

The  
**Stewardship**  
JOURNAL  
October 25, 2021

**From the Desk of Our  
Executive Director**

**Fulfilling The Great Commission  
Through Cooperation**

**Making the Case for the Offering Time**

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**Halloween Is About Saints Not ...**

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## From the Desk of Our Executive Director

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I have known Dr. Ronnie Floyd for many years. Few have his heart for the Great Commission. You can imagine that the last few weeks must have been trying and challenging, ultimately leading Dr. Floyd to announce his resignation as president and CEO of the Executive Committee of the SBC. We had just begun an interview with Dr. Floyd about the wonderful Cooperative Program results when he resigned. I think it says something about his heart that he completed the interview, leaving us a great challenge. We are honored that Dr. Floyd took the time to respond to our questions. I believe his word to MBC pastors is priceless!

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

How much time do you spend planning your offering compared to how much time you plan out the announcements? Mark Brooks, The Stewardship Coach, points out that most churches seldom plan out their offering time in his post entitled ***Making the Case for the Offering Time.***

The **Bonus Section** adds to the discussion of the offering, giving practical advice in a post entitled ***Don't Forget the Offering.***

Speaking of offering planning, we produce an "offering talk" for you every week. Using these stories helps you increase giving. This week's Mission and Ministry Moment is entitled ***Halloween Is About Saints Not...***

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/>.

We hope to see you this week at our state convention in Branson. Stop by, say hello, and let us know how the Journal has helped you this year.

Advancing the Gospel!



Dr. John Yeats

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# THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

## Fulfilling The Great Commission Through Cooperation

### An Interview with Dr. Ronnie Floyd

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Everyone loves good news. Sometimes, however, it's hard to see or hear good news when the negative looms so large. With this *Stewardship Journal*, we wanted to focus on the positive news that the national Cooperative Program exceeded budget by \$5.4 million. On top of that, our International Mission Board recently released the news that the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering had set a record, eclipsing \$177 million. In any other year, those two statistics would be cause for celebration. MBC churches significantly contributed to the Cooperative Program, Lottie Moon, and Annie Armstrong increases. Given today's present tensions in the SBC, we feared these milestones and their lessons would be overlooked.

Our team that produces the *Stewardship Journal* plans weeks and often months in advance, scheduling out each edition. We wanted to provide you with an end-of-fiscal-year look at the Cooperative Program. We wanted to show how we are fulfilling the Great Commission through cooperation. The plan was to have our Executive Director of the MBC, Dr. John Yeats, interview Dr. Ronnie Floyd, president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee, about the Cooperative Program results. Dr. Yeats was in the process of the interview when Dr. Floyd announced his resignation.

If you have ever been forced, due to events, to change your sermon on a Saturday night, you can understand our dilemma. We considered delaying or even not publishing the interview. Frankly, our concern was for Dr. Floyd. When we reached out to him, he agreed to finish the interview. We think when you read his responses, you will see why. Here is the interview.

**Dr. Yeats:** First, Dr. Floyd, let me say how much we appreciate your leadership through this trying time in the life of our convention. Please know that you and Jeana are in our prayers. I'm grateful that, given the circumstances, you found time to say a word to our pastors here in Missouri. That demonstrates your heart and passion not only for this convention but also for its pastors and leaders. So, thank you.

**Dr. Floyd:** Thanks, Dr. Yeats, and thank you for your leadership of serving Missouri Baptists and the entire SBC. I'm happy to share with MBC pastors about something that I am passionate about *and* that I fear could be in danger, our cooperative partnership in spreading the Great Commission. One of the greatest joys of my life has been the promotion of our Cooperative Program and our mission offerings. I thoroughly enjoyed doing this at every level of Baptist life, in every place where Baptists are, with everyone who is a Southern Baptist. One of my greatest and deepest regrets in having to walk away is I cannot do this any longer and keep them before our entire convention, including the six strategic actions of Vision 2025.

**Dr. Yeats:** That's a great segue into what we had originally planned for this interview, the recent Cooperative Program report for this past fiscal year. Dr. Floyd, it is no small accomplishment amid a pandemic that CP giving topped \$192 million, exceeding budget by \$5.4 million. Dr. Floyd, what did you find most encouraging about those numbers?

