

# The Stewardship JOURNAL

November 22, 2021

**From the Desk of Our  
Executive Director**

**Saying Thank You With A  
Thankful Letter**

**How to Be Like Lance**

**Sample Commitment Card**

**Your Gift Matters**

# THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

## From the Desk of Our Executive Director

Thanksgiving is a few days away! I'm ready for some family food and football. I love Thanksgiving, not simply for the fun and food but for what it means. Sadly, like many holidays, we can miss the real reason for the day, expressing thanksgiving to God for His provision in our lives. Longtime MBC pastor, Richie Rhea, writes our lead post this week in *The Stewardship Journal*, reminding us about the importance of expressing thanks. Richie's post is entitled ***Saying Thank You With A Thankful Letter***.

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

How can you appeal for money in a way that does not turn people off? Mark Brooks, The Stewardship Coach, answers that question by sharing about a recent fundraiser he attended and the lessons he drew from that event in a post entitled ***How to Be Like Lance***. It's a great story that will not only warm your heart but also show you how to make appeals that excite people to give instead of turning them off and away.

The **Bonus Section** gives you a sample commitment card from Hope Is Alive's Nights In November, showing how best to make appeals.

This week's Mission and Ministry Moment is entitled ***Your Gift Matters***. In a time when Christmas has become commercialized, this talk gives three excellent reasons why giving to your church should be high on a Christian's list of Christmas gifts.

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/>.

Let me conclude by wishing you a Happy Thanksgiving season. I pray you get some much-needed rest and time with your family. We will be taking a Thanksgiving break from *The Stewardship Journal* until December 6<sup>th</sup>.

Advancing the Gospel!



Dr. John Yeats

During this holiday season, please note there will be no *Stewardship Journal* on the following dates:

- November 29
- December 27
- January 3

# THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

## Saying Thank You With A Thankful Letter

Richie Rhea, Care Pastor, NorthRoad Community Church, Moscow Mills/Harvester MO

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Jimmy Draper wrote a handwritten note to me several years ago! I still have it. How kind and thoughtful! His thankful mindset was amazing (and still is!) This great pastor, convention leader, and Lifeway head wrote thousands of letters to people over the years. Each one touched someone in a memorable and often unforgettable way.

I learned from Dr. Draper the power of saying thank you with a thankful letter. However, I have found that not everyone is convinced of the importance of expressing thanksgiving when it comes to stewardship.

Many years ago, a man on the finance committee of our church thought we should never express anything positive to givers for their giving. He was a wonderful believer, an older man I loved and respected. He is with the Lord now. But he said, "If you thank people for giving, they'll think we have enough money, and they'll stop giving!" I respectfully disagreed. Over the years, I have experienced the opposite response when people are thanked. Especially when they are thanked the way Paul thanked people.

**Saying "thank you" with thankful letters is God's way.** Many of the epistles in the New Testament are, in part, "thank you" letters. One of my favorite examples is from the Apostle Paul to the Philippian church where he gave this prayer of thanksgiving, *"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now"* (Phil. 1:3–5 ESV). This and many other passages show us how thankful letters can inspire others.

**Saying "thank you" with thankful letters inspires others in their Christian faith.** "Thank you" is food for growth. When individuals are thanked, they are encouraged. Their joy in Christ will likely grow. Their joy will grow because they will see how the Lord has used their faithful giving to accomplish something eternally important. No one wants to give to something that is failing or is unimportant. God's kingdom is eternally successful and should always come first. "Seek first the kingdom of God."

**Saying "thank you" with thankful letters, for helping change lives, motivates additional giving.** The same man that expressed hesitancy over thanking donors also thought we should always set our budget super high so that it appeared giving was under budget. Again, I disagreed. I believe we should never tell the church to give to meet a budget. Giving to catch up with the budget is wearing and sours faith of individuals. Soured faith robs our future of God's richest blessings. Paul addressed the correct attitude when he wrote, "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, **not reluctantly or under compulsion** (i.e., to meet a budget shortfall), for God loves a cheerful giver. *(Here comes a faith-building promise)* And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work" (2 Cor. 9:7–8 ESV). When you thank donors for helping change lives, you will find they become more cheerful givers. Cheerful givers always give more money.

