



The Stewardship Coach Volume 7 / Issue 19



Do you remember the 55 mile per hour law? In the 1970's, when America was faced with increasing oil prices, a new law was enacted purportedly to save money requiring no one travel above 55 miles per hour. Americans immediately ignored it. You Gen X and Millennials can Google "Smokey and the Bandit" to find documentary proof of my point. I am joking! Sort of. My point is that Americans regularly broke a law they did not like.

America has reached another 55 MPH limit! Can you sense the unease and unrest? It seems like half of America is screaming in protest at being sequestered. The other half is screaming back to those people; screaming they want out to stay inside in order to protect. Let's see, who are we protecting today? Oh, yeah, me! Seriously, we have reached a tipping point and things could get nasty right as you are considering fully opening back up.

In the midst of all of this, four words come to my mind. **What four words will drive what's next for you????**

Fear. Never in my lifetime have I ever seen our country so paralyzed by fear as it is right now. Who wouldn't be fearful when you hear that potentially 2 million people might die? We have millions of people afraid to touch anything or venture out of their houses. And your church is talking about opening back up?

"One of my children's workers just informed me that she will not be coming back this fall." That was a comment my wife Valerie, the Student and Children's Director of Community Bible Study here in Charleston SC, told me yesterday. The worker is over 70 and has a husband that ticks off all the morbidity risk boxes for those most susceptible to COVID-19. Valerie and the leaders of the local CBS are trying to figure out what this fall's launch will look like.

Does that sound familiar? As you consider when to open, if you should open, to what extent you should open, behind any decision is the question, what will your people do?

A significant portion of your membership will not attend physical services until there is a vaccine for COVID-19! This group represents most of your largest donor group. Your future strategy needs to take this into account.

Trust. The lack of trust is more like it. Even before COVID-19 hit, institutions were at an all-time low in terms of the trust level Americans have in their institutions. With COVID-19, it gets worse.

"You don't need a mask." You **MUST** wear a mask!" It seems every day our "experts" change their minds about the proper course of action. Let's be fair, our leaders were and are trying to figure this out. Yet both sides of the aisle sent mixed signals or gave advice they later had to correct. This caused, and is causing, an erosion in trust.

Social media has made matters worse. Our airwaves and social media outlets are filled with people screaming at each other. Articles and videos that run counter to the accepted narrative are banned and censored. This leads to increased mistrust.

When trust in an institution erodes, so does contributions! As you consider re-opening, my advice is to be as transparent and open as possible. You are going to be criticized no matter what position you take. Make the best decision for your church and communicate your reasons clearly.

Uncertainty. You feel it, don't you? How do you make plans when so much is up in the air? Your members are faced with questions like, will I be able to start school this fall? Will my business survive? Will I have a job when this is all over? Will this ever be all over? Tons of questions are being asked across our country and the honest answer is, we don't know.

Where there is uncertainty, there is unease, and this will impact giving! This is why I have been one of the few in my industry to advise churches to put off any capital campaigns until 2021. Donors are not going to give to that which they are uncertain of.

When you have uncertainty and unease it often leads to...

Anger. Six weeks of being pent up in our houses is boiling over into the streets of America. We are pointing fingers and casting blame. That anger is spilling over into the Church, primarily through social media. Now is not a time to throw stones at those that open before we do or who don't open when we do. Stop the holier than thou attitude and let's accept that everyone is doing the best they can under the circumstances.

The next few weeks are going to be incredibly stressful. How can you lead your church through this time? Two thoughts. First, the words of Hebrews 12:2 come to mind, **"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus."** Let's point people to the only One who can meet their real needs, Jesus.

Next, keep focused upon, and communicating, the vision that God has given you. When He gave you that vision, He knew COVID-19 would hit you. That vision can be a beacon of light for you and your members. Remember, "Without a vision the people perish."

Keep casting the vision God has given you and your people will rally to support that vision!