**Dr. Floyd:** First, let me say that we could have never seen those kinds of numbers without the faithful generosity of our SBC members and churches, including Missouri Baptist churches. So, this is a story that illustrates the power of many banding together for a common vision. That has been true of our past, and I'm praying it continues until Jesus comes. We are better together, and we can do more for the Great Commission as we partner together.

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From a practical standpoint, the results showed that we budgeted correctly. Pastors understand how difficult it was to establish a budget with all the unknowns of COVID. We believed it would be prudent to back off our initial budget plans, given the uncertainty when planning the budget. So, I'm grateful for our team that worked on setting an obtainable realistic budget. It set us up for a tremendous win for the convention. More importantly, it enabled us to continue to take the gospel to the nations.

**Dr. Yeats:** I love how you end by talking about the gospel, reminding us of the main thing. Post-COVID, I know there are a lot of unknowns for us, but what do you think these CP results say about the convention and its future?

**Dr. Floyd:** I think it is important to realize that we are not finished dealing with COVID, so we are still challenged when setting and making our budget. However, ending like we did last year (Oct. 2020 – Sep. 2021) puts us in the best posture to be able to move forward.

Let me speak to this for a moment because I think there is a great lesson here for pastors regarding *their* budgeting process. You never want to set a budget that is unrealistic or that ignores reality. That ends up misleading people about what can be accomplished. After a while, they lose confidence in you, and that can and does impact giving.

So, surpassing our budget *while* fighting a pandemic should be a huge confidence boost for our people. Again, it shows the power of cooperation.

However, no matter how well you set your budget, the question comes back to how much people give to support that budget. We prosper as a convention when our churches prosper. Churches prosper as they make disciples and focus on relationships. People need Jesus, and they need Him *now*. Southern Baptists are a testimony of what you can accomplish through cooperative relationships and partnerships. We must continue that pattern in the name of the Lord.

Finally, when it comes to making budget, we must have a vision worthy for people to give to. I'm grateful the convention adopted the Vision 2025 initiative, which has as its aim "reaching the world for Jesus Christ—every person, every town, every city, every state, and every nation." The Great Commission has been and should be that which unifies us until Jesus returns. If we truly believe in the Great Commission, we must find a way to cooperate together.

**Dr. Yeats:** Amen to that! As you leave your post, what concerns you most about CP giving?

**Dr. Floyd:** I fear that other "issues" will crowd out the priority of the Great Commission. We need to cease neglecting or even derailing the main conversation from being about the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. This Great Commission of Jesus Christ should never be reduced in its importance at any time in Baptist life. This is a constant battle – we must stay on the gospel-focused mission. When other issues crowd out the Great Commission, we suffer. Please understand that I am *not* saying these issues are not important. They are important and must be dealt with, and I believe they are being dealt with. We have said this continually. We can't let our disagreement over process ruin or impair the harmonious fellowship impairing our relationships with one another. My concern is that we might lose our focus on what it will take to plant more churches and send more missionaries so we can reach more people for Christ.

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**Dr. Yeats:** Dr. Floyd, over the past 10 years, Missouri Baptists have generously and increasingly given over \$215,818,205 through the Cooperative Program, the Lottie Moon Offering for International Missions, the Annie Armstrong offering for North American Missions, and the MBC state missions offering. We have set some new records during this season. Yet, we know it is not just about the dollars. It's the spirit of cooperating together to reach people with the gospel that is to be celebrated. What would you want to say to Missouri Baptist churches in response to their generosity?

**Dr. Floyd:** First, and above all, thank you for your generosity! That is an amazing amount of money. By that generous amount, Missouri Baptists have shown all of us the power of relationships and partnerships. You've been a great model to the rest of the SBC.

The second thing I would say is, continue to be generous. Continue to partner with one another and with the SBC. Relationships are critical for the Gospel Advance. I would encourage us to love more, live for Jesus more, and to share Jesus more.

Next, our giving will never be as great as our teaching and implementing a return to biblical stewardship. This is a part of discipling others, to live and give as Jesus would do. Pastors should never back away from teaching and preaching biblical stewardship.

Then finally, I would say always keep the Great Commandment *and* the Great Commission before your people. Southern Baptists, throughout their history, have been motivated by these two commands. Look at what we've been able to accomplish for the kingdom by partnering together. Missouri Baptists have an opportunity to model the power of relationships and partnerships to fulfill the Great Commission. That is how we are to live until Jesus comes.