**Saying "thank you" with thankful letters helps remind us of the promises of God.** Paul shared with the Philippians that great promise we often quote, *"And my God will supply every need of yours according to his*

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*riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19 ESV). The word "And" connects this great promise to an important condition, "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" (Phil. 4:18 ESV). Talk about inspiring!*

Paul thanked them for their gifts and tied their giving to God's promise. Some of the greatest promises of God are in the context of the faith it takes for the giver to give cheerfully. Paul pointed out that he was not seeking their gift. He was not writing to get them to give. He was writing to say thank you. And, he was writing to remind them that their giving will lead to "fruit that increases" to their "credit" (Phil. 4:17 ESV). Hallelujah!

Paul didn't write to get them to give more, but I'm pretty sure that is what happened. Don't say thank you to get people to give more, but know this, saying thank you will lead to people giving more as their faith in Christ and His promises grow. We can do the same as Paul. Say thank you to givers for giving to the Lord, and then tie your "thank you" and their giving to the great promises of God's word.

**Saying "thank you" with thankful letters leads to God's glory.** Underhanded motives for saying thank you don't work ultimately. Oh, to be sure, gold-plated cathedrals have been built and paid for on the backs of horrifically manipulated and spiritually abused people. But the goal is not gold-plated cathedrals of man's doing. The goal is God's glory. *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* (Phil. 4:19–20 ESV).

Paul didn't just say, "I thank you." Instead, he wrote God-inspired, canonized phrases like, "I thank my God every time I think of you." So, as we approach the Thanksgiving season, let's thank the Lord for our people and personally thank those people in a tangible way. Jimmy Draper's letter to me many years ago still inspires me. Who might the Lord lay upon your heart to write a thankful letter to?

# THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

Current Events and Relevant Thoughts From:

## The Stewardship Coach

Mark Brooks

### How to Be Like Lance



**"As a result of tonight, lives will be changed."** That was the opening comment of Lance Lang, the Executive Director of Hope Is Alive Ministries. Hope Is Alive's (HIA) mission is to radically change the lives of drug addicts, alcoholics, and those that love them through Faith-Focused Mentoring Homes. The story of Hope Is Alive is incredible, and they had invited potential donors from across the Tulsa, Okla., area to hear their story of life change.

What was I doing sitting inside a tent on the grounds of one of their homes along with about a hundred other people? I'm not a big money person by any stretch of the imagination. My longtime friend and reader of this newsletter, Wendell Lang, invited me to HIA's Nights In November fundraising event. Lance Lang is Wendell's son. Wendell warned me that Lance would make an appeal for money at the end. "Don't feel like you have to give," he said. "I want you to see what he does and give us a critique of the event." In over twenty years of helping churches raise a billion dollars, I have heard a lot of appeals. Here is my critique.

**Every pastor should be like Lance, and every church should hold events like HIA's Nights In November.** So, this week's Coach is entitled **How to Be Like Lance**. Let me tell the story of an amazing night that set the stage for a bold "ask." This story is all about HIA's story. The story of founders Lance and Allyson Lang, their amazing staff, and the lives of hundreds of people's changed lives. It's the story of how a passion burning deep in a heart can impact other hearts.

First, let me share a Brooks mantra that I have preached for years. When it comes to successfully raising money, you must **get a story, work your story, tell people about your story, and people will give willingly to support that story**. HIA's Nights In November was all about the stories of changed lives by the power of the gospel.