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach
mark@acts17generosity.com

ANNOUNCING! You might have missed it, but I just signed an agreement to partner with Gyve, <https://gyve.com/>. Guys, this will be more than me simply writing blogs. The guys at Gyve and I are talking about ways to better help churches increase generosity, so stay tuned!

Dave Dummitt interview on Monday Mornings With Mark The Stewardship Coach! I did a taped interview the other day with Dave Dummitt, the co-founder of Gyve and the new pastor of **Willow Creek Community Church**. Here is the link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/3800174275888419335>

Missions and Ministry Moment

This week's Missions and Ministry Moment (aka offering talk) – This coming Sunday is Mother's Day. The following is perhaps one of the most loved and talked about offering talks I have ever written. I actually was surprised as, after I wrote it a few years ago, I did not think it was that big of a deal. I have revised it slightly to meet our current situation.

The Chicken Neck Sacrifice

Happy Mother's Day! Have you ever heard that grandmothers and mothers would always eat the chicken neck when they served their families chicken? I remember hearing that and I found these statements from writers...

"When I was little, my mom and her mom used to always say that a mom's favorite parts of the chicken were the necks and backs." Another writer said,

"My Mom recently passed at 92. She ALWAYS ate the chicken neck. She said she liked it. Imagine my surprise when I brought one to her bedside three days before she passed, and she turned her nose up at it. She confessed she never liked them and certainly didn't have to eat them anymore!"

If they didn't like them why did, they eat them? **Because mothers always sacrifice for their children, saving the best for them.** A mother's love drives them to do amazing things, even eating a bony chicken neck and feigning enjoyment from it! That is love and today we honor all mothers with this day of celebration. Let's give all the mom's a round of applause.

Love motivates us to do a lot of things we might not normally do, like eat chicken necks. Every week we take up an offering and it is love that drives us to give away what we hold precious, our money. In a time where we are all worried about finances, YOUR CHURCH NAME has stepped up generously in giving your tithes and offerings. You have given sacrificially for the good of others. As a result of your generosity, we have been able to not only stay open but to continue ministering to our community in Jesus' name. Thank you for your sacrifices! Your gifts allow us to do all we do here in impacting the lives of others.

Remember, we have multiple ways by which you can give. So, this morning, as we honor and celebrate the sacrificial love of mothers, let's give in that same spirit of mothers!

Bonus Section

Have you sent out your quarterly giving statement yet? Recently, Pastor Brad Graves of FBC Ada OK asked me to write a letter for him. Below is what I wrote. You could easily edit this for an appeal letter for anything. By the way, send me your letters and I will weigh in.

Dear _____,

For such a time as this. Those words were spoken to Queen Ester by her uncle Mordecai when Jewish lives were in peril. Mordecai wanted Queen Ester to intercede on their behalf to the king. Ester was fearful of the king's wrath. Mordecai sent back this word, "Who knows but that you have come to your royal position *for such a time as this?*" In this pandemic, I believe God has called the 1st Ada family to minister in the name of Jesus, *for such a time as this!*

When we coined the phrase "For Ada," COVID-19 was certainly not in our minds. Yet, the generosity and can-do spirit of our 1st Church family have allowed us to provide hope to a world desperately looking for an answer. From shopping for Seniors to providing blessing baskets to praying for people, FBC Ada has been "For Ada!"

We could not be doing what we are doing without you, our faithful and generous members. Enclosed, you will find your quarterly giving statement. I wanted to insert this note to say thank you for your continued generosity. We have cut our budget and our spending, but we dare not cut back on our mission, *helping people find and follow Jesus.*"

We depend upon the generosity of people like you. Collectively, all our gifts together allow us to continue our mission, here and worldwide. Every time you give here, you are making a difference.

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

Your faithfulness allows us to continue to provide the help and support our community needs. For such a time as this, we *must* offer hope and help to our community. Thanks again for your generosity.

Blessings,

Pastor Brad

P.S. Please check out the various ways by which you can give to 1st Ada. We make it simple and easy. Go to our website at <https://fbcada.org/giveonline> and follow the simple steps to give.
