



The Stewardship Coach Volume 7 / Issue 27



Rethink EVERYTHING!! I wrote that on a legal pad that I use for collecting my thoughts in early March. Doesn't that sum up all our lives these last few months? We are in a continuing process of rethinking everything we do.

Smart leaders think forward. That was another thing that I wrote. How do we do that? By rethinking *everything*. This edition of *The Stewardship Coach* is entitled **Rethink EVERYTHING**. We have all been doing that as we now realize that there is no going back to February. Not yet at least.

My friend, Dennis Moses, in early March coined the term, **The Great Reveal**. Dennis, with a banking background, meant that the pandemic showed how financially fragile most churches were. I agree with him, but I would also say that COVID-19 revealed many areas of needed change, forcing us within days to *rethink everything!* While you were rethinking how to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, racial reconciliation caused you to once again, *rethink everything!*

The call of God upon my life is to help churches be fully funded. So, I think about stewardship issues. I am always asking, how will this impact giving? For the last few years, I have been rethinking everything. Here are a few of my *rethink everything* thoughts:

The failure to rethink all things stewardship related will cause thousands of churches to unwillingly close their doors by 2050.

We need to get back to the biblical word stewardship rather than the trendy word generosity. Why? You will never lead people to be generous unless you teach the biblical concept of stewardship. Changing language doesn't change people's actions. Generosity became the popular buzz word a few years back yet giving still is in decline. True generosity comes *when* a person lives out a life of stewardship.

We must reject materialism and point our people to the higher calling of being a good steward of whatever gifts God has entrusted to us.

Madonna summed up societies view of materialism best in her 1985 hit "Material Girl." Most remember the chorus, "You know that we are living in a material world And I am a material girl." What most forget is that the rest of the song is Madonna singing about how she only wants to go with men who can meet her material needs. Read the first verse of her song:

"Some boys kiss me. Some boys hug me. I think they're okay. If they don't give me proper credit I just walk away. They can beg, and they can plead. But they can't see the light, that's right, that's right. 'Cause the boy with the cold hard cash is always Mister Right."

That song might be from the last century, but it still sums up the view and thinking of the majority of people living today and the unstated opinion of many of your church goers.

Preaching a simpler lifestyle will be unpopular. Yet, where did Jesus teach that having two cars, multiple phones, devices, TV's, computers, shoes, boats, etc. was the path to joy and fulfillment? He didn't, so let's teach our members to be good stewards.

Start a concentrated effort of discipling the next generations of faithful Christian stewards.

There has been a lot of talk about focusing more on engagement than attendance. I don't disagree but I feel that misses the problem. Our problem has been that we have been crowd-focused instead of discipleship-focused. The path to financial security for your church lies in making disciples.

For more on this, read my post at <https://acts17generosity.com/2020/05/05/where-do-we-go-from-here-the-way-forward-is-back/>.

Get your members out of debt! “I can’t afford to give.” Ever hear that one? For the vast majority of your members, the reason why they cannot give at the levels they should is because of their lifestyle. That lifestyle is driving many of your members into a debilitating debt. To compound the issue, COVID-19 has increased that debt load. Consider these facts from a study quoted by Consumer Affairs:

- 56 percent of parents with school-aged children have increased their personal debt.
- 4 in 10 respondents have had to increase credit card balances.
- 15 percent took out personal loans to meet virus-related expenses.
- Nearly 20 percent of single parents said they couldn’t pay their credit card bill last month.

You must provide a debt cancellation class such as Financial Peace to help your members live the kind of life that gives them financial freedom so that they can afford to be faithful stewards.

Build a Digital Giving Strategy for the present. Whether we like it or not, we may never see the return to normal in terms of how we collect donations. Now more than ever you must view your offering time as a 24/7 event. To do that you must adapt an overall Digital Giving Strategy. I mentioned this last week but again here is what I have written for Gyve on this topic, <https://gyve.com/gyve-generosity-articles/>.

Establish a Legacy Team approach for funding the future. Discipleship ensures funding for the present but what about the inevitable over and above needs of your church? Sooner or later you will have to repair, replace, renovate, or build. Our studies show that the top 15% of donors give as much as 90% of all over and above giving. These are the donors you need to invest your time and energy with if you want to remain financially secure into the future. You will see more from me on this in the future.

The Seacoast Story – I have the privilege of meeting from time to time with Jason Surratt who serves as Legacy Pastor at Seacoast Community Church. Few in the church world know Jason like they do his dad, Greg, and his younger brother, Josh. Yet in my mind Jason is a Rock Star. Why?

A few years back, Jason revamped giving at Seacoast and around 75% of all giving comes in some type of digital format. Around the same time, he led Seacoast to start Financial Peace across all their campuses. Millions of debt dollars were wiped out, giving countless people financial freedom. Finally, a year ago, Jason led Seacoast to form their Legacy team, a group of lay people desiring to use their privilege to bless others.