Another Brooks mantra that comes to mind that Lance and his team used effectively is **to celebrate your wins in Jesus' name!** I now live in Oklahoma, where football is, well, up there next to Jesus. When a recruit walks onto the Oklahoma or Oklahoma State campus, what do you think they show them? At OU, it's all the Heisman Trophies and all the national championship banners. I'm sure the OSU Cowboys have a similar trophy room they show off. Why? Winning players want to be on a winning team. A part of telling your story is celebrating your victories in Jesus' name. Nothing motivates a giver like seeing life change, and for the first thirty minutes before the actual program began, we were paraded through HIA's trophy room by living trophies of grace.

**"Would you like to see my before picture?"** As we arrived at the house, we were greeted by enthusiastic occupants and participants in the HIA program. Valerie and I were guided through the house by a young woman I will call Sarah. She looked to be in her late twenties or early thirties. She was well dressed and perfectly groomed, *and* she had the brightest, most joyful expression. My first thought was she was a staff member, but I was wrong. Halfway through showing us the house, she asked if we wanted to see her before picture. She pulled out her phone, scrolled a bit, and said, "This was me the day I hit rock bottom." I don't believe in Zombies, but that is perhaps the best way for you, my reader, to understand the lifeless and hopeless picture of her former self she was showing us. "That was eighteen months ago, and I have been sober since!" Lance and Allyson haven't even started their appeal, and I am already mesmerized.

**"Nothing moves a heart like a heart that has been moved."** My mentor in stewardship, Dave Sutherland, used to say that to us stewardship consultants. We older Christians call that a testimony. As a kid, I can remember testimony nights where folks would stand and recount how God had and was blessing them. I'm not sure why we got away from that but if ever we need a demonstration of the power of prayer and our God, today is that time. Hearing and seeing the life change around me had certainly moved my heart from simply being an observer to being forced to think, what should Valerie and I do? And remember, the program hasn't even started!

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## How to Be Like Lance

**What do you do after you tell your story?** After the tour, attendees were ushered into a huge tent erected on the grounds for a light dinner before the presentation began. After hearing more amazing testimonies of life change and victories, Lance and Allyson got to the point. That point was summed up with this statement, "A New Season." Why is that significant? Because while stories of the past inspire, we do not live *in* the past but in the future. Sharing amazing stories of baptisms and the fact that 77 children in 2020 were re-united with sober parents builds excitement, but excitement doesn't always generate into dollars for the future. You have to make the "ask."

For years, I have coached pastors and other non-profit leaders to communicate their message using fundraisers' simple formula. You focus on a crisis, share the need to meet that crisis, and then ask people to financially help solve or meet that crisis. I'm not sure Lance and Allyson know about formulas, but they intuitively did just that. Here is my brief breakdown of their appeal.

**Crisis** – After sharing testimonies and statistics of life change, Lance made this statement, "You've probably heard about the spike in alcohol sales over the past 18 months, but did you know that..."

**13% of Americans reported starting to use substances to cope with stress or emotions related to COVID-19. That's almost 43 million new substance abuse users in America!**

**There were 93K reported drug overdoses in 2020 alone. That's the highest number ever recorded in any year. EVER."**

Our nation is in a crisis. All this has resulted in quadrupling the number of applications and inquiries to the HIA Program. Allyson commented at one point, "We have had to say no more than we said yes this year as we simply don't have enough houses and rooms."

**Need** – They then explained what the future need was and how the money raised would be used. Everyone in that tent knew exactly what was needed and where the funds would go. From scholarships to renovations to new property acquisitions, a new season was clearly defined for those in attendance.

**Ask** – Here is where most pastors drop the ball. We fear what people will think and say of us, so we go soft on our appeals. It's like getting to the one-yard line and then just dropping the ball on the ground, hoping someone will pick it up and get it across the goal line. Lance didn't make that mistake. "Our goal for NE Oklahoma is \$150K. In our first meeting like this, we saw \$50K come in. We need \$100K from this meeting tonight. What you give tonight will help change lives." He didn't blink but stepped up and made the "ask." How could he do that so courageously? Because...

