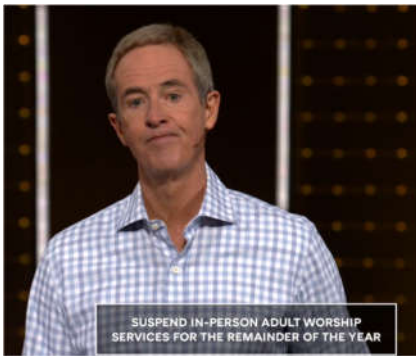




The Stewardship Coach Volume 7 / Issue 30



“We have decided to suspend in-person adult worship services for the remainder of the year.” The second I heard Andy Stanley make this announcement, I knew the dominos would start to fall, and other churches would follow suit. A few days later, Brian Tome of Crossroads Church in Cincinnati, another super megachurch, announced the same thing. And so, it begins.

By the time you read this, the momentum will be gaining steam to cancel in-person services for the rest of 2020.

I am entitling this edition of the Coach ***The Lost Worship of 2020***. Yes, I know worship hasn’t stopped, churches are not closed, etc. etc. Yet...it ain’t the same, and the impact will be long-lasting. I am going to give you my opinion of what I see and how I think this will impact my area of expertise for churches, stewardship. I want to do this, knowing that some will disagree with me.

I also want to say that I am not throwing stones or making judgments. None of us like what is happening, and everyone is trying to do what is best for their church. The look on Andy’s face in the picture above, I think, sums up how he feels about making that announcement. All of us in church leadership know what it is like to have to make tough decisions. The Andy Stanley’s of the world face hurdles bigger than the pastor running a hundred in worship. One is not better nor more important than the other; we simply face different circumstances.

Having said all of that, here are my thoughts for whatever they are worth.

The future of megachurches was questionable before COVID-19 and, now more than ever, that future is up in the air. What? Yep. Some of you, megachurch staff reading this, probably want to delete this immediately. Please hear me out.

I began reading about the push back of younger generations from megachurches long before we ever heard of COVID-19. The one thing that I felt was going to save megachurches was the multi-site strategy many of them implemented. Their attempt to grow larger came through being smaller.

For instance, I go to one of the top 10 largest churches in America. Yet, I attend a campus whose worship services numbers in the few hundreds. I get great preaching, but I also get to personally know my campus pastor. In fact, he called our house last night to see how we were doing. When I attended North Point, Andy never called me, and in fact, I have never met the man who for years was my pastor.

Honestly, super-megachurches serve as mini-denominations or, for those of you like me who come from SBC roots, Associations. Southern Baptists are perhaps the most organized denomination in the world, and while each church is autonomous, they collectively pool their resources together, beginning on the local level. Typically, an Association is made up of all the SBC churches in a country or region.

If the megachurch movement survives into the future, I believe it will be based around multiple campuses spread throughout the region of the “mother” site. To get larger, we will have to think smaller.

We have entered an era where we have re-defined Hebrews 10:25. Now we focus on engagement instead of attendance. Those that have embraced live streaming and keeping the sanctuary closed will say that they are still “meeting together.” But, honestly, as I said before, it ain’t the same!

We have deluded ourselves into thinking this New Normal is allowing us to impact more people. Recent studies are blowing this idea apart, but like all negative news, few are paying attention to the reality that we have little to no clue how great of impact live streaming is accomplishing. Video fatigue is setting in. The uniqueness of live streaming is wearing thin.

COVID-19 has created a deep division in the Church that will not soon go away. Meet or not? Masks or not? Social media is awash with pastors and Christians attacking each other over these disagreements. If you want a classic example, listen to Pastor Greg Locke’s rant, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2791082731113230>. You might disagree with him, but I can assure you many share this sentiment.

I have been dismayed at how Evangelical leaders worked to stifle any debate or views that ran counter to the “acceptable” narrative. *Christianity Today* attacked those that argued for an alternative view. Remember, CT spoke out against the use of hydroxychloroquine and belittled any Christian who advocated it’s use as supporting “fake news.” New data and studies are showing how, when used early and correctly, hydroxychloroquine does indeed work. Sadly, incidents like this have taught us little, and the divisions continue as Christians face off against one another, often spurred on by our “leaders.”