I came here 28 months ago for one reason: Promote the Cooperative Program and mission offerings and then cooperate and coordinate a mighty strategic unified Great Commission vision. I was faithful to do this even as I faced headwinds continually. I will be continually praying that Southern Baptists fulfill the Great Commission through cooperation.

**Dr. Yeats:** Thank you, Dr. Floyd, for these timely words. We continue to intercede for you and Jeana as you transition to God's next assignment for you.

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# THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

Current Events and Relevant Thoughts From:

## The Stewardship Coach

Mark Brooks

### Making the Case for the Offering Time



**The offering might not be dead, but the offering time certainly is.** You remember the offering time, right? It was the time during the worship service when you called up the ushers and passed a plate by attendees. Somebody prayed, the choir or somebody sang, and the offering was taken up. Few are doing that now. The trend was moving away from passing a plate long before COVID hit our shores.

**99% of all churches, from top 100 churches to churches running 100, spend more time planning and executing the announcement time than they do the offering time.** That statement was true before COVID-19, and it is still true today. But please find announcements in the Bible. Yet *announce* in your next staff meeting that moving forward there will be no announcements in services and see how that goes. Those same folks probably never gave a thought to the offering time. Do you?

I have been giving the offering a lot of thought, so this edition of the Coach is entitled ***Making the Case for the Offering Time.***

Please hear what I am about to type! **The easiest way for any church to increase giving is by improving how they collect the offering during the time of worship.** If you take two minutes or less to help people understand how giving is an act of worship that enables your church to impact people world-wide with the Good News of Jesus, your giving will improve. Online or in person, if you position the offering for worship, giving increases. I have never seen this fail. Ever.

If it is so easy, why do so few churches take time during their worship service to focus on giving and the offering? Because we *assume* that any and all talk of money will turn people off and drive them away. The sad reality is that though we claim we want to make disciples, our actions in this regard reveal we really want to attract a crowd. Talk about money is unpopular, and who wants to be “that preacher?” My answer to this has always been that it is not *that* we talk about money, it is *how* we talk about it that drives people away.

Here’s how it typically works. A pastor wants to grow his church. He knows how explosive preaching on money can be. So, he seldom if ever mentions or preaches on giving. Then, one July, the treasurer informs the pastor that there is not enough money to pay the staff. Suddenly the pastor realizes he must preach on giving *and* send out an appeal letter immediately. The tone and tenor of the sermon and appeal comes off as desperate and laden with do your part guilt. Giving ticks up the next week, but ultimately levels off and the problem continues. Sound familiar? It does to me. I was that preacher!

Please stop doing this. This is why people have a bad impression and believe that all a church ever cares about is money.

This newsletter gets White Papered by several organizations. For the Missouri Baptist Convention, on the page where I provide a weekly offering talk I wrote this:

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

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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.

My bestselling book is entitled *Elevator Pitch Your Offerings*. I wrote it years ago, but the principles are still timely. Here is a quote:

A few years ago, I read a book called *The Influential Fund Raiser* in which the authors talked about what they called the elevator pitch. **The elevator pitch is that short statement you can make in less than one minute.** The authors stated that every elevator pitch needs three elements - think, feel, and do. **Here are the three elements as they relate to the offering...**

**Think** – You want to get them thinking about the offering. You are making the case for why people should give to your church.

**Feel** – You want to touch their heart as to why the offering is important. The best way to do this is to tell the stories of life-change giving fuels.

**Do** – When it comes to the offering you want them to reach into their pockets and give! OK, now we want them to reach for their phone, but you get my point.

My point is that *every* offering needs an elevator pitch, helping people see the need for giving. When your elevator moment arrives, what will you say? Guess what? Every Sunday you have an elevator moment, the offering. What you say could make the difference between making budget this year or laying off staff members and canceling ministry. You better get your elevator pitch on!

How *you* approach taking up the offering during your services says everything about what you believe about stewardship.

Does it work? I could give you tons of testimonials, but here is my favorite from a few years back when I sent a pastor an email that simply said, "How is giving going?" Here is his reply...

"The short answer on our giving can be summed up with one word: **phenomenal!** Giving is up 30%+ this year. We connect the dots every week, often using your 'Elevator pitch' from the *Stewardship Coach*. This has been life changing for our church as we no longer scrape around for money every week. I keep waiting for the bottom to drop out and to have giving return to the old levels, but it just stays strong week after week. Connecting the dots every week makes all the difference. Every single week, we say, "When you give, this is what you make happen here..." and we point to some kind of tangible difference being made at our church."