Fast forward to 2020. When other churches were struggling financially, Seacoast has stayed strong. One key reason is Jason’s forward thinking. In April, I felt led to text Jason telling him, “At a time when many churches are struggling you are weathering this storm.” I then listed out all of the above steps he had taken that led them to the secure place they were in. I also pointed out that getting members out of debt probably saved countless small businesses. I said to him, “Your hard work and visionary leadership helped build a base for success. That’s what we Nehemiah’s do. Well done!”

Who is your Nehemiah?



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Join me for another group teaching time Monday, June 29 at 11 AM EST. Here is the correct link
<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/246587880220610318>

Here is the Consumer Affairs link about debt, <https://www.consumeraffairs.com/news/young-families-face-significant-financial-pressure-from-covid-19-052020.html>

Missions and Ministry Moment

(aka offering talk)

#7 of The 16 Offerings of Summer! Let's make every one count. Here is mine.

Celebrating Freedom of Religion

Yesterday we celebrated the birth of our nation, on the 4th of July. I am sure the signers of the Declaration of Independence would be amazed at America today. We are certainly not perfect, as our headlines tell us every day. Yet we have got one thing right, at least for now, the freedom to worship as we see fit without any government authority telling us what to believe or how to worship.

Few realize this, but studies show that Christians are more persecuted than any other faith group in the world. Today, our brothers and sisters in Christ in places like the Middle East, China, Pakistan, and North Korea feared for their lives as they gathered to worship, whether in person or online. None of us who gathered here today or watching at home even thought about that. Why? We live in America, the land of the free.

That is something to be thankful for! As we approach our time of offering, I thought of Psalm 107:21-22 that says, "Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! And *let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving*, and declare His works with rejoicing." Let's do that this morning with our offering. Let's give as an act of thanksgiving, celebrating our freedom of religion.

Remember, every gift you give today helps us continue our life-changing work! We have multiple ways by which you can give. Chose the best platform now as you celebrate your Freedom of Religion!



Bonus Section

In Volume 7 Issue 20 in this section I introduced you to *Analog Church: Why We Need Real People, Places, and Things in the Digital Age*, by Jay Y. Kim. I consider this one of the most thought-provoking books I have read this year. I reached out to Jay with some question and what follows is that interview.

Mark: Jay, can you give us a quick take on your book *Analog Church*?

Jay: Sure thing. *Analog Church* explores the intersection between our ecclesiology and the digital age; specifically with a thoughtful and critical eye on how our use of digital technologies may be influencing and shaping our discipleship to Jesus and how we understand what it means to be the church.

Mark: What was your motivation that led you to write *Analog Church*?

Jay: I've lived most of my life in the Silicon Valley, the epicenter of digital technology. I'm surrounded by people who spend most of their waking lives crafting and creating the digital tools that have become such prevalent and pervasive parts of our everyday lives. And for the past 16 years, I've served full-time in local church ministry contexts. About six years ago, I began to wonder about the intersection between the two, as I saw more and more churches dive headlong into all things digital.

Mark: I am paying attention now to when something was written, pre- or post-COVID. COVID-19 took off right as your book was coming out. Has COVID-19 changed any of your views you wrote before the virus?

Jay: COVID-19 has actually affirmed the ideas I share in the book. If anything, this strange time of sheltering in place and forced isolation has accentuated our great need for embodied presence. Almost everyone I talk to expresses the same sadness and longing—that all of the digital online mediums at our disposal are helpful but ultimately unsatisfactory. Several months into sheltering-in-place now, as digital fatigue sets in, I think what we miss most is the ability to be near one another as we worship and commune. Hearing voices sing together, listening, learning, leaning in together as we hear the Word preached, the shuffling of feet and the extending of hands as we take the bread and the cup together. We miss the chit chat and conversation in the lobby or courtyard, before and after, all the stuff of human experience that digital connections try but fail to replicate. Technology is doing a fine job keeping us pseudo-connected in this time, but its shortcomings are also becoming abundantly clear.

Mark: Pastors are literally worn out right now from redesigning their structures to now addressing racial reconciliation. How do you see *Analog Church* as potentially helping them through these issues?

Jay: We're certainly living through difficult times. For pastors and church leaders, our cultural moment is especially challenging because of the convergence of circumstances - both Covid-19 and the unrest over racial injustice and desire for reconciliation. If nothing else, I do hope that the book can give pastors and church leaders hope in the long view, that what's quickest/fastest/most-convenient isn't always (and isn't *usually*) what's best. "Slow and steady" has become grossly underrated in the digital age. But in times like these, slow and steady is exactly what we need. I hope some things in the book can point leaders in that direction.

Mark: Finally, you talk about the need for discipleship. Given what we are experiencing now, what role does discipleship play in addressing the issues of today?

Jay: Discipleship is everything. To learn the way of Jesus, to live as a student or apprentice of Jesus—this is what the Christian life comes down to. When it comes to addressing the issues of today, or any day for that matter, both the starting and ending points. As Dallas Willard reminded us, "The greatest issue facing the world today, with all its heartbreaking needs, is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as 'Christians' will become disciples—students, apprentices, practitioners—of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence."
