



The Maximized Annual Campaign

*A Plan of Action to Make
Your Annual Campaign a Success*

by
Mark Brooks
The Stewardship Coach

The Maximized Annual Campaign

A Plan of Action to Make Your Annual Campaign a Success

Mark Brooks

The Stewardship Coach

@StewardshipMan

<https://acts17generosity.com>

Table of Contents

Introduction

Why Most Annual Campaigns Fail

Building the Base for A Successful Campaign

 The Value of Evaluation

 The Power of Vision

 The Importance of Segmentation

 The Power of Prayer

 It's the 21st Century Your Campaign Should Look Like the 21st
 Century

Putting the Plan in Action

 A Two Step Premise to Success

 Leadership Summit

 Congregational Challenge

 Sample Sermon Series

 Sample Letters

 Sample Prayer Emphases

 Sample Commitment Card

Introduction

I get a lot of emails from various groups trying to get me to buy their product. Most I never even open. Frankly they all want my money and make ridiculous promises. Whether it is because of what I do or I am simply lucky I get emails about investments. Nearly all of them promise to help me maximize my money. Well who would not want to maximize their investments or make more money? I seldom if ever open any of those emails. The few that I do open have catchy subject lines. Words like, empower, improve, sustain or maximize abound. The subject line are designed to captivate our attention and at least look at what they were promoting.

These emails started me thinking about my own area of expertise - stewardship. What steps could a church or Christian ministry take that would empower, improve, sustain or better yet maximize their giving? At a time when the economy seemingly has every church worried, how could I help them increase giving? So, using the email subject lines that caught my attention, I began to write about maximizing your giving

Around this time my wife and I were attending a very traditional church that held an annual campaign with the goal to maximize giving. You have to understand that this church does nearly everything with excellence, except the annual campaign. In my opinion it is routine, dull and not as effective as it could be. One day I was complaining to a church friend about the annual campaign when it dawned on me that instead of complaining I should do something about it. So I did. I wrote this manual to not only help this church and churches around the country.

This manual is devoted to pastors and other Christian leaders that are faced with having to raise funds year end and year out. Very few pastors were ever trained in the area of stewardship. Our seminaries and colleges do a woefully inadequate job in this area. Most of what pastors know about stewardship they have learned on their own by either attending conferences or reading books like this. My hope is that this book can help bridge the gap left by our institutions of higher learning.

For those laypersons that are reading this manual desperately looking for help, you too have little to no training in stewardship. Yet here you find yourself on the Stewardship Committee of your church wondering what to do. Most lay people have only their past experience as a reference of how to do an annual campaign. So often churches simply do what they do because they have always done it that way before. The reality is that times have changed and what once worked in 1975 no longer works today.

This manual then is devoted to everyone that has the task of running their churches annual campaign and who are looking for a better more effective way of holding the campaign. In the pages that follow I am going to use my expertise in the area of stewardship to help you Maximize your annual campaign!

Why Most Annual Campaigns Fail To Maximize Giving

I work with many churches that hold annual campaigns for the operating budget of the church. It is my observation that most of these churches fail miserably to attain the level of their true potential. Yet year in and year out these churches try the same thing time and again. While annual campaigns might have once been successful now they seem to have lost their steam. Still annual campaigns can have value in helping you achieve your budget needs. Done properly annual campaigns can add value to your church. Here are some of the key values that I find annual campaigns have.

The Value of Annual Campaigns

1. **It allows you to cast the vision of your church.** Done properly this is a great time to focus in on what your church is doing and how donors gifts can make a difference. People give to vision so give them a visionary message towards committing to your annual budget.
2. **It unites all generations around the vision of the church.** The typical church has multiple segments and generations under one roof. Annual campaigns can bring all those segments together to support the common cause.
3. **It gives you an opportunity to teach stewardship.** Campaigns should be learning experiences not only about what the church does but about how we are to be stewards of what God has given us.
4. **It can if done properly increase your budget giving.** Annual campaigns should help you not only keep your current donor base but expand it. The key is doing it correctly.
5. **It can give you a good idea of what income to expect as you plan your yearly budget.** This is perhaps the major reason most churches will give as to why they hold annual campaigns.

While the positive benefits are many I find that most churches miss out on much of the above benefits. Here are some common mistakes that churches commit when holding an annual campaign.

Mistakes Churches Make in Annual Campaigns

1. **They too often give little thought and effort to the campaign.** I think one reason why is that they simply do what they have always done. If you do what you have always done you will NOT get what you have always gotten. Times have changed and your program needs to change with it.
2. **They treat it as a necessary evil and not an exciting opportunity.** Frankly most annual campaigns that I have seen, the staff and key leaders apologize for the process. It is like making the congregation take castor oil. If you the pastor dread the annual campaign how do you think your donors will react to it?
3. **They make it dull and boring.** Giving should be exciting. Focus on what the gift will do not simply upon making a gift for the sake of giving.
4. **They too often focus on guilt rather presenting giving in a positive light.** In the long run guilt does not motivate me to change my life or give more.

While the positive benefits are many I find that most churches miss out on much of the above benefits. Here are some common mistakes that churches commit when holding an annual campaign.

Mistakes Churches Make in Annual Campaigns

1. **They too often give little thought and effort to the campaign.** I think one reason why is that they simply do what they have always done. If you do what you have always done you will NOT get what you have always gotten. Times have changed and your program needs to change with it.
2. **They treat it as a necessary evil and not an exciting opportunity.** Frankly most annual campaigns that I have seen, the staff and key leaders apologize for the process. It is like making the congregation take castor oil. If you the pastor dread the annual campaign how do you think your donors will react to it?
3. **They make it dull and boring.** Giving should be exciting. Focus on what the gift will do not simply upon making a gift for the sake of giving.
4. **They too often focus on guilt rather presenting giving in a positive light.** In the long run guilt does not motivate me to change my life or give more.
5. **They never seem to review what worked and what did not work.** We have always done it this way before seems to be the motto of many churches.
6. **For many churches it has become a program not a spiritual exercise.** Giving is one of the most spiritual things we can do. Why not make your annual campaign revolve around spiritual principles?
7. **Most churches do little to prepare their members before asking them to make a pledge.** It takes donors time to consider what their gift or pledge will be. If you get up one Sunday in the fall and preach one sermon on giving and then ask attendees to fill out their commitment card, don't be surprised if the results are not what you want. Our plan takes more time than many annual campaigns. However, the preparation ahead of time will mean greater success in commitments and dollars raised.

With the help of this manual our goal is to help you avoid these common mistakes so that you can Maximize your annual campaign. So, let's get started!

Building the Base for a Successful Campaign

Many years ago I served on a national publishing agency that was building a new office tower. Everything seemed to be going well until the elevator shaft rose far into the air. It was discovered that the shaft was leaning. There was debate over whether it was leaning to the right or to the left but it was leaning. What was wrong? The problem was discovered at the base. A few inches off center at the base went unnoticed until the structure reached far into the sky. The only way to fix the problem was to start all over at the base. A structure is only as good as its base. The same is true for an effective annual campaign plan.

Most plans come unglued at the beginning. However like the elevator shaft in the story above it sometimes goes unnoticed. Before we get into a specific plan it is important that you establish the right base.

The Value of Evaluation

The seven deadliest words of the church are, “We’ve never done it that way before!” Churches have a tendency to do the same thing over and over, again and again. I often hear churches complain that their annual campaign is not as successful as it once was. One reason why may be that they are still doing it the way they did it in 1974. Times have changed and so have we. Your church is vastly different today than it was in 1974 or even last year. For many churches they simply institute a program and keep doing the same thing they have always done. I believe that if you do the same thing you will NOT always get the same results. You may have found that your results are suffering. It may be time to do some honest evaluation.

Your first step should be to review and evaluate your past campaigns. Take the time to think through what worked and what did not work. What can you do to make the campaign better? Here are some probing questions to get you in the right frame of mind.

How effective has your campaign been in the past?

What percentage of your final budget is pledged?

What percentage of the pledge total actually comes in?

What percent of budgeted receipts comes from those that did not pledge?

Has the percentages stayed the same or changed in the last five years? If so, what do you attribute that to?

Do you know how many true giving units you have as opposed to those that only give at Christmas or Easter?

Are your giving units increasing or declining? If so, what do you attribute that to?

Is there a difference in how the various age segments of your church pledge or fail to pledge?

Is there any effort to follow up on pledges throughout the year? If so what and could it be improved?

Does anyone really enjoy the process you have been using?

How can you make the process less painful and more effective?

A Working Assignment: At your next Finance Team Meeting Take Time to Evaluate

Use the above questions and others to think through how to make your next campaign a better success than the last campaign.

Consider Utilizing Acts 17 Generosity's Generosity Assessment

We will analyze past giving to your church to determine your strengths and weaknesses. This anonymous review will enable us through our years of experience to give you a good idea of what could be capable in a capital stewardship campaign as well as give advice on how to increase your offerings.

Objectives:

- Document the last two full years of giving.
- Analyze any capital campaigns results.
- Compare strengths, weaknesses and trends.
- Analyze each giving segment for growth and capacity for the future giving or capital stewardship campaigns.

Outcomes:

- Documented reports will be given to your church showing our analysis of giving.
- Your church will have a clearer picture of the trends in giving to their budget.
- Your church will have a better read of what their pledge capacity might be for the upcoming campaign.
- Your church will have a better understanding of the various giving segments of the church and how each can impact any upcoming campaign.

For more information contact Tom Holloway Acts 17's Director Giving Analysis at Tom@Acts17generosity.com

What Motivates People To Give?

It is important that you realize what motivates people to give. Studies have shown that there are three primary drivers of why people give. They are:

- 1. Belief in an institutions vision.**
- 2. High regard for staff leadership.**
- 3. Fiscal responsibility of the institution.**

Violate any of these three principles and it doesn't matter how good your annual campaign program is, you are doomed to failure. For your work on the annual campaign there might not be anything at present you can do to increase confidence in points two and three. However you can and should build your annual campaign around a vision that will unite all segments of your church.

The Power of Vision

When it comes to giving everything rises and falls on vision. It is the number one reason why people give to any ministry or church. Show me your vision and I can tell you whether or not you will be successful in raising funds. Too often when giving is down we want to blame the economy or other issues when the truth is our vision is not motivating people to give. When you have a powerful vision you can be assured that strong giving will follow.

Bill Hybels correctly nailed it a few years back when he said, "Vision leaks!" He meant that people tended to forget the vision that was cast just months ago. In the day to day struggle of life other issues would crowd out that vision statement and they would often be clueless as to what their church was about.

