breakdown of each key phase of a capital campaign.

Are kids worth it? Sometimes we might wonder but the answer is, absolutely. In this week's **Missions and Ministry** "offering talk," entitled ***Is It Worth the Cost?***, we address this question while linking it back to giving. This talk will help your members see the value of making a deposit into the lives of future generations of Baptist laypeople. It is worth the cost!

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/>.

Do you have a stewardship story you would like to tell? Contact Rob Phillips at rphillips@mobaptist.org. We would love to hear from you.

Advancing the Gospel!



Dr. John Yeats

THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

The State of Giving: The Factors That Will Bring People Into Giving

Dr. John L. Yeats

What are you reading? I often ask that of people I meet. Now that podcasts have exploded onto the scene I ask, what are you listening to? I'm always looking for informative and interesting material. Let me share with you two things that have been on my mind due to my reading and listening to podcasts.

"**Churches, Religious Organizations Face Shrinking Pool of Donors**" was a recent Lifeway Research article that caught my attention. The article quoted a study done by Indiana University's Lilly Family School of Philanthropy which stated, "Those who are giving to religious organizations are donating more per household, but fewer Americans are donating to charities — including churches." ¹ My question was, if the donor base is slipping, how come? I believe one reason is American's lack of faith in the church and its leadership.

The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill, a podcast produced by *Christianity Today*, is sweeping the nation. It charts the meteoric rise and fall of the church and its pastor, Mark Driscoll. Frankly, it is not easy to listen to. You can hear in those being interviewed their disappointment and disillusionment of all things church related. After listening to the Mars Hill Podcast detailing the rise and fall of that church, it's easy to see how many have lost confidence in the church. We, Southern Baptists, might discount the impact of events like Mars Hill, but we do so at our own peril. Here is at least one reason why...

2/3 of Americans under the age of 40 weren't motivated to give anything to religious causes in 2018, according to the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy study. That statistic caused Una Osili, the associate dean for research and international programs at Indiana University, to ask what all of us are asking, "What are the factors that will bring them into giving?"²

My first thought after reading that question was, don't be like Mars Hill! Even after the leadership attempted to deal with the toxic environment of the founder, they could never overcome the damage. They lost the trust of their members.

The Reasons People Give – Fundraisers tell you there are three classical reasons a donor gives to any institution or organization. First, they believe in and buy into the vision of that organization. Second, they believe and trust the leadership of that organization. Finally, they trust the fiscal responsibility of how the organization handles finances. Violate any of those three, and you will find giving decline. The Mars Hill story confirms this.

Stories like Mars Hill are not *the* reason for giving's decline, but it certainly hasn't helped. Consider these sobering facts:

- Americans' positive opinions of the ethics of pastors has declined eight of the last 10 years.³
- Church membership in 2020 dropped to 47% in a recent Gallup poll. It marked the first time since the polling firm started measuring church membership in 1937 that a minority of adults said they belonged to a formal religious institution.⁴

Recent studies have shown that giving has stabilized after the steep decline in March of 2020. We even see an uptick in giving. The Lilly study revealed that while the amount of giving has increased, the percentage Americans give to the church continues to decline. Consider these facts from the Lilly study:

THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

The State of Giving: The Factors That Will Bring People Into Giving

- Only 29% of U.S. households made donations specifically for religious purposes.
- The percentage of giving for religious purposes has dropped in each study since 43% gave for such reasons in 2006.

All this led me back to the question: What are the factors that will bring people into giving? Here are a few thoughts:

First, let's lead with integrity. Listening to what happened at Mars Hills makes me aware of the importance of leading with integrity and the value of accountability. Southern Baptist churches are not perfect, but we do have systems in place that instill fiscal confidence in our members. Let's never forsake this.

Next, lead with compelling vision. I love being a part of something bigger than myself. As we cooperate, Missouri Baptists' reach becomes world-wide. By telling the story of how giving to your church impacts our state and the world, your members are better motivated to give to support the life-changing work you are doing locally. We have found that dollars always follow vision. Cast a compelling vision and people will give willingly to support that vision.

Finally, make stewardship a part of your discipleship process. A key principle in life is "we become what we celebrate." You would think that reductions in average giving result from a downturn in the economy, but in many sectors, the economy is functioning at a high level. But it is not flowing toward the church, and part of that is because leaders come up short on equipping and celebrating their people in generosity and systemic giving.