This is a dark post, Coach! Maybe. It’s my opinion, my views on what I am seeing, hearing, and reading. We are in uncharted territory, and none of us knows how this will all play out. What the Church of the future will look like no one knows. Here is what I am convinced of and what I know:

The Church is the Bride of Christ, and He will not let His bride fail until He comes back to gather us to Heaven! Here is what else I know ...

The local church, beginning with your church, is the hope of this nation and of the world. My calling is to help support local churches to be fully funded to do all that God is calling them to do. You might not agree with me on all things, but if you are committed to the cause of Christ, then I can help coach you toward financial stability. Let’s get started!



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach
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I am taking a break this Monday, so we will not have our group teaching time. See you next week.

Missions and Ministry Moment

(aka offering talk)

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

Are You Tired of the Offering?

If you were to go door to door across your neighborhood and ask people the one thing they don't like about church, do you know what most would say? That all we ever talk about is money. Well, here we go again, it's time for the offering!

Some churches have decided to eliminate the offering time during their services. They might mention how you can give, but that is about all. Some churches don't mention giving at all. Others who do take up an offering will go out of their way to explain that the offering is a time for members; guests need not participate. They do that in an effort not to offend the guest. They know most people are tired of any talk about money in church, and that includes the offering.

We take a different approach here. We take up an offering every week. We do this because the Scripture commands Christians to give as an act of worship. To NOT take up the offering would be to short-change you an opportunity to participate in an essential part of worship, the offering. The offering is our time to show thankfulness and gratitude to God by giving back a portion of what He has given us.

The other reason we never get tired of taking up the offering is that every gift given helps us do all the amazing things our ministries and mission endeavors accomplish. Your generosity spans the globe, allowing the advancement of the Gospel. Thus, giving is our opportunity to do good through the blessings we have received from God.

I close with this rendering of Galatians 6:9 from the Living Bible that says, "And let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't get discouraged and give up." We still have work to do, and your tireless serving AND giving will assure a harvest of blessing for you and our church!

Bonus Section

The Stewardship Coach Platform is live! I have a plan and level for everyone. Here is an overview:

Silver Level Membership: The Stewardship Coach Newsletter – \$99 a year! This is a great tool for church leaders that want to stay abreast of the latest generosity news, information, and best-case strategies. I will also sell the newsletter for \$9.99 a month. You're better off being a Silver member.

Gold Level Membership – \$365 a year! Designed for the church leader who wants to begin implementing a yearly approach to generosity. The goal of this level is to help your church establish a Digital Giving Strategy, giving you financial stability for the present and future!

Gold members receive:

- **The Stewardship Coach Newsletter** sent to them weekly with key thoughts, offering talks, interviews, samples and more, PLUS,
- All my seasonal manuals like *The Successful Easter Giving Plan*, *The Fully Funded Summer*, *The Maximized Annual Campaign*, *How to Increase End of Year Giving*, and more that each sell for \$9.95!
- A review of your giving trends using our Generosity Assessment tool.
- A scheduled conference call with The Stewardship Coach giving you a personalized generosity assessment.
- Unlimited email access for answering all your generosity questions and reviewing any direct giving appeals you write. Your story, plus the Coach's expertise, will make your appeals more effective and in turn raise you more dollars for missions and ministry!

Platinum Level: This level is designed for the church leader that needs a more hands on approach. From start to finish, the "Coach" helps establish a plan of action leading to financial stability using our **Directed Coaching Model**. This level is perfect for the church that is planning a capital campaign 12 to 24 months out. In addition to the above benefits you also get:

- Twice a year **Generosity Assessment** with our deep dive financial analysis of giving trends.
- **Group Coaching** every week, focusing on key topics of generosity with a Q&A time personally with the Coach.
- **Personal Coaching** through email and monthly teleconferencing.
- **Quarterly personalized teaching time** allowing me to "coach" up your staff or Financial Team on how to increase giving at your church.
- **Deep discounts** on capital campaigns!

Diamond Level Membership: With a Diamond level membership, you essentially are **hiring The Stewardship Coach as your own personal Minister of Generosity!** Diamond members get all the materials and resources I provide for the other levels of membership and so much more!

Pricing on the Diamond level is determined by the size of the church.