As a pastor once a year I would preach a sermon about the vision God had given me for my church. I typically did that the first Sunday of January. I called it my state of the church message. I would lay out what was ahead for us in the next year casting a vision that I thought was compelling and most of all God sent. I would wonder in May why the church did not understand what we were to be about. My vision casting sermon had probable leaked out the second they got to the cafeteria for Sunday dinner.

Vision casting cannot be one Sunday a year or even the Sunday of launching a campaign or stewardship initiative. Since vision leaks we must repeatedly remind our members where we believe God has us going and how they can get on board. As a pastor once told me, "You have to tell a church member seven times, seven different ways, before he or she gets it." The "it" in this case is the vision that is the driver for why I stay at church as more than just another warm body in a seat. Vision as we have stated when it comes to stewardship is the main driver of why people give. Vision is what keeps me giving even when the economy is down. So, if your vision

pot is leaking you can be assured that the offering plate will have holes in it as well. You cannot motivate your members to pledge to the annual budget if they are not inspired by your vision.

Never will vision be more important than in stressful economic times. Several years ago I coined this truth:

Good Vision Trumps Bad Economy!

When I was younger we played the card game of Spades. I was never particularly good at Spades which might be why I no longer play. I never seemed to get the hang of it in terms of strategy or just the sheer luck of the draw of a winning hand. One thing I do remember vividly about Spades is that you always wanted to have spades in your hand. You could be playing the ace of hearts and think you were going to win the hand and someone else could throw in the deuce of spades and beat you. Playing a spade was a trump card that beat all other cards in play. In stewardship vision is the trump card that affects your ability to raise funds.

Developing your Vision

There are scores of books on vision and how to develop one. In fact it has been one of the most written about and talked about subjects in Christian leadership circles for the last decade. You probable have been to those conferences and have those books on your shelf. You like me probable formed a team to study and craft a vision statement. In my opinion we have made vision development overly complicated. Most vision statements that I see are either trying to be too cute or too broad to ever be effective. If we were honest most people in our pews don't know truly what our vision is nor do they really care. I think this is again due to the fact that we have made it overly complicated.

Please understand that I am not trying to minimize the importance of vision. It is crucial. I just think that we have made it too difficult and have muddied the waters not only for ourselves but the people we lead. I think finding your vision is much simpler than we have made it.

What is in your heart?

Two Old Testament figures come to mind of how to establish a vision. First David is a prime example of someone that was driven by a vision that in turned drove Israel to accomplish more than they ever dreamed of. While his son Solomon is known for building the temple it really was David's dream and vision that began the process. As we know God would not let him build it since he was a man of war. However listen to what he tells the leaders of Israel in I Chronicles 28:2, "King David rose to his feet and said: "Listen to me, my brothers and my people. *I had it in my heart to build* a house as a place of rest for the ark..." He then laid out his dream and vision. In chapter 29 he leads the people to give willingly to fund the new temple. The offering that was given in chapter 29 was a result of a vision David had in his heart and communicated in chapter 28.

Nehemiah is another example of someone that God placed a burden in his heart. In chapter one after he hears of the disgrace of the broken walls of Jerusalem he, “mourned and fasted and prayed before God.” In chapter two he is given permission and aide from the King to rebuild the walls. He begins by inspecting the walls. Nehemiah 2:12 says, “I set out during the night with a few men. I had not told anyone what my God *had put in my heart to do* for Jerusalem.” What was in his heart ultimately led to the walls being rebuilt in fifty two days!

What is in your heart? What do you get excited about when you dream about the future of your church or ministry? What keeps you up at night? Those are the things that are the basis for your vision. Start there. Show people what is in your heart not some catchy phrase or acrostic. People respond to vision. Money follows vision!

The Three C’s of Vision

While I am not a huge fan of catchy vision statements I do readily admit that how you communicate your vision is crucial. Down through the years I have counseled on what I call the three C’s of vision. Evaluate your vision on the basis of these three C’s.

Make it Clear

Above all else do your members clearly understand what it is you are attempting to do? Many years ago I happened to be working in a church in the town that my brother lived in. The president of the huge national insurance firm that he worked at happened to be a member of the church where I was working with. My brother one day told the president that his little brother was helping the church the president attended. The president remarked, “Yes I know they are raising funds but I am not sure what it is all about.” When my brother told me that my heart sank as the pastor was counting on the president of this firm to be a substantial donor like he had been at the local state university in town. However this man could not even tell my brother what his church was doing. The vision was not clear. Is your vision clear? Can your members easily tell their work associates, neighbors and friends what you are doing and why? When visions are not clear people will not donate even in the best of economic times.

Keep it Concise

Donors have basically two questions, does this make sense and can you pull it off? Answer those questions and you will get their dollars. Remember the old KISS acrostic? It stands for Keep It Simple Somehow. KISS is good advice for communicating your vision.

Several years ago I worked with a church in the Northwest that had just finished working up their vision statement. On the telephone one day the pastor told me he would fax it to me. When it finally finished coming through my fax machine it was twenty five pages long! I laughed when I saw that every point and sub-point was alliterated. I was not surprised that we had difficulty raising funds around this vision as the people never could quite grasp what it was

about. Your people ought to be able in one to two sentences tell what it is you are about and how you propose to do it. Remember Keep It Simple Somehow!

Cast it Compellingly

The most important thing of all is to make your vision matter in the hearts of your members. You have to realize that they have multiple opportunities of where to spend their money including other ministries that are after their charitable gift. A compelling vision that motivates the heart will even in the worst of economic times cause dollars to come to your ministry. Show your donors how their gift will make a difference and they will rise up to support it financially. Fail to communicate your vision in a compelling and passionate way and you will struggle through this economically challenging time.

Make the Annual Campaign About Vision Not Meeting Your Budget

The number one reason most annual campaigns do not maximize their potential is because the emphasis is not about vision but about making budget. Few of your members are motivated by hitting some arbitrary number. If you truly want to be successful build the annual campaign message around a vision that will inspire. Focus on what the funds you are asking to be given will be used for. People want to know that their gift will make a difference for the Kingdom. Your main task is to effectively communicate the vision of what your church will attempt to accomplish next year.

A Working Assignment: Write Out a Vision Case Statement for Your Annual Campaign

Following the above principles write out three to five major points of why your annual campaign is so important for your church. What major initiatives are you launching this year that the annual campaign will help fund? What is the major focus of your church for the next year?

What are the positive things your church has accomplished that they will continue working on this next year? These questions can begin your thinking about a vision case statement. The vision case statement becomes your talking points to rally the support of the congregation. Tell members why they should commit to the campaign not simply that they must. Give them a compelling reason to give that is greater than simply helping you make budget this year. What does the budget accomplish apart from paying the preacher and the light bill? The more compelling you make your vision case statement the more impactful it will be.

Naming the Stewardship Campaign – You will want to choose a name for the upcoming stewardship campaign. Using your vision case statement as a starting point for your theme will give you a good start on the kind of name you want to attach to the campaign. The name should be simple, concise and yet appealing. Don't try to be too cute or catchy. However you do want the title to be memorable and impactful.

The following is a list of samples you can either use as stated or as a springboard for your own thoughts.

Answering God's Call

Journey of Faith

Faith in Action

Partners with God

Faith for the Future

Proving God Faithful

Foundations for the Future

Forward by Faith

God's Challenge...Our Choice

God's Purpose....Our Vision

Growing Together with God

Giving Joyfully To Increase Our Ministry

Investing In the Future

Investing In Eternity

Putting God First

The Great Adventure

Test the Tithe

Reaching Out in Faith

A Working Assignment: Create a Theme for your annual campaign

Either assign a team to come up with a theme or create a theme on your own. Remember the theme should encompass what you are attempting to raise funds for. Make the theme creative and memorable.

<http://Acts17Coach.com>

The Importance of Segmentation

The typical church is made up of so many various groups that they are at times like churches within a church. For years, we in the stewardship industry have talked about segmentation. We know that the more personalized the message the more effective the result. Take generational differences for instance. Boomers hear a message differently from Millennials. Senior Adults have concerns that their grandchildren do not. Yet all may attend church in the same building even during the same service.

If you think about it you have multiple segments in your church. In fact, a good exercise for your next staff retreat might be to list all the various segments in your church. Generational segments are easy to identify. What about married couples versus singles? Think about the difference between long time members versus new comers. What about those that attend your contemporary service versus those that attend the more traditional? The list could go on and on. My point is to get you to think about the various segments that all reside in your church.

The goal is to rally all segments to support the vision that God has given you. Yet if you attempt to communicate that vision the same way to every group, you might fail to effectively communicate it at all. A failure to properly and effectively communicate your vision will result in a decline or stagnation in giving. If you want to increase the level of commitments to your campaign, one easy way is to segment your communication to the various groups you are attempting to impact. It is the same story it simply needs telling in a multitude of ways.

Does Segmentation Violate Scripture?

What about James 2:1-4 that reads, “My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. ²Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. ³If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," ⁴have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?” What this passage teaches is that those of wealth should not be shown favoritism. You are not to give them the best seats in the house or upfront parking.

You are not to visit them and ignore others in your flock. The reality has become today that if you are a person of wealth we often show you reverse favoritism; we ignore you for fear of showing favoritism.

The point of this passage is that money should not sway how you act toward any one person. Being rich does not mean you get your way. Rich people's vote or opinion does not count more than the widow. We don't bend the plans of our next building to suit the rich donor for fear of losing their donations - that is favoritism.

The issue is one of maturity. The mature pastor knows they will not be affected by the wealth of any person. They rely upon the direction of the Lord and the counsel of godly people. How much a person makes does not factor into the mature pastor's thinking. If you feel it would sway you then there are larger issues at stake!

Another Scripture often quoted is Galatians 3:28 which reads, "For you are all one in Jesus Christ." That is true but that does not mean we are not gifted or wired differently. I have a great voice for congregational singing. However if you are trying to build a church you don't want me on the platform singing. I have never been offended when the Music Minister did not ask me to sing a solo. I simply don't have the skill or the passion for singing up on stage. Trust me; you should be glad for that.

George Barna in How to Increase Giving in Your Church, says, "Effective fund raising churches fail to treat all people as equals.¹" It would be worth your while to purchase this book and read his chapter, "Segmenting the Donor Base."

Refine Your Donor Base

We live in the information age; yet if you were to go into many churches you would never know this. In fact, I think that time travel is possible. Every Sunday you can go in the door of countless churches and be warped back into the 1960's. You might think that only traditional churches are guilty of this but I have found some of the most contemporary churches lack information on their members and donors. What is amazing is people readily give out key information to strange corporations that their church would never think to ask.