Granted, we are not legalists, but we are to be people of principle. If we are to disciple our people in the principles of faith, we must teach them that proportional, systemic giving is part of the walk. We must take people where they are and give them the handles to walk by faith in their giving as much as with any other area of life. Then find creative ways to celebrate their generosity. That must be a part of the discipleship process of every church.

"The shrinking and aging number of donors to religious causes may indicate trouble for churches who are already reeling from COVID-induced giving decreases." That was one conclusion of the Lilly study. By taking action now, you can avoid the trouble that lies ahead for churches. Our mission is too important to let even one Southern Baptist church die from a lack of discipling about stewardship.

1. <https://lifewayresearch.com/2021/08/03/churches-religious-organizations-face-shrinking-pool-of-donors/>
 2. [Ibid.](#)
 3. <https://lifewayresearch.com/2021/01/22/americans-trust-of-pastors-hovers-near-all-time-low/>
 4. <https://www.ncronline.org/news/media/poll-church-membership-continues-decline-21st-century>
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THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

Current Events and Relevant Thoughts From:

The Stewardship Coach

Mark Brooks

Is It Too Late?



"When we started planning, we were looking at a \$2 million project. That has now grown to \$12 million." Those were the words of a church trustee in a church with a yearly operating budget of \$700K. On the phone a few weeks ago, he told me that the church had given him the responsibility to find out how to raise the amount needed. On September 12th, they want to announce their plans to the entire church. "Can we do that as a kickoff to a capital campaign?" I'm not Jewish, but Oy Vey!

With this edition of the Coach, I'm culminating a series entitled *Raising Capital in a COVID World*. This edition is entitled *Is It Too Late?* For the church above, the answer is no. Yet if we start now, we *might* have time for a spring 2022 campaign. But, just as no two churches are alike, no two projects are alike.

About this time every year, churches call and ask, "Is it too late to start a capital stewardship campaign?" The answer is it depends! We joke that most of our answers are, it depends! That is because there are so many variables that go into campaign planning. As I write this at the start of August, let me say that the answer is a qualified, no it is not too late. But it's close to being too late. Let me give you one of my Brooks Mantras, "It's more important to get 'it' right than to get 'it' done on time." It's always a question of timing.

What factors go into knowing whether the timing of your campaign is right? Let me list some key factors for your consideration.

First, what kind of project is it? If you are adopting another church or starting a new campus, you might need more time to help members get their hands around the concept. People will not give to what they do not understand. Most any type of new building takes longer for members to embrace, and thus you might need a longer campaign cycle. However, if your campaign is simple, like debt reduction, then I find you need less time. Most, if not everyone, understands the need to be debt-free. So, the more complicated the project, the more time we like to give to the process to ensure greater success.

Next, where are your leaders? By this, I mean are they up to speed on the reason you are raising funds? Are they already on board? The reality is that your leaders will give as much as 90% of what is given. If you have been communicating with them and have not heard any objections, you might be ready to start your campaign. Tell me where your leaders are, and I will tell you if you are ready or not.

Is everything aligned? I typically ask questions like, "What is the bank saying?" I'm not a banker, but I knew enough to know that in my opening story, this church would never find a lender willing to write a loan for 12 times their annual budget. "Have local authorities given you the green light?"

Is the church calendar clear? If you have a major missions conference that will fall in the middle of your capital campaign, you need to seriously think about delaying one or the other. A crowded calendar will make for a much more difficult campaign process.

THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

Is It Too Late?

What kind of program are you going to use? If you want an old-school multiple team approach, then you will need longer to effectively recruit and train those lay people who will serve. But realize, programs don't raise dollars. Vision does, but you need time to communicate that vision.

How much time will the senior pastor commit to the process? The best at communicating the vision of a campaign and thus raising the needed dollars is the senior pastor. If the senior pastor is too busy, then I would advise against a launch. Something as important as funding, the vision you have demands the time and commitment from the senior pastor!

These are some of the keys that we look at as we evaluate the timing of starting a campaign. You will see that I often used the word might. So much goes into a successful campaign. With so much on the line, you need to make sure the timing is right.

So, how do you know if you still have time for a campaign? Here are some questions to ask...

- Is what we are raising funds for easily explained, or will we need time to get our members up to speed?
- Is the "ask" simple or complex? Explaining debt reduction is easy. Buildings typically aren't.
- Has it been a long time since we held a capital campaign, or is this another in a succession of campaigns?
- Are our leaders already fully on board with what we are raising funds for?
- Are there major issues or initiatives already on our church calendar that would compete with the campaign message?
- Do we as a staff have the time at this time to invest in a campaign?
- Are all the pieces in place, such as building plans, financing, etc.?