Would it be worth it to dedicate two minutes or less every week to set the stage for the offering? I can promise you it is. So, onsite or offsite, never stop the offering moment *and* never take up another unplanned offering!



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach  
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## Bonus Material

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The following is an adaptation of a post written within weeks of the lockdowns in the spring of 2020. You can find the post at <https://www.onlinegiving.org/support/dont-forget-the-offering>.

### Don't Forget the Offering

"I can count on one hand the number of times I have seen vision connected to the offering." That comment was made by a denominational leader to me recently. He revealed what I have long known: the offering is the least prepared moment of our worship services.

Every church in America is scrambling to figure out how to continue ministry in this time of crisis. Now more than ever, we need our members to stay faithful in giving. Having online giving helps, yet that tool is not as useful if you don't set up the offering correctly.

Let me share with you some fundamental principles on how, even remotely, you can make your offerings more impactful.

**First, I know giving has been a challenge but, don't come off as desperate.** Donors never respond well to pleas that begin by telling people how dire your financial situation is. In all your appeals, you want to build confidence in your donors that their gift will make a difference, not merely keep you out of the poor house.

**Next, even though you cannot meet onsite for your service, don't forget the offering.** Take time during your service to focus on the joy of giving. Giving, and thus the offering, should always be a part of our worship. The offering is not an interruption to worship; the offering *is* worship. So, make the offering a worshipful moment.

**Then, always connect your vision to the offering.** Every offering should help those listening understand that a dollar given at your church impacts the Kingdom of God. I like to call it show and tell. You want to show the amazing things your church is doing. Tell the story of how you are impacting the lives of people. Then simply say something like this, "Every time you give here, your gift helps us impact people. Thank you for your generosity."

**Next, use the change-up pitch to keep your members' attention.** What is a change-up pitch? In baseball, a pitcher will often throw a pitch that is slightly off-speed from his fastball. The batter is thrown off by the speed and misses the ball. A change-up for a pitcher helps keep the batter guessing. My point with this point is that you need to keep members' attention by changing how you make the appeal. You might use video one week, a Scripture passage another week, and so on. Sometimes it pays to move the offering moment to another time in the service simply to keep your members focused.

**Finally, make it easy for them to give.** The easier you make it for people to give, the more they will give! I recommend that you post the link to your giving page. List the various ways people can give, from online to text or through your app. Never assume people know the different options they have for giving.

Now is not a time to forget the offering. As you plan out your online worship services, spend time thinking about how best to position the offering. In all your planning, don't forget the offering!

As always, if we here at OG can be of help and service to you, please contact us at 615-206-4000, or drop us a line at [support@onlinegiving.org](mailto:support@onlinegiving.org).

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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.

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### Halloween Is About Saints Not...

**This might surprise you, but Halloween was not originally about trick or treating or candy.** Like a lot of our holidays, Halloween is not what it once was. While the exact origin of Halloween is debated, we know that in the 8<sup>th</sup> century Pope Gregory III designated November 1<sup>st</sup> All Saint's Day. That is the day on the Liturgical Calendar dedicated to honoring the dead, including saints. A saint was also known historically as a hallow, an Old English word for "holy person." The evening before All Saint's Day was known as All Hallow's Eve. Thus, Halloween is about Saints not...well, you know!

We can debate back and forth about whether or not it is a pagan holiday that Christians attempted to co-opt or vice versa. My point is that the origin of the day, for the Church, was about honoring saints and loved ones who had gone before us. Clearly over time the original intent of All Hallow's Eve has been lost and commercialized.

It is important to recognize and honor those that lead our Christian faith. These "saints" established our churches, served countless hours, and gave significant amounts of money of which we are the beneficiaries. Without their sacrifice and their examples, where would we be? They truly left behind a legacy and, whether on October 31<sup>st</sup> or November 1<sup>st</sup>, it is fitting that we honor and remember those faithful "saints." Who was a "saint" in your life that you can honor this season?

Many of you had Christian grandparents and parents. Those that didn't wish they did. Even if you did not have a Christian upbringing, by being here today you benefit from your spiritual fathers and mothers in the faith. They believed and gave their lives serving and sacrificing to advance the Kingdom. We honor them. We thank God for their lives.

Each generation of the church builds upon the legacy of the last generation. We stand upon the foundation of the saints. As we approach today's offering, know that you are building upon that foundation not only for today but for the generations that follow.

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