



The Stewardship Coach Volume 7 / Issue 6



32%. That is the number of Americans in a study a few years ago that said they had heard a sermon on the relationship between faith and personal finances in the previous year. Apart from the weekly offering, where I *hope* you stress giving, how long has it been since you last preached on money and finances? If you need to think, then it has probably been too long.

Is it any wonder giving is in decline?

Two weeks ago, I began laying out for you what I call the Two Tracks of Generosity you need to run to assure your financial future. One part of that track is the Leadership Track. The other is the Discipleship Track. Here is what I wrote last week about the Discipleship Track:

“First, start with the easiest thing a pastor can do, preach a series on stewardship. Notice I said series. Barna has shown that one-off sermons on giving are not as effective as a series on giving. Next, this will be tough for some to swallow, but I have an opinion about the frequency of which you should preach a stewardship series. My preference is every year!”

Every year? Yes! How often do you preach a series aimed at getting your members more involved in small groups or in ministry? In the last twenty years, I have attended two of the largest churches in America, Northpoint Community in Atlanta and Seacoast Community in Charleston. *Every year* that I can remember, each of those churches ran series with targeted messages



encouraging deeper participation in the church. If we do it yearly to boost volunteerism and small group attendance, why can't we do the same for generosity?

I think the answer is that we are afraid we will lose attendance. We think a series on giving would be unpopular, so we ignore the topic altogether. Until we run into trouble. Then even guys like Andy Stanley get up and preach a series on giving. I know. I was a member when, out of almost desperation, Andy gets up and preaches on giving. If you wait until you're in a financial crisis to preach on generosity, you have waited too late! In reality, you are only putting a bandage on the wound.

It's not *that* we talk about money that turns people away but *how* we talk about it. If Americans didn't like talking about generosity, we would not have just given over \$4 billion dollars to various charitable causes, including religion. It is time to admit that non-profits do a better job of talking about generosity than the Church. We need to change the conversation.

Establishing a culture of generosity starts at the pulpit. Today, start planning out your preaching series on stewardship! **See my bonus section for more about this!**



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach
mark@acts17generosity.com

Monday Mornings With Mark, will be held today at 11 AM EST. This is the correct registration link for Feb. 3rd
<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/7081778876232214541>

This Week's Offering Talk

Don't look now, but Valentine's Day is just around the corner. In keeping with that holiday, here is this week's offering talk.

How Long Does a Valentine Last?

How many of you still have your Valentine's Day cards from last year? A few. Those that you do keep are typically from your child, grandchild, or that special person in your life. Yet most of us, after a few days or in some cases a few minutes, throw our Valentine's Day cards away.

According to the National Retail Federation, Americans plan to spend an average \$196.31 on Valentine's Day, up 21 percent over last year's previous record of \$161.96. Spending is expected to total \$27.4 billion, up 32 percent from last year's record \$20.7 billion.

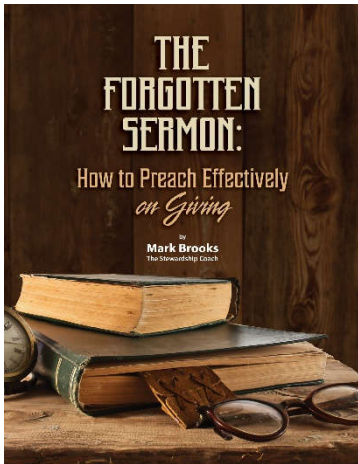
The same study reveals that \$1.3 billion of all we spend will be on cards. It is estimated that nearly 150 million cards will be exchanged for Valentine's Day just in the U.S. alone.

Did you know that God created a Valentine's Day card for us? He nailed it to a tree. John 3:16 sums up what I think is the eternal message of love when Jesus said, "For God so loved the world..." That is the Valentine message we here are committed to share. It's a "card" that lasts for eternity!

Give all the cards you can. Add some candy to that mix. Have fun and celebrate the day and those you love! At the end of the day, however, don't forget how desperately our world needs to hear about the love God has for us. Every time you give here, you help us spread the love of Christ. Long after that cherished card deteriorates, the love of Christ remains! So, let's give generously.

Remember, we have multiple ways to give here. Cash, check, text, or online, every dollar goes to help advance the Kingdom; sharing the eternal Valentine, Jesus, with a lost and dying world!

Bonus Section



I got your back! A couple of years ago, I wrote a manual entitled ***The Forgotten Sermon: How to Preach Effectively on Giving***. It is filled with sermons on giving. I have sermon series listed for regular giving messages as well as series for capital campaign and annual campaigns. Using this tool, you can easily start your sermon planning for 2020. Right now, this tool is off the market but free to those of you who get this newsletter. Send me an email request, and I will send you a copy. Email me at mark@acts17generosity.com

The Floodgates of Heaven tithing series - Last year, a key national leader reached out to me for my thoughts about writing a tithing series. I did what I always do in cases like this; I started thinking and writing. I reached out to several pastors who I respect as great preachers and tithing advocates. While the initial request has not materialized, I am still working on that project. My working title, for now, is ***The Floodgates of Heaven***. Below is an excerpt from the initial proposal I sent out:

Why should we be concerned about the state of giving in _____.

The Problem: At the current rate of decline, giving to the church will be 50% less in 30 years. At that point, many of today's churches and Christian ministries will go under. The time to avert this crisis is now. Should Jesus tarry, we must work *now* to assure the financial independence of your local churches and your denominational entities. It is time to open the Floodgates of Heaven.

The Goal: Raise up the next generation of generous disciples that will impact the world for Christ. (That is the general goal. We need more objectives, like percentage of increase per church, etc.) To do this, we need to change the conversation about stewardship and tithing. **The church that survives into the future is the church that plans today for tomorrow!**

The Platform or Tool to Accomplish This: A 4- to 6-week study on generosity/stewardship that combines all our best elements of discipleship, solid biblical preaching on the topic, and Sunday School/Small Group curriculum. I think we need to consider ending this in a Prove the Tithe Day or 90-Day Challenge type of commitment on the final Sunday. What if week five was promoted as First Fruit offering day?

That was my idea, and I began reaching out to other pastors of like mind for their ideas. I would love to know your thoughts and have your input. My goal is to produce great sermon material, as well as quality small group/Sunday School material in support of the sermon series.

If you are interested, email me at mark@acts17generosity.com