These are just a few of the questions you should be asking and thinking about. **Timing is everything when it comes to a successful capital campaign!**

In the last edition of *The Stewardship Coach*, I shared with you that I typically like at least six months lead time for a successful campaign. There are rare exceptions, but as with anything, the longer you give yourself for planning, the better the results. So, start sooner rather than later to achieve success.

Remember, capital campaigns are *not* dead; they are just different. I have coaching plans for capital campaigns that start as low as \$99 a month! <https://acts17generosity.com/memberships/digital-capital-campaign/>



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach
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Don't forget to download your copy of *Recovering the Lost Offering(s) of COVID19* to help close out your summer strong. Go to <https://acts17generosity.com/shop/recovering-the-lost-offering-of-covid-19/>.

THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

Bonus Material

Capital Campaign Basics

Values versus process – Since there is no one church identical from the next, it would make sense that no one model for capital campaigns should be identical as well. You want to be committed to the key values of a successful campaign *not* the process of how you execute those principles. Here are the four key basic elements of a successful campaign. The how, or the process of delivery of the campaign, should be specific to each church. Yet, focus on these values.

Vision Communication - Preparation Phase

Before anyone will make a whole-hearted commitment to a campaign, they need to fully understand what we are asking of them. They want to know what the dollars raised will be going for. Most importantly they want to know how that will make a Kingdom impact. **When it comes to raising funds, the one thing you need to know is that it's all about the vision!** How much you raise depends to a great degree on your vision. **Use the 3 Cs of Vision:**

Clear - Does it make sense? The clearer the vision, the more likely donors will give to support it.

Concise - The more concise your vision, the more likely donors will even read it!

Compelling - Does your vision touch my heart and thus cause me to want to support that vision?

The goal of Vision Communication is to connect for the donor how a dollar given to this campaign makes an impact. You make that link through...

Spiritual Connectivity – From Start to Finish

It is essential that members catch the vision for what you believe God wants to do through the campaign. Their hearts must be inspired. They need to see the link between the project, or why we are raising dollars, and the vision of the church. We must spiritually connect the members to that vision that we believe comes from God's heart.

Prayer is what links our heart to the heart of God. Prayer is the vehicle that helps us link this project back to the God-given purpose of the church.

Leadership – Private Phase to Public

If your leaders are not on board, we cannot expect the church family to get on board. The purpose of this process is both biblical and practical: Leaders should lead! In a typical church, 15% of all donors will commit as much as 80% to 90% of all the dollars. It is imperative to get your giving and ministry leaders on board early as vision carriers to the congregation.

Congregational Commitment Process – Public Phase

The two key reasons for this process are to celebrate the blessings of God upon the church and commit to the future of the church. Through this process, a series of weeks, we will be asking the entire church family to make their commitment to the campaign. Leaders indeed give more, but asking everyone to do their part helps raise not just more money but future donors.

All plans and procedures should have these four core elements in mind as you plan out your next capital campaign.

THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

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 13th of the 15 offerings of the 2021 Summer.

Is It Worth the Cost?

Have you ever heard someone say, "We are delaying having kids until we can afford it?" How much is that? According to a recent study, it costs between **\$12,800 to \$14,790 every year**.¹ The same study showed that the more kids you have, the more the cost goes up. Multiply that over 18 years, and what will the cost be? We are not even talking about college costs yet!

Here is the question: Is it worth the cost? Ask a new mother that question. Ask a dad after his first father/daughter date or after the first soccer game. Ask a parent after their child graduates if all the costs of books, cleats, musical instruments, clothes, medicine, etc., were worth it. The answer is yes! You can't put a price tag on raising kids. Our children are our future, and there is no cost too high.

That is why, this summer, we have pulled out all the stops to create the best children's and student programs possible. Here is what we have seen:

- List children's ministry results from the summer
- List student ministry results from the summer

You can't put a price tag on that! We could never accomplish this without your generosity. Every time you give here, you help us achieve results like this in the lives of children and students. As a result of your generosity, *you* are investing in the next generation of Christian leaders. Thanks for being so faithful!

We have many ways by which you can give. Find the way that is best for you. Thanks for showing that the next generation is worth the cost!

1. <https://costaide.com/raising-child-cost/>