If the only information you have on your members is their name address and telephone number, you are behind the curve. Today it is so easy to gain information and use it effectively. For churches there exists a host of companies that have developed software to track this vital information. While we never recommend one against the other we do recommend that you have some system. In this competitive world you will find that it is not that costly to have a vibrant software package to help you keep track of your donor base.

Specifically, I find that churches are behind in gathering data such as email and social networking information on their members. All segments of our society are now hooking up on the internet. My 84 year old mother was on the road traveling recently and told me how much she missed her computer and Facebook friends! Senior Adults are one of the fastest growing segments of internet users. Do you have an up-to-date list of your members' email addresses? If not, it is time to start.

¹ George Barna, How to Increase Giving to Your Church. (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1997) 124.

A few years back I had the privilege of working with a fast growing contemporary church in Florida. At the time they were approaching 2,000 in weekend worship. Their database did not include the email addresses of their members. After talking about the importance of communicating in ways that their upscale attendees worked with it was agreed that we needed to add members' emails. So for two weekends in a row we passed signup sheets down every row of chairs asking for updated information. It was not the smoothest of ways to do it but the job got done. From that point on each time people were signed up email information was requested.

How Much Information Do You Need?

I don't think you can ever have too much information. While I might limit what I ask of those that are guests or non-members, I certainly would ask more of my regular attendees and members. The more involved members are with the church, the greater their likelihood of giving you more pertinent information.

Beyond simply asking about physical addresses and telephone numbers ask more probing questions. Do they have a Twitter account or Facebook account? When is their birthday? What about an anniversary? Think of information that might allow you to connect with them in a more personalized way. Get as much information as you possibly can. As we move through your plan you will find ways to utilize this information in a variety of ways.

We began this chapter by looking at how important a good base was for building. As you attempt to build up your campaign commitments and your offerings, it is imperative that you have a good base as well. Taking the time, and even spending money to increase your informational database will pay off in the long run.

How Segmentation Works for an Annual Campaign

Don't treat everyone the same. The audience you are communicating to hears the message differently on from another. Treating everyone the same will dilute your message and endanger your results. Those that always make a pledge to your annual campaign should be dealt with entirely differently than those that have never made a commitment. There are some that attend your church and while never joining faithfully give. They should be treated differently than members. The more you can identify and segment your donor base the more effective your campaign will be.

A Working Assignment: Segment Your Congregation

At your next Finance Team meeting spend some time listing out and identifying the various segments you have in your church. Think through how each might need to hear a specific message.

Specifically you will want to separate out your leaders from the rest of the congregation. How do you establish who your leaders are? First start with all ministerial staff and support staff.

Then add to the list those that are on key committees, head up ministry at your church, teach a Sunday School class or small group, or have influence of any kind in your church. Finish the list of leaders by making sure that the top 15% of your donors are included.

After you establish this list then segment out a list of all those that have made a commitment in the past year to the annual campaign. Create a list of all those that did not make a commitment but gave something to the ministry of the church. Another list should contain those that are attendees who give but are not members. While segmenting your congregation might take some time it is well worth the effort.

<http://Acts17Coach.com>

The Power of Prayer in Raising Funds

One of the most over looked aspects of raising funds is prayer. In our rush to put programs together and catchy themes we often forget about our greatest resource, prayer. One reason for this oversight might be that we all too often over look the importance of prayer in many of our endeavors in church. We give lip service to prayer but do we actually really pray? Apart from a one minute platform prayer do we really engage in the exercise and discipline of prayer?

We believe that a successful annual campaign is a teachable moment for the church. As you teach members how to respond to God in faith we encourage you to bath the process in prayer. We believe that pray should be an essential part of your planning. To that end you should consider...

Building a climate for prayer - Don't just pray when your back is against the wall make prayer a natural aspect of all you do. Prayer should be the key element of everything you do. Pastor, if you are not praying you will not lead your church to pray!

Don't programize prayer. We have a tendency to make everything into a program. While enlisting a prayer team and organizing around the clock prayer slots might be a great idea it too often can lead to prayer simply being one more church program. True Spirit directed prayer cannot be boxed in by a prayer program.

Don't apologize about prayer. When it comes to the annual campaign and prayer many times churches shy away from an extensive prayer thrust. They fear that members will feel that the call for prayer is really a disguised call for giving. You are not asking them to pray when you really are asking them to give. You are asking them to pray in order that they might know what God wants them to give.

If all that we possess is God's why should we not pray about what to give? If we are truly trying to walk by faith how can we do that apart from prayer? So, be unapologetic in calling your church to pray about their giving.

Use your campaign as a teachable moment. From your preaching to what your small groups discuss the campaign gives you a great opportunity to teach how to walk by faith. It is not simply about raising funds. It is about raising the faith level of your congregation. The campaign gives you a platform upon which to teach biblical principles that will impact all of my life, not just what I put down on my commitment card.

A Working Assignment: Plan a Prayer Strategy

We would recommend the following ideas be considered in your planning process...

- Form a spiritual foundation team tasked with encouraging pray for the annual campaign.
- Consider a prayer journal or prayer calendar directing prayers for specific ministries, missions and personal introspection. A sample is provided towards the end of this book.
- Print prayer book marks for members to use with their Bibles. See the end of this book for a sample.

It's the 21st Century Your Campaign Should Look Like the 21st Century

I remember the first cell phone I ever saw. It was about as big as a loaf of bread! I was so envious of my pastor friend who had the ability to be in instant contact with his church. Though each call cost an arm and a leg he could still be accessible even when he was traveling. I wanted one! I thought I needed one and I just had to have one. The problem was getting the Finance Committee of my church to see this not as a toy but as a necessary means of communication. Ultimately we purchased a mobile phone and did use it.

At the time if you would have told us that a day would come when people would send communications to one another on their phone, do their calendar and scheduling on their phone and even pay their bills on their phone no one would have believed you. Then if you would have stated that the phone would fit in your pocket they would have really thought you were completely nuts. Fast forward twenty plus years and the phone in your pocket has more power and storage than the early computers that took up a whole room. Times have changed. We live in the Smartphone Era. It has changed the way we do everything. From email, to bill pay to finding the closest Starbucks we do everything with our phones. Oh, and we still talk to people on them too.

Since smartphones are the predominate tool for communications today wouldn't it be smart for churches to have a Smartphone Strategy? Smart churches are prepared for the smartphone era. Here are my Smartphone Strategy recommendations...

Have an up to date web site that is not only informational but interactive. Smart churches have moved away from their websites simply being an extension of the Sunday morning bulletin and instead actually being a workable site that members continuously engage in and go to. How up to date and useful is your site?

Make sure your church website is set up for mobile viewing. More and more people are accessing the Web through their smartphones and iPads. If your site is not mobile friendly they will not stay long on the site. Also, if it is not mobile friendly search engines will not list your church high on a search of churches in your area. Is your site mobile?

Set up Social Media sites to tell the story of your church. Facebook is the front porch of America. Your church can easily tell the story of what you are doing through Social Media sites like Facebook and Twitter. What is more they are free tools to get your message out. Are you using Social Media effectively to tell your story?

Have an online giving platform. The world is moving away from cash and checks. More and more people are using their smartphones to purchase products and pay bills. Online giving is on the rise. Before long the traditional offering plate will be a thing of the past. The future of online giving is now not in the future. Your online platform should include an app and text giving. Your goal is to make it easy for anyone to give. Do you have online giving set up?

A Two Step Premise To Success

Our plan addresses the two groups that exist at your church, Leaders and the Core of the congregation. Leaders are comprised of staff, ministry leaders, elders and deacons, small group leaders or Sunday School teachers as well as those that lead by their monetary gifts. This group typically in any church represents roughly 20% of the congregation. These leaders give the vast majority of what is given, in some cases as much as 90% of the total gifts.

Any plan that does not take them in to account will fail. In “Passing the Plate: Why American Christians Don’t Give Away More Money,” the authors found that Five percent of Protestants give 56 percent of all that is given. This group at your church will be pivotal to the success of raising additional dollars. We believe that leaders lead the way and the congregation follows.

The Core of the congregation that represents 80% to 90% of the makeup of any church typically gives only 10% to 20% of the gifts. This is typically a spiritual maturity issue but also is an economic issue as well. Our experience is that you have to teach this group how to be a fully functioning disciple while at the same time equipping them to be responsible stewards of that which God has given them.

Our plan will follow the model of leaders first and the core of the congregation second. It is our experience that this will equate towards immediate stewardship enhancement. We believe that you should never announce anything from the platform to the church that you have not first communicated to your leadership. By using this approach when you do announce the start of the annual campaign you will have already informed your leaders and enlisted their support. They thus can become your eyes and ears to the rest of the congregation impacting all those in their sphere of influence.

The success of a meeting hinges on the meetings before the meetings! I learned as a pastor that if I wanted something to pass through my leaders I needed first to get the key influencers on board. So I would begin planting the ideas I wanted to initiate in the hearts and minds of key leaders before the various committee meetings. In time I learned that this same process was important for the whole congregation. People need time to get their hands, hearts and minds around something. Too often we in the church surprise our leaders and the congregation with our ideas and then wonder why no one gets on board.

One of the biggest mistakes of the annual campaign is not setting the stage for success ahead of time! Whether it is laziness or lack of understanding little to no thought goes into most annual campaigns. The results are then mixed at best. You should never announce from the pulpit the annual campaign and then that day ask people to make a pledge. Giving at the level you want them to give takes time. Our process takes time to evolve but it will help you maximize the results. It could just help you make that budget you have your eyes upon.

The following pages outline our plans of action for the future stewardship enhancement of your church.

Leadership Summit

Affirm the Faithful and Rally Leadership - Since we believe that everything rises and falls with leadership we believe it is important to rally the leaders at your church. We typically do this at a Leadership Summit meeting.

The following outlines the elements of this meeting...

Premise: The success or failure of any endeavor can be traced back to leaders responding with whole hearted support from beginning to end. The Leadership Summit is a key element in the success of any giving campaign.

Goal: The goal of the Leadership Summit is to build ownership of all that God is doing at your church. We want to give leaders an update on what has happened and is happening with regards to the future. We want to create buy-in to the vision and extend a challenge for them to actively support that vision. The leadership must be informed, supportive and passionately talking about the vision. In essence we want to see the transfer of the vision from the pastor's heart into their heart causing them to be vision carriers!

Plan: First, we would encourage a list of all current leaders at your church be pulled together. This would include staff, elders or board members, ministry leaders, any small group leaders and others that serve in a position of influence. We would also encourage you to include those that are your financial leaders as well. The entire final list typically will comprise about twenty to twenty five per cent of your regular attendance.

You will then want to set a date and time that will be conducive to a good percentage of attendance by those on the list. You will need to determine what type of event you think would work best. Some churches have had this as a food event while others have opted for a much less involved event that was simply a meeting in the worship center. There is no one way that is better than any other. You will simply need to decide which format and time you think is best for your church. However, if it involves something more than a simple meeting then you will need to put someone in charge of those details.

All those on the invitation list should receive a letter or invitation to the Leadership Launch at least two to three weeks ahead of the date. See the Appendix for a sample letter you can edit for your use. Maximizing attendance is helped by telephoning all those invited a few days before hand to remind them of this important meeting. Typically this can be done by the secretarial staff or a volunteer recruited for this task.

Time Frame: This event needs to be held at least two to three weeks prior to the kick off of your annual campaign. Ideally we will want to have this event right after the school year begins but it can be held at any time. See the attached calendar for a suggested time line.

Format: The following format is merely a suggestion of the key elements of the Leadership Summit. Churches need to tailor the suggestions to fit their particular style. Many churches incorporate a time of praise and worship to start the Summit. Whatever you decide to do the entire time of the Summit should be right at one hour and no more than one and a half hours. A typical format will include the following:

Ministry Update – The focus here should be upon all that God has done in the last year. You should spend time thanking them for their support both from a volunteer standpoint and also financially. Deal with any things that you feel are potential land mines for the future. The focus however should be positive helping them see the faithfulness of God in the past thus leading to trust for the future.

Our advice is to celebrate the “wins” of your ministry in the last year. Everyone loves to be on the winning side. Show the success of what your church has done. In doing so you are communicating in a positive way that giving to your church is a worthwhile use of your member’s hard earned dollars.

Budget Update - The focus during this segment is to give them a glimpse of what the future could look like if we are obedient to what we feel the Lord is calling us to. You should outline all the various steps that you are being led to pursue in the order you feel is best.

Annual Giving Campaign – You want to announce the upcoming stewardship campaign to these leaders.

The campaign must always begin with the discussion of ministry, yet ministries need funds. The question in the mind of any donor is, are we being fiscally responsible? Donors commit to what they see as an urgent need not an extravagance. Some things are obvious to everyone, paying the bills, paying salaries, etc. Other things might not be so obvious to all but are still important.

Your plan must stand the test of questions. Remember, there is a difference from asking a question for information and questioning for the sake of being disruptive. Donors want to know is the campaign goals realistic? Your goal is to make sure the giving campaign is in line with your ministry and that it can be accomplished. If your budget goal and thus the goal of the campaign is unrealistic donors will not be as excited to support it. Additionally it will make it harder for them to defend it to those in their sphere of influence.

Donors want to know if they commit the dollars to this campaign can you pull it off. Do you have a plan to accomplish this or are you simply a dreamer? In other words how are we going to get this all done? The difference between leaders and dreamers is that leaders have a plan and act upon their plan!

What you want to do is to show that you have carefully thought out the process of what it will take to pull meeting your budget goals successfully. You are launching a campaign that we feel could generate funds to meet and exceed your current budget needs. The campaign will be launched in a few weeks but you wanted to give them as leaders an insider's view of what was about to happen. At the end of this campaign you will continue to stress giving and will seek to enhance your stewardship base.

Vision Link – It is very important that we help them see that this campaign is not just about paying bills and salaries. We are looking to:

Link the campaign to the Mission
Link the leaders to the Vision and then ultimately,
Link the congregation to the Journey

Cast a compelling vision. Remember, it is a compelling vision that people give sacrificially to. **Your aim with leaders, as it will be with the entire congregation, is to personalize giving to the budget by putting a picture on giving. Show them what giving to the budget accomplishes and they will be more apt to give.**

Commitment – To conclude you want to call your leaders to commit to A. Be informed; B. Be supportive and C. to be in prayer D. make their commitment early. Ask them to become with you owners of the vision the Lord has given your church. Communicate to them that over the next few days you will make yourself available to them to answer any questions that they might have.

Stress that the congregation will look to the churches leaders to set the pace towards achieving a pledge total that will fulfill the budget needs. Tell them that you want to announce at the start of the campaign that the leadership of the church is already on board with their commitments. Set a date for leaders to have their commitments into the church.

Gift of Appreciation – You might want to consider a thank you gift to those that have been so faithful in their gift to the church. Some memento of appreciation would add a nice touch to the meeting. Randy Alcorn's "The Treasury Principle" is a good example of a gift book that could be given not only to current giving leaders but to all who sign up to give as a result of the annual campaign.

Follow Up – Immediately following the Leadership Summit you should mail letters to all those on the invitation list. The letter will summarize what was shared at the Leadership Summit. It will include a commitment card asking them to commit to the giving campaign. See Appendix for a sample.

Congregational Challenge

While it is a truth that the majority of what will be pledged and given comes from your leaders you none the less want to rally the entire congregation to support your missions and ministry plan. As I tell church leaders, all campaigns, whether capital or annual are “teachable moments.” You get the chance to teach congregants about stewardship in a positive way. Our goal should be to motivate our members to WANT to give to your church. As important as pledging is to your budget the process leading up to that pledge should be seen as equally important.

The following key steps should be taken during the congregational phase of the annual campaign.

Rally Congregation - Official Announcement of the Stewardship Campaign – One Sunday you will announce from the platform in all services at all locations the kick off to annual campaign. This brief announcement will precede the mailing to all members the following day. As with your leaders give the congregation time to know what is coming so that they can begin to pray and think about what their commitment will be.

Direct Mail appeals for Stewardship Campaign – Despite the fact that more and more of what we are doing is online charities have learned that direct mail works. The church needs to take a page out of their play book and regularly direct mail their members.

All members will receive a letter of appeal and a commitment card asking for their support in making a pledge to the annual campaign. Subsequent letters and offerings will keep a positive focus on meeting and exceeding the giving goals for the church.

Email appeals for Stewardship Campaign – In this digital age many people will not respond to old fashioned snail mail but will read emails from you. All letters that we give as samples can be adjusted to fit into an email format. The only difference is that we recommend embedded links to your websites giving pages. The goal of email is instant communications but also ease of responding.

Use Social Media for your Stewardship Campaign – Facebook has become the front porch of America. Why not utilize your churches Facebook page to tell the story of what your church has done and is planning on doing? You can also use Twitter to blast out key information about the Stewardship Campaign. These two tools alone allow you to be creative in communicating your message. The wonderful thing about them is they are free!

Preaching series for Stewardship Campaign – Perhaps the most challenging aspect for a pastor is coming up with a compelling stewardship series that will enhance commitments. You should begin thinking early on about your series. At the end of this book we give you several sermons for your consideration. Suffice it to say that your series will be key in motivating the congregation to get on board with the campaign.

The following is a suggested calendar for the campaign. It is based upon a fall campaign date but can be adjusted for any time of year. The key is to decide when you want Commitment Sunday to be and work back from that date.

Detailed Suggested Campaign Calendar

<u>Date</u>	<u>Activity and Time</u>
Early Summer	Initial Planning Meeting for campaign implementation
Mid August	All print materials printed and ready
End August	Mail Leadership Summit invitations – See appendix for sample
Mid September	Leadership Summit – Date and Time to be announced - A meeting with key leaders to announce the upcoming plans for the campaign and elicit their support.
After Leadership Summit	Direct Mail to Leadership – A letter of appeal with a commitment card is sent to all those on the Leadership Summit list. Leaders are encouraged to get their commitments in early. See appendix for sample
First Sunday in October	Campaign Launch Day – Announce Plans for annual campaign in all services. Line up testimonies of those that have lived a life of faithful stewardship for each Sunday. A stewardship sermon is suggested for this day as well as the next two weekends.
First Sunday in October	Sunday School and Small Group Studies – We would recommend that each class or small group in your church engage in a study of the importance of stewardship. One good source can be found at
Monday after Launch	Second Letter to leadership – For those on the leadership list who have yet to make a commitment another letter should be sent out encouraging their response. This letter should contain a commitment card and an envelope for easy return. See appendix for sample
First of October	Thank you notes to leaders as they commit – As each advance commitment from you leaders come in send a brief note of thanks for their commitment.
Second Sunday in October	Announce Week of Prayer for Annual Campaign and Leadership Advance Commitments – During all services the prayer emphasis should be mentioned and members encouraged to participate. Any prayer guides or materials should be made available to all members on this date. On this date you will want to share the results of how much leaders have committed.
Third Sunday in October	Commitment Sunday – Announce the total committed by leadership at this point. All members are encouraged to turn in their commitment card for giving to for the annual campaign.
Monday following Commitment	Direct Mail Letters – First mail a letter of thanks to everyone person who turned in a commitment card. Another letter goes out to those that did not make a commitment encouraging them to support the annual campaign. This letter should include a commitment card and a return envelope.

Sermon Series

Making Giving Fun

II Corinthians 9: 6 - 15

Intro.: I recently read about a church that needed to increase their giving so they hired a stewardship expert to help them. The pastor made the staff attend a planning meeting with this consultant. Frankly as you can imagine they were less than thrilled. Who wants to sit around talking about giving? I know you think that is all we ministers do but I can assure you this is not the case. The staff walked in and rather glumly sat down. Sensing the obvious lack of excitement for the meeting the consultant said, "Our goal is to make giving easy and fun. They looked at him when he said fun like he had just landed from Mars! How can giving be fun? No one in their right mind thinks of giving as fun. Giving means giving up some of our hard earned money right?"

The Bible talks about fun giving. Our text today says, "God loves a cheerful giver." Literally in the Greek that word is *hilaros*, from which we derive our word *hilarious*. So, literally this text is saying God loves a hilarious giver or one who has fun giving. That is our goal to make giving fun.

Doesn't that run counter to everything? You can't expect us to really think that giving is fun? Making giving be fun is simply counter intuitive. Isn't the whole of the Christian life counter intuitive? Think about it, we give up our lives to Christ to gain our freedom. So why would it surprise us that one way to have fun in life is to learn generosity?

III.: Think about your own spending. Don't you spend some of your money to have fun? We go to the movies, the pool, Six Flags or the beach. What are we doing? We are spending our money to have fun.

Yes, but giving away money as fun? How can that be fun? This morning as I launch our annual campaign I want to show you how giving can be fun. If I can convince you that giving is fun then you know what? You'll be more likely to pledge and more likely to give more!

So, how can your giving become fun for you? When you see that...

I. Your Gift Makes a Difference

One way to see giving as being fun is to realize what your gifts go to. What does your money that you give here to this church do? Your money supports...

Missions

The back ground of this text is the offering that Paul was taking up for the poor in Jerusalem. It was in effect a missions offering. The Corinthians had early on stated that they would give. However the gift was not yet in the mail. So Paul is writing to get them to fulfill what they promised.

Think about all the missions we do through this church. A part of your money goes to support our denominational work around the globe. So, when you give think about the fact that you are helping people around the world and helping extend the Kingdom.

Ministry

Think about all the cool things that happen around here. You give to support that. The gift you give comes right back to you!

Maintenance

While this aspect might not have the same wow factor would anyone like to be sitting here without air-conditioning? It takes money to build these buildings and maintain them. We enjoy them but we have to pay for them.

III.: Every month most of us right a check for rent or a house payment. We seldom complain about that as we love our castles! We pay utility bills but we love the service that brings us. It is no different here at the church.

Ministers

Yes but doesn't a lot of our money go to pay salaries? That's true. We pay our staff a salary that is consistent with ministers. None of them are going to get rich of what we pay them but they are not going to starve either. So, yes some of what you give goes to pay our ministers and staff. But consider all they do for us.

III.: When a crisis comes to your life does your Congressman come to sit with you in the emergency room? No, in all probability it is someone on staff. Who preaches your weddings, counsels those in trouble, preaches funerals and runs our ministries? Our staff.

Another way to help giving become fun is to realize that...

II. Your Gift Gets Given Back to You!

Look at the promises that are contained in these verses. Then consider other passages of Scripture, Luke 6:38 - "Give and it shall be given unto you..." Malachi 3:10 - "I will open the windows of heaven..."

The point is not that we will be wealthy or that we should give to get. It is simply a truth that giving leads to getting!

Conclusion

At the end of the day God really is not interested in your money. He is interested in what it represents, your heart! When I give I am obedient. When I am obedient joy results. Being joyful is a whole lot more fun than being miserable. So, let's pledge and give joyfully and hilariously so that we can have fun!

How God's Work Gets Done

Exodus 35:4-10; 21-22

Intro.: - How does God get His Work done? Have you ever wondered that? Does it just happen? Has God created the world and then just left us here to muddle through the best we can? The Bible gives us a clear word on how God gets His work done. I want us to look this morning at just one instance of God's work getting done.

Turn with me to Exodus 35:4. I want us this morning to discover some truths about how God's work gets done and how they can apply to us.

I. A God Ordained Need Arises - The need here is that the people needed a place to worship.

What is our need at our church? List your needs for the new budget year. It could be missions, a new ministry venture, etc.

God has blessed us with increased growth. With growth come needs. As a result of the needs of our community we have begun many ministries to meet those needs. We have ministries that all of us benefit from. List some of the ministries currently helping members. Those ministries cost money and must be funded.

Illustration: Put a face on your budget by sharing specific ministry results. Tell stories to show that giving to your church accomplishes things for God's Kingdom.

God allows needs to come into our lives to allow us to learn more about Him and His ways and His mission for us.

Application: What needs are you facing today individually? Have you considered that God has allowed that need to teach you how to trust him and to walk with Him in faith? The same is true for us corporately. Even the needs of meeting our budget is an opportunity for us as a church to learn more about God's ways.

II. God Invites His People To Get Involved In Meeting The Need 5 Notice that in this story it was the people of God who are invited to help meet the need through their gifts. The solution to the problem was within the means of the "congregation."

Illustration: There is an old joke of a preacher telling his congregation that he has good news and bad news. The good news is the church has all the money they need. The bad news is it is in their pockets!

In this passage we are looking at the God who created the world could have easily created a place of worship for the people and had it drop down out of heaven. Doing so would have caused His people to miss out on a learning opportunity and on a chance of blessing.

Our problems are a platform upon which God can work in our lives

God doesn't really need anything. He is interested in us learning through the process.

Our budget campaign is a tool that God is using to teach us how to walk in faith with Him. What will you learn from taking this journey? Are you willing to listen to His voice as He leads you? What you learn in this journey can and will help you with all of life's journeys.

God's People Then Face A Crisis Of Belief That Requires Faith And Action - God wants us to take on God-sized programs that only He will get the glory from. He will call His people to an assignment that they cannot do without Him.

You face a crisis will you believe God and move out in faith or continue to want to walk by faith? To follow God, you will have to walk by faith, and faith always requires action.

III. God's Plan For Meeting The Need - It was an offering

1. Freewill Offering - KJV "willing heart" v.5,21,22,29 We are not going to twist arms or run you through the guilt gauntlet to give to this church. We want to show you why a gift to this church is so impactful and important. We want people to give with a willing heart.

2. Revelational Offering - v.10 "everything commanded" As we ask you in the coming days and weeks to consider a commitment to this campaign we are not simply asking you what you feel you can afford. We are asking you to make a revelational commitment.

God will reveal to you what He wants you to give. This is why we are asking our members to pray earnestly about what God would have them pledge to our campaign.

3. Godward Offering - v.5,21 "to the Lord" The people gave to the Lord. Your gift is really not to this church but to the Lord.

4. Inclusive Offering - v.4 "the whole community" The important thing to notice here is that the "whole community" had a part. Our campaign will not be successful if a few raise all the funds we need. We are looking for everyone to have a part in what we sense God wants to do this year through our church.

IV. God Provides The Potential To Meet The Need - "bring to the Lord an offering of gold, silver, bronze..." Where were the Israelites going to get that? God had already provided it when they left Egypt. Exodus 12:36

God will provide for you that which He reveals to you to give.

Concl.: - For generations after this offering the people of Israel were blessed by the gifts given. Think about our past. How many have given sacrificially down through the years so that we can sit here today in comfort? How many lives have been touched as a result of past gifts? How has your family been blessed by the ministries of this church that are fueled in part by the faithful gifts of our members? There is a long line of believers through the ages who have faithfully supported the work here. We are asking you to join that line.

How To Be A New Testament Giver

II Corinthians 8:1-7

Intro.: - We know nothing about her except that she was a poor widow. And yet this unnamed woman caught the attention of Jesus and was immortalized as a result of her generous giving. Listen to the story as it is recorded in Mark 12:41-44.

What a far cry from this woman is the typical American giver. We who have so much contribute less than 2% of our income to God's work. Interestingly enough we give less now than we did during The Great Depression. I once figured up that if everyone in our church gave 10% of what the poverty level is we would have more than enough money to do all that we need to do. What we need in our churches today is more people who will give in the example of the widow in Luke. We need people who will be New Testament givers.

The New Testament speaks much about giving. In the N.T. there are about 500 verses on faith, 500 verses on prayer but 1,000 on giving. 1 out of every 6 verses in Matthew, Mark and Luke deal with the topic of money. 19 of Jesus 38 parables deals with money.

So, this morning I want to talk with you about **How To Be A New Testament Giver**. So, turn with me to II Corinthians 8:1-7.

New Testament givers give...

I. Regardless Of Circumstances - v.1,2 Background of offering was to meet the needs the Saints in Jerusalem. The church at Corinth had pledged to give but had thus far not given. To motivate them to give Paul used the example of the Macedonian church a church that was very poor.

Paul says they gave out of "severe trial" - word describes beggar who has absolutely nothing and has no hope of getting anything. Literally means deep poverty, rock bottom destitution.

Illustration: As a result of this past recession and its lingering effects donations to churches across the country have been in decline. What has happened is that people feel stressed for money and one place they cut back is their gift to the church. Paul is saying that the Macedonian church could not afford to give but gave regardless.

I can't afford to give was not something these people said! When we say we cannot afford to give it usually means "I am not willing to give up anything for my Lord."

Illustration: So often we say we cannot afford to give and then leave the church parking lot to go out to eat. Do you realize that Americans last year spent over \$48 BILLION dollars on their pets! It could be that Fido gets more money than God.

Application: What about your life? Are you unable to give because you are unwilling to sacrifice anything for God's Kingdom work? New Testament givers are those that give regardless of the circumstances of their lives.

II. Sacrificially - v. 3 "Even more than they could afford," is how the Good News Bible translates this verse.

Illustration: A pastor of a church once shared with his congregation that he did not have any stock investments. He then said, "I have investments but just not in the Stock Market. I invested a gift to help build our children's building. I invested a gift to help build our youth facility. I have sacrificed to make an eternal investment." If you think about it we the church are where we are due to the sacrifices of those who have gone before us.

Application: These people gave when they had nothing to give. What about you? Are you willing to sacrifice something in order to give to God's work?

III. Enthusiastically - v. 4; 9:6-7 Their giving was voluntary and spontaneous. No one twisted their arms or made them give. II Corinthians 9:7 says, "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." What is interesting about the word used here for cheerful is that we derive our word hilarious from its root. So in essence Paul is saying God loves a hilarious giver. Are you a hilarious giver? Or are you a groaning giver? When the offering plate is passed in church do you groan or laugh?

IV. Willingly - v.10-12

V. By Faith - v. 13-15

Three Questions To Ask Before You Give

- 1. What can I afford?**
- 2. What can I sacrifice?** - Not equal gifts but equal sacrifice.
- 3. What is a reasonable step of faith?** What do I believe God

Concl.: - Verse 8 and 9 the example of Jesus. As you consider what your pledge to our annual campaign will be think of this example. What would Jesus have you pledge today?

<http://Acts17Coach.com>

Sample Leadership Launch Invitation

Dear Church Leader,

That title might surprise you but that is exactly how I view you. You are a leader here at **Your Church**. You lead by example and you have certainly led by your generous gifts to this church. Without you we could not have seen the amazing things that we have seen. I believe the best is yet to come!

I would like to host you and your spouse for a luncheon/meeting of our key leaders to share with you the upcoming events in our church. You can relax I will not be taking up an offering! I simply want you to hear what God has placed upon my heart and give you a head's up on what we will be ultimately sharing with the whole church soon. I value your support and wanted to have a special time with just a few leaders to share what we have in store for us. The meeting will be at: **List the date, time and place.**

We will have a great lunch/meeting and then I want to share with you the exciting things with regards to the upcoming campaign. I know this hour and a half will be well worth your time and I am counting on seeing you and your spouse there.

Please call my secretary, **Whatever Her Name Is**, to confirm your attendance that morning. I look forward to seeing you on the **list the date.**

Your Pastor,

<http://Acts17Coach.com>

Sample letter to be mailed after the Leadership Summit to leaders who have never made a commitment before

Dear Leader,

One thing I have learned as your pastor is how important people like you are to this ministry. At our recent Leadership Summit we laid out some aggressive plans for the future that we believe God is leading us to pursue. One thing I repeatedly mentioned was the fact that we would not be able to do what we do without people like you. You give of your time, your talents and your gifts to support our work here. When I say that you are crucial to the success of Our Church I am not simply blowing smoke. It is the truth.

Every fall we hold our Annual Campaign for pledges from our membership and attendees to garner their financial commitment to support all the work we believe God is calling us to accomplish. Just as we could not function without our volunteers, without financial gifts from people like you, we could not fund our ministries or meet our obligations. Our Annual Campaign is the time where we encourage everyone to prayerfully consider what they believe by faith God is leading them to pledge to our budget needs.

On the first Sunday of October we will kick off our Annual Campaign. The campaign will run for three consecutive weeks with the third weekend being the time where we will ask all our members to make their commitment. These three weeks will be a time of information, inspiration and spiritual challenge. Our goal is for every member and regular attendee to make a commitment in support of our budget.

We are encouraging all our leaders to submit their commitments by **Insert date** so that we can announce the total to the congregations the week before the commitment day. Our pray is that your example will lead others to make their commitment as well. You will find enclosed in this letter a commitment card to that end. Please prayerfully consider what faith commitment God is leading you and your family to make for the coming year. Fill the enclosed card out and mail it back or put it in the offering plate this weekend. Your example will inspire and motivate others in our congregation to make their commitment as well.

If you have any questions about our budget or the campaign please feel free to contact either myself or any of our Finance Team. Thank you for your past support of our church and your prayerful consideration about making a commitment towards this year's campaign.

Your Pastor,

Sample letter to be mailed after the Leadership Summit to leaders who have made a commitment before

Dear Leader,

One thing I have learned as your pastor is how important people like you are to this ministry. At our recent Leadership Summit we laid out some aggressive plans for the future that we believe God is leading us to pursue. One thing I repeatedly mentioned was the fact that we would not be able to do what we do without people like you. You give of your time, your talents and your gifts to support our work here. You have faithfully pledge to our past annual campaigns and given sacrificially to fulfill that pledge. When I say that you are crucial to the success of Our Church I am not simply blowing smoke. It is the truth.

As you are aware every fall we hold our Annual Campaign for pledges from our membership and attendees to garner their financial commitment to support all the work we believe God is calling us to accomplish. Just as we could not function without our volunteers, without financial gifts from people like you, we could not fund our ministries or meet our obligations. Our Annual Campaign is the time where we encourage everyone to prayerfully consider what they believe by faith God is leading them to pledge to our budget needs.

On the first Sunday of October we will kick off our Annual Campaign. The campaign will run for three consecutive weeks with the third weekend being the time where we will ask all our members to make their commitment. These three weeks will be a time of information, inspiration and spiritual challenge. Our goal is for every member and regular attendee to make a commitment in support of our budget.

We are encouraging all our leaders to submit their commitments by **Insert date** so that we can announce the total to the congregations the week before the commitment day. Our pray is that your example will lead others to make their commitment as well. You will find enclosed in this letter a commitment card to that end. Please prayerfully consider what faith commitment God is leading you and your family to make for the coming year. Fill the enclosed card out and mail it back or put it in the offering plate this weekend. Your example will inspire and motivate others in our congregation to make their commitment as well.

If you have any questions about our budget or the campaign please feel free to contact either myself or any of our Finance Team. Thank you for your past support of our church and your prayerful consideration about making a commitment towards this year's campaign.

Your Pastor,

Sample letter to be mailed out after Kick Off Sunday

Dear Friend,

Can you imagine being a half mile from victory only to run out of gas? This nightmare once happened to NASCAR racer Dale Earnhardt Jr. who was mere feet from putting an end to the longest losing streak of his career. He had it in the bag but he ran out of fuel. In what was a frantic finish to NASCAR's longest race in history, Earnhardt got the lead right after the restart of a green-white-checker overtime finish to the Coca-Cola 600. Then it happened. In the blink of an eye, Earnhardt went from ending a 104-race winless streak to paving the way for Kevin Harvick to win his series-leading third race of the Sprint Cup season. Earnhardt lost because ran out of fuel.

If you have ever run out of gas you know the feeling. There you sit with all that power under the hood but it's useless without fuel. A car that will virtually take you anywhere you want to go without gas in the engine is nothing more than a glorified paper weight. The same can happen to our bodies without food. God has miraculously designed us to do all sorts of things but without food, the fuel for our engines, we drop in exhaustion unable to even pick ourselves up.

Can you imagine what would happen if the church ran out of fuel? I'm not talking about gasoline in the tank or food in our stomachs. I am talking about the finances that fuel the ministries here at **Our Church**. Think of how many lives are touched through our church including your families! We all love our church and we love the ministries of our church. Yet without our members' faithful and sacrificial donations we would quickly run out of fuel.

If a NASCAR racer runs out of fuel he loses out on the trophy and a large check. However life goes on. For the church the results are far more devastating. We are in an eternal race. We are battling the principalities of this world for Christ's Kingdom. We dare not fail. Our trophies are not made of metal but are the destiny of the souls of men, women, boys and girls. We must keep our tanks full.

Every year during the month of October we run our annual campaign to encourage our members and attendees to make a financial pledge to our operating budget. Literally this is the fuel that keeps our engines revved up. I am writing to ask you to prayerfully consider making a pledge in the next few weeks. Already we have seen a tremendous out pouring of support. My desire is to see all our members and attendees commit to give something to this great work God has called us to. The stakes are too high for us to run out of fuel. Your gift will help us continue the work of the Lord here.

Can I count on you to help us keep in the race for Jesus? Will you do your part to keep our engines running full speed? Please find an enclosed commitment card. You can fill this out and mail it back to the church or simply drop it in the offering plate this Sunday. Let's keep our fuel tank full and win this race for the glory of God!

Your pastor,

Letter to those who previously pledged

Dear Friend,

The Golden Gate Bridge is perhaps the world's most famous bridge. From 1937 to 1964 it was the longest suspension span in the world. Two main cables pass over the tops of the main towers. Each cable is made up of 27,572 strands of wire. Together they support the bridge that has about 41 million crossings a year. None of those 27,572 wires by themselves could even begin to support the bridge. Yet linked together in common purpose they support the massive 887,000 tons of weight.

First Duluth is made up of scores of faithful donors like you. Individually we might not think our gift matters much. Collectively like the wires of the cables of the Golden Gate Bridge our gifts do matter.

Your gift and the gift of others like you comprise the strands of wire needed to produce the cables of support for our missions and ministries here at First Duluth. Hundreds of people every year are impacted by the ministry and missions of our church.

Consider that this past year we have seen...

- Several hundred children attend VBS.
- Student ministry highlight.
- List various mission projects.
- List any other victories.

While we might not think about it all of the above takes not only time but money to support. The faithful gifts of the First Duluth family help make this possible. Thank you for your generosity!

As you know every October we ask our church family to prayerfully consider what part they will play in helping us meet our financial obligations. Once again beginning October 14th we will ask all our members and attendees to make their pledge of support for our church. You have been so gracious to make a commitment in the past and I want to encourage you to once again be in prayer about making another commitment this year.

In closing let me again say how thankful I am for you and the difference you make here at First Duluth. Your strand of wire helps make us stronger for the Kingdom!

Your pastor,

Tommy

PS. Enclosed you will find a pledge card and postage paid envelope for your consideration. You can either mail it in or drop it in the offering plate during one of our services.

Thank you letter to all who make commitments

Dear Friend of First Duluth,

Thank you so much for your recent pledge of financial support to First Church. Our records show that you pledge \$X,XXX for the upcoming year of 2013. If this is not accurate please contact our Church Administrator Betty Haskins at betty@fumc.org or call her at 555-476-3776 ext. 20. She will be more than happy to answer any questions you might have.

To date along with your pledge we have seen XXX number of families commit \$XXX,XXX. We appreciate so much your standing with us with your financial support. Your gift allows us to fulfill our mission statement of *I can't remember what it is nor could I find it on the website!*

I also wanted to write and let you know that we take seriously all gifts given to our church. You can be assured that your gift is used to fund the many missions and ministry endeavors of our church. First maintains the highest standards of integrity when it comes to the tithes and offerings of our members and attendees. You will be receiving quarterly and year end giving statements of all your gifts to First Church.

Should you ever have any questions about your giving records you can contact our Church Administrator Betty Haskins. Her contact information again is betty@fumc.org or you can call her at the church at 555-476-3776 ext. 20.

So again, thank you for your pledge and for becoming a faithful giver to First Church. Together our gifts will make a difference for the church and the Kingdom. May God bless you!

In His Service,

Mark Smith

Stewardship Chairman

Prayer Sample

BREAKOUT TO THE NEXT PHASE

October 22	October 23	October 24	October 25	October 26	October 27	October 28
<i>Pray for spiritual growth.</i>	<i>Pray for deeper faith.</i>	<i>Pray for forgiveness of sins.</i>	<i>Pray for obedience to Christ.</i>	<i>Pray for honest evaluation of self & motives.</i>	<i>Pray for a spirit of oneness as we start this endeavor.</i>	<i>Pray for our hearts to be clean & open to God's direction.</i>
ROMANS 12:1	MARK 9:23	ACTS 10:43	2 CORINTHIANS 10:5	HAGGAI 1:7	ACTS 2:1	PSALM 51:10
October 29	October 30	October 31	November 1	November 2	November 3	November 4
<i>Pray that we will keep our focus on God and wait upon Him.</i>	<i>Pray for a staff member by name.</i>	<i>Pray for the Building Committee.</i>	<i>Pray for a right attitude about stewardship.</i>	<i>Pray that God will remove fear & hesitation from our hearts.</i>	<i>Pray that our church will be built on faith in God.</i>	<i>Pray for family financial unity.</i>
ISAIAH 41:10	COLOSSIANS 1:3 & I CORINTHIANS 1:4-6	PROVERBS 3:5-6	MATTHEW 6:3-4 & MATTHEW 25:25-29	ISAIAH 41:10	PSALMS 127:1	JOSHUA 24:15
November 5	November 6	November 7	November 8	November 9	November 10	November 11
<i>Pray for clear vision.</i>	<i>Pray for the Steering Committee.</i>	<i>Pray for our Pastor.</i>	<i>Pray that God will give us a "servant's" heart.</i>	<i>Pray for a willingness to relinquish possessions.</i>	<i>Pray for a spirit of thankfulness & gratitude.</i>	<i>Pray that we will reach out to the unchurched.</i>
ACTS 2:17	JEREMIAH 33:3	TITUS 1	MATTHEW 23:11	MATTHEW 19:11	EPHESIANS 5:20	PROVERBS 11:30
November 12	November 13	November 14	November 15	November 16	November 17	November 18
<i>Praise the Lord for the victories each day.</i>	<i>Pray that our church will be a light shining forth in our community.</i>	<i>Pray that we will be careful of our speech.</i>	<i>Pray to give God the glory.</i>	<i>Pray for God to reveal the financial gift He wants me to give.</i>	<i>Pray for removal of any obstacles concerning God's building.</i>	<i>Pray for commitment to go the "extra mile" & then some.</i>
1 CHRONICLES 29:11	MATTHEW 5:16	EPHESIANS 4:29	PSALM 115:1	EXODUS 35:21-24	HEBREWS 12:1-2	EXODUS 36:3

PHILLIPS TEMPLE CHURCH ... A CME CONGREGATION • 3620 Shiloh Springs Road • PO Box 26489 • Trotwood, OH 45426
937-837-9631 • 937-854-4890(f) • www.phillipstemple.org

The following stewardship series was preached by Rev. Herb Buwalda. It contains three sermons, letters, prayer guides and a pledge card sample.

WHERE DO I FIT? *Joining God in the work God does*

Herb Buwalda Clay Church October 31, 2010 Ephesians 2: 1-10

He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does

Ephesians 2:1-10, *The Message*

Ephesians 2: 1-10 The Message

¹⁻⁶It wasn't so long ago that you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin. You let the world, which doesn't know the first thing about living, tell you how to live. You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience. We all did it, all of us doing what we felt like doing, when we felt like doing it, all of us in the same boat. It's a wonder God didn't lose his temper and do away with the whole lot of us. Instead, immense in mercy and with an incredible love, he embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. He did all this on his own, with no help from us! Then he picked us up and set us down in highest heaven in company with Jesus, our Messiah.

⁷⁻¹⁰Now God has us where he wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish! We don't play the major role. If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing! No, we neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and saving. **He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing.**

Introduction: Our family once took a Florida vacation. One day as we were walking through a mall in Orlando and saw a sign that read, "Free Disney World Tickets." So, we stopped and found out it was a development and all we had to do was tour a time-share condo, listen to the spiel, say "no," and take our tickets. Perhaps you have been on a similar kind of tour. We made it clear we weren't in a position to buy anything, they said "It doesn't matter. You'll still get the free tickets."

So we went. We were skeptical. We knew there would be a push and pressure and a little guilt, but we were determined not to buckle. We loaded up the girls. They thought the tour was great. The loved the condo. "Can we do it, dad?" No, we can't do it. We listened to the promotion. We said, "No. Not interested. Can we have our tickets now?"

We had to go wait in a room. Another supervisor came in to pressure us some more and seal the deal. "Were we sure? Did we realize what a great deal this was?" We told him we were in no position to buy anything. **We had no money.** He said, "Can I ask you why you are here, then?" In unison we said: **"Free tickets!"**

I knew they would pressure us.

I knew we'd feel guilty.

I knew they were expecting us to pay for the tickets.

I knew we'd feel some stress in going through it....

I knew they were trying to get something out of us that we weren't willing or able to give.

Unfortunately, I think many people think of "STEWARDSHIP" that way. When we begin a stewardship series, people start squirming. Women clutch their purses to protect the check book! Men sit firmly on their billfold so in a weak moment they won't do something or give something they will regret.

We brace ourselves for the hard sell. We expect to deal with some guilt or manipulation.

We know there will be some stress related to it. And we're determined not to give something we aren't willing or able to give.

Let me say as we begin this series that that kind of thing isn't "stewardship." That might be "fundraising," but it's not stewardship.

I will tell you I really dislike (can I say "hate?") fundraising. In fundraising – or selling, like timeshare – the whole point is to get you to do something today that you had no intention to do today.....to buy something, to participate in something, to cave in....and say YES, when you really were trying to scream NO!

Please, don't confuse "fundraising" with "stewardship."

Stewardship is **a lifestyle**, not a **moment of weakness**.

Stewardship is **about God's property**, not **our possessions**.

Stewardship is taking care of God's stuff, not **protecting our stuff**.

So, as much as I hate fundraising (begging people to do things they don't want to do), I love talking about stewardship – partnering with God to JOIN GOD IN WHAT GOD IS DOING.

And, might I add this: The reason I love talking about this is because I believe it truly is at the heart of being a church ON THE MOVE, and being people who are LIVING IN FAITH EVERY day.

The whole concept of stewardship is that we know that:

1. Everything is really God's (creator)
2. All we have is a gift from God.
3. All God asks is we return to God and God's work what God asks for
4. That involves our TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURE.

It means we give Him the days of our lives.

We give back to Him the unique way (strengths and gifts) we have been created, AND our financial resources.

I love talking about this because I firmly believe: If we never learn the joy of partnering with God in what God is doing, our lives will end – in some significant way -- unfinished....Because God’s purpose for our lives was never really fulfilled.

Illustration: Eugene Peterson *The Contemplative Pastor*, says that this is why pastors must be subversive leaders p. 27-28 (“I remember that I am subversive....”).....”I am undermining the kingdom of self and establishing the kingdom of God. I am helping them to become what God wants them to be, using the methods of subversion...The kingdom of God in which we apprentice ourselves (is) revolutionary, a dangerously unwelcome intruder in the Old Boy’s Club of thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers.”

Those are powerful words. Stewardship stuff is radical stuff. It’s subversive stuff.

It’s toppling the kingdom of self -- and selfishness – and replacing it with a commitment to God, a concern for others, a new kingdom of love and grace and peace.

It’s not fundraising. It’s joining God in what God is doing

So, it’s a privilege for me to talk about stewardship. I feel no compulsion to **sell you anything, or manipulate you into something you wanted to avoid**, or even to make **you feel guilty or pressured** in any way.

I feel privileged to invite you **to discover what you were born for** -- your purpose in God – and to care for God’s property (your life) in such a spectacular way that you join God in what God is doing.

In these two opening chapters, **the Apostle Paul reminds us of these two things:**

GOD HAS PLANS FOR THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD!

The church is Christ’s body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence. Ephesians 1:23 *The Message*

God has great expectations for the church in the world. Powerful plans of world-changing...

We’re certainly not here as the **body of Christ** just to be a religious organization! We are not simply an institution. We are not just a facility. We are not a business. None of that is inspiring!

None of these things is what God has called this church to be. We are called...

To be on the move,

To be Living In Faith Every day,

To be a crucial part of God’s work of world-changing!

This is why William Barclay says “The church is to be the hands to do Christ’s work....an instrument, a body through which God can work.”

In every congregation I've served I've seen GOD'S PLANS FOR THE CHURCH break out IN THE WORLD. **And it was all about stewardship!**

- A. **In one congregation it was "time."** At this church every Tuesday evening was movie night for the children of the seasonal workers at the tomato processing plant. We would drive in with movie projector, 16mm cartoons, the projection screen sticking out of the top of my VW sun roof. Children would run alongside, quickly helping to plug in the extension cord; little boys setting up the screen, moms and dads coming out of trailers with blankets and towels to sit on, and watch Mickey and Daffy and Minnie and Wylie E. Coyote go through their shenanigans. I wish you could have heard their cries of joy! I wish you could have seen the smiles of delight! I wish you could have felt the emotion of being cared for by those people who came each week to bring a little delight to their lives.

Didn't we have better things to do with our time than swat mosquitoes on Tuesday night?!! No, we didn't. We couldn't think of anything better to do. **It was a stewardship of TIME.**

- B. **In another congregation it was "hospitality."** A community of people who loved others and made their church house available for the Lion's Club for their weekly meetings, cooking homemade meals for them each week. Who –each year–had a celebration dinner to honor the Volunteer Fire Department for their self-less concern for themselves as they protected our homes.

Certainly, they had other places to use their gifts? No, not really. They couldn't think of anything better to do than to honor the local servants.

It was stewardship of **HOSPITALITY AND LOVE.**

- C. **In yet another one, it was a "facility."** This church heard that there was a crying need in the community – especially medical professional's families at the local hospital – for quality childcare, for a spiritual environment so they could go to work and earn a living. Within two years we had a day care and preschool going, over 100 children. Happy, joyful, secure.

Someone said to me one day: **"Don't you think these kids are going to make a mess around here? Ruin things?"**

I said, **"I'm sure they will. Isn't it great?"**

He looked at me with a questioning look, and I said: **"I'd rather we wore it out than we rusted out!"**

It was the stewardship of a **"facility."**

It's all God's. And God has PLANS FOR THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD.

And those plans come to life through our lives.

GOD'S PLANS COME TO LIFE IN US!

God creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, Ephesians 2: 10 *The Message*

.....the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing.

That's why **I love talking about this.**

That's why **I love being subversive.**

That's why **I love to be called to topple the kingdom of self** on behalf of God's kingdom of love and difference-making.

Because I know when it really gets in our hearts, when we really join God in what God is doing -- we **won't begrudge it, we won't feel manipulated or pressured or stressed; we won't be looking for an exit...**

Instead, **we'll be grateful** that we finally **discovered why we are here.**

Conclusion: Several years ago, we had a stewardship series in the fall over at the South Campus. It was the first time I told the story of the "Ten Apples." This was a story my father told me when I asked him about tithing. He said, "If I give you 10 apples, would you give me one back?" I clarified with him that these were HIS apples in the first place, and all I needed to do was return one." He said that was correct. I said I would do it. His response: "You will be a tither some day." So, on the day I told that story, we then turned in our commitment cards to support the ministries of the New Year.

After about a week or so, a young church member showed up at my office and asked if he could have their card back. I asked why, and he said, "**I filled it out wrong.**"

I went and got it, glanced at it when I was walking down the hall to see him. It was generous. It had three or four zeroes on it. He thanked me and left. A few days later a new card came in the mail. Their financial commitment for the New Year was three times as much as the old card.

I learned later that his wife had come home after the story of the ten apples and began to say that they needed to make the decision to become tithers. He told me later that he began to argue about it. Making the points that first of all, they were very generous in their giving, and second of all, if they were to do that, they'd have to do it after taxes because otherwise it didn't make any sense.

He told me she looked him in the eye and said, "**We've got to stop making excuses. It's time to do what we know God wants us to do.**" They became tithers for the first time in their lives. They joined God in what God was doing.