**Lance knows he is on a mission from God that will change lives.** When you know that, when you feel the weight of that, it makes it easier to stand up and boldly ask people to give to support what you are doing. Lance ended where he started by reminding us that as a result of tonight, lives will be changed.

**The results?** \$100,000 was given. The cool thing about that is a donor beforehand had agreed to match what was committed dollar for dollar. So, that \$100K was turned into \$200K. That would have never happened if Lance had said, "take this card home, pray about it and please make a commitment if God leads." He simply got up and made the appeal. Why would we *not* give after all we had witnessed. I went to observe. I ended up willingly giving a gift larger than I ever anticipated.

**If you want to raise the money you need to fuel the vision God has given you, then be like Lance!**



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach

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## Bonus Material

### Sample Commitment Card

Here is how to do it! Check out the commitment card used by Hope Is Alive for their Nights In November.

Name _____	
Address _____	City _____ Zip _____
Cell Phone _____	Email _____
Card # _____	Exp _____ CID _____
Help HIA open new homes in 2022, through a one-time gift:	
<input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$25,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Partner with HIA in 2022, through a monthly gift:	
<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100 <input type="checkbox"/> \$200 <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

The image shows a sample commitment card for HIA (Hope Is Alive). The card is white with a black border decorated with red and white snowflakes. It contains a QR code in the center, which links to the HIA website. The card is designed to be easily accessible and strategically placed around a table.

First, the cards were easily accessible, already strategically placed around the table. This allowed for an easy transition that kept the flow of the meeting moving.

Next, the makeup of the card fits how our society does commerce today, electronically. They made it easy to give by either inputting your card information or using the QR code to go straight to their giving portal. We have found that the easier you make it for people to give, the more apt they are to give.

Notice there are two ways to respond with multiple levels by which a person could donate. The first line asks for a one-time gift. This was to meet the \$150K goal for NE Oklahoma. HIA had received a commitment from another donor to match dollar for dollar what was given that night. So, a \$1,000 gift would result in \$2,000. **HIA reached their \$100K goal that night *without* the matching gift, meaning they will collect \$200K from this one event.**

Next, notice the line asking for monthly gifts. The one-time gift goes for HIA New Season initiatives, but the reality is they still have an operating budget to meet. This line allowed Lance to make an appeal for help in that area. It also serves as an easy gateway into becoming a supporter of HIA. By starting the suggested amount at \$50 a week, they have made it possible for anyone to help financially.

Finally, each card had an envelope with it that was already addressed. This provided a secure way for people to respond and also made it easy to send back. We may primarily be a digital economy now, but you will still find people using old-fashioned snail mail. The point is to provide multiple ways by which people can respond.

For more information about HIA see their website at <https://hopeisalive.net/partnerships/>.

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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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### Your Gift Matters

**Did anyone get up early Friday morning and stand in line to be the first in the door for that special sale?** Some of you. How many of you stayed home and shopped online? Did any of you do both? The response here shows you the changes in how commerce is done in America.

Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, has traditionally been all about standing in line at a brick-and-mortar store to get the best deals on all your Christmas gifts. Now, more people shop online than they do at physical stores. Brick and mortar stores still see huge numbers of people shopping, but now we like options for purchasing our Christmas gifts.

Here at YOUR CHURCH NAME, we give you several options on how to give. **List the various options.**

We don't care how you give. We just want you to give. Let me give you three reasons why.

First, your gift today honors God and is an act of worship. We encourage everyone, members, and guests, to consider a gift in today's offering as a way of saying thanks to God for all He has done for us.

Secondly, when you give, you are blessed. Consider what Malachi 3:10 says, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it."

Third, your gift blesses others. Every time you give here, you help us fulfill the mission and ministry that God has called us to do. Our church impacts hundreds not simply here in our community but around the world—your gift matters.

No matter what form your gift comes in, whether cash, check, or electronically, you can be assured that we use that gift to extend the Kingdom of God here locally and globally. So, thanks for your generosity. Your gift matters for you and for those you bless with your gift!

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