Later I heard them giving a testimony about what that decision had meant to them as a couple. (1) His spouse said for the first time she stopped worrying about money. (2) She had a deeper sense of peace and joy about money. And, (3) they felt confident that if they had never become stewards of financial resources, that she might never have heard God's call to ministry. **She said, "I felt that God might have said, 'If you don't trust me with your money, how can I ever trust you with my ministry?'"**

God has plans for the church! And, they come alive in us! My prayer is that each of us will respond appropriately to God's call.

“He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing.” Eph. 2: 10, *The Message*

WHERE DO I FIT? Message #2 A Life Worthy

Herb Buwalda Clay Church November 7, 2010 Clay Church

I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Eph 4:1

Today is All Saints Day.

A day we remember those who have died

A day we remember lives that are complete now.

We honor, remember, and celebrate your loved ones today who have completed their course of life here. I have fond memories of several of these people.

Illustration: I remember Kitty, in remission from cancer before she died... her joy, her energy.... **(Come up with your own example of saints from your church)**

Illustration: Tapestry story – Each strand of the tapestry is placed by the artist with care. Some are brightly colored, some have darker hues, some are smooth and clean, while others are ragged and rough. Finally, the last piece is placed, and the artist says, “That’s it. It’s done. That’s it.”

Same is true in our lives. Some days are bright days and some are dark days. We have smooth places in our lives and rough places. At some point, the last day is lived, and the Creator of all of life says, “That’s it. That’s a complete life. Everything that was accomplished by that life is now accomplished. There is no more to add. That was a life.”

So, on All Saints Day we remember these people.

But it’s also a day to reflect about the meaning of our own lives.

Finite lives, with a beginning and an end.

We have a specific period in which to make our impact, make a difference, and join God in what He is doing.

Illustration: When I was 31 – My Bishop asked us to move to a new community. It was a difficult decision, and something that turned out to be very hard to do, emotionally: Let go of one congregation in order to embrace a new one. We finally relented, and accepted the appointment to a new church.

Our daughters were 1 1/2 and 2 ½ -- just babies, really. They had been born in this small community. They loved the people there. It was a very warm, supportive church family.

So, we decided to attend a weekend “Grief Workshop” sponsored by the conference for parsonage families who were moving to deal with their feelings related to the loss of this congregation in their lives. We tried to name the things we were sad about. We tried to get moving in a new direction.

One of the activities at the workshop caught me completely off guard. The leader asked us to take some quiet time and write an obituary for our spouses. Some of you have had to do that in real life in this past year for these wonderful people we remembered this morning.

But, I was 31 years old writing this and my wife was still with me! It was just too odd. But, we did it. I wrote one for LeeAnne. LeeAnne wrote one for me. It proved to be a very emotional experience.

I really labored over writing it, trying to say the things that mattered most about her and her young life. It began something like this:

“LeeAnne... died today. She was 29 years old. She leaves behind two little girls who adored her, and a husband who wonders if he can live without her...”

I continued saying some of the things that were outstanding in her young life:

Tireless servant and worker

Generous to a fault

Caring and concerned about others

Loved God with all her heart

Loved the rest of us, too....

As I was writing her obituary, laboring over the words, trying to say it just right, **suddenly it occurred to me: SHE WAS WRITING ABOUT ME!**

What could she possibly be saying? I wondered what values or priorities or characteristics she had picked up in our young life that mattered.

I remember thinking, “I wonder if I matter? I wonder my life means to anyone? What could anyone really say about me?”

In a nutshell, I guess I was wondering what we all wonder: what did my life mean? What is **the MEANING or IMPACT of our lives?**

Paul was getting at this in his letter to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11, 16 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, **I urge you to live a life worthy** of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. **There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— one Lord, one faith, one baptism;** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, **grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.**

Paul urges the Ephesians to live a life worthy of the calling

Growing up, each part doing its own work....

This is stewardship.

This is the stewardship of our lives.

Stewardship isn't fund raising – getting someone to give to something they really don't want to give to -- or selling something to someone who doesn't really want to buy it.

Stewardship is a lifestyle.

It's a way of life.

It's a way of life that says, humbly, **“I believe my life matters. I believe God expects something important from me. I believe God cares about things, and wants me to care about those things. God is doing something in the world, and I need to do it, too!”**

That's a “life worthy.”

I have a part to play in the enterprise of God's kingdom work here.

And, no one can do it for me.

No one can be me, but me.

What did we say last week?

1. God has plans for the church in the world
2. Those plans come alive in us!

Those plans have to do with the impact of our lives –

It has to do with how we invest ourselves: time, talent, and treasure....

And the way we do that: Others can easily tell what matters to us.

Illustration: In one congregation the issue was a “facility.” This church heard that there was a crying need in the community – especially medical professional’s families at the local hospital – for quality childcare, for a spiritual environment so they could go to work and earn a living. Within two years we had a day care and preschool going, over 100 children. It provided a source for happiness, joyfulness and security.

Someone said to me one day: **“Don’t you think these kids are going to make a mess around here? Ruin things?”**

I said, **“I’m sure they will. Isn’t it great?”**

He looked at me with a questioning look, and I said: **“I’d rather we wore it out than we rusted out, Chet!”**

It was the stewardship of a **“facility.”**

We have that same opportunity right now at the Firehouse Youth Center...Literally hundreds

Stewardship matters!!!!

Illustration: Denny’s story - Pastor Denny was meeting with a church member friend at stewardship time of year: “Honestly, I’m not that impressed. I’ve seen your homes, your cars, your vacations...you have a large life. You know the Bible teaches of a tithe, 1/10 of income, to be connected to God’s work in the world. But, given the large life you live, I’d think you could easily give 15% to God, not 10!”

He got mad. Left the lunch offended, challenged, hurt.

Several days later he came back to see his pastor-friend: “The other day you hurt my feelings. I know I’m generous. I know I probably give more than anyone else around this place. I couldn’t believe what you said to me! You said I could give 15% because of my large life. I’m here to tell you, honestly, you’re wrong. I can do 20%!”

He became the largest individual donor to missions in his denominational conference. His family changed the world for people around the planet: fresh water, humanitarian relief, disaster relief... he started making an impact with his life! A life worthy!

He still had enough.

He had plenty.

But, he did something with his life.

He connected it to the things God cared about, and the things God was doing.

It was the stewardship of money.

He's in his 70's now. Looking back, I wonder what he would wish for? Would he want more BMW's, more restrooms in his house, a bigger garage, a larger boat, or more pictures of himself?

Or, do you think he's deeply grateful that a pastor/friend of his had the guts to challenge him to live for something more to live a life worthy, to do his part? To connect his life to what God cared about and what God was doing?

Conclusion: Zig Ziglar says, "If you aim at nothing, you'll hit it every time!"

Next Sunday we will ask you to "aim at something." We will invite you to set **a personal stewardship goal for the new year.**

This goal will be a key spiritual component in living for Christ.

As we come to the communion table this morning, let's pray this prayer

"Lord, what will people say really mattered about me?

Just the things I cared about?

Or, the things that You cared about?"

Amen.

Where do I Fit? Message #3 Willing to Share

Herb Buwalda Clay Church November 15, 2009 I Timothy 6: 6-20a

...to be generous and willing to share....I Timothy 6: 18

Invite you to keep these images in our minds during this message:

Clenched Fists vs. Open Hands

Think about these **two images**.

How do they **affect you?**

What one **makes you uptight?** What one makes you **feel encouraged?**

Illustration: Retired Pastor – Once early in my ministry I and a few other young ministers met with a retired pastor who had retired as a pastor of a large church in a big city. We were all young and we wanted to learn.

That retired pastor made a startling comment: **“One of the roles I take very seriously as a pastor is SEPARATING PEOPLE FROM THEIR MONEY.”**

I bristled. Hair stood up on my neck....

I became resistant for a few minutes. I became suspicious.

But, then he made it **clear what he wasn't talking about.**

He said, **“I'm not talking about getting anyone's money, but helping people have a proper relationship with their material possessions: getting some separation from it, using it for good in the world, and getting control of it and NOT being controlled BY it.”**

During this series we are having a **“Spiritual conversation about money and material possessions”** as followers of Jesus Christ.

1. **We can't afford as Christ Followers to serve false gods...our possessions can have a god-like impact on us.**
2. **We know our personal decisions about possessions really do matter.**

Money Matters. Sometimes it **matters too much.**

The elder pastor was right: we have to **“get some separation”** from our possessions **to be spiritually healthy.**

Today, I'd like to share Two Thoughts:

First, When we clench our fists - with respect to our money and material possessions..... it's a sign that they may matter too much to us.

When we are overly attached to stuff our hearts get smaller

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have **wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.**

I Timothy 6: 10

As a Pastor: I want to see **our souls enlarge, not shrink!**

Shrinking hearts get ugly... in a hurry.

God's heart is **always about love, giving, sharing, AND EXPANDING!**

Illustration: "Jack" - A number of years ago, I served a "Clenched fist congregation." They were good, sweet people. They just were **afraid to share and give.** They were **"Clenched."**

One morning, I challenged them with "world-changing," pointing out **the incredible ministries that were being held back** by our **clenched hands.**

It was an **inspiring morning.** **I felt the energy of God all morning.** I felt compelled to challenge the congregation, not to just keep doing what they always had done, or always had not done, but **to step up, be generous, change the world!**

Monday morning, I stopped at the coffee shop, and **I saw the clenched fist, up close and personal: "Jack" - a church leader - turned his back on me. It wasn't that:**

he just didn't talk to me.

he argued with me.

he avoided me.

He **literally, turned his back.** **Physically turned away from his pastor me at the breakfast bar and refused to speak me.**

It wasn't pretty.

It was painful to see **such a clenched heart.**

It's heartbreaking when we're **overly attached to "stuff"** and can't bear to hear the call to **generosity and sharing and world-changing.**

I think retired pastor was right: There **needs to be some separation** between **us** and **our possessions.**

Maybe that IS a pastor's job: to help the congregation **get some separation** –

Help us DETACH from material things.

Because when we're **overly attached** to STUFF, **our hearts shrink.**

Secondly,

Open hands often reveal an open heart

Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and

to be generous and willing to share

....so that they may take hold of **the life that is truly life.**

I Timothy 6: 18-19

If we're not hanging on so tightly our hands are open.....

"Generous and willing to share.....The life that is truly life." I love that phrase

When we can **get over ourselves**

When we can **get beyond ourselves**

When we can **get some separation.....**

Yes, our souls begin to grow.

PAUL SAYS, that's a LIFE THAT IS TRULY LIFE!

Illustration: BENEFACTORY STORY - Out of the blue one day, this **older couple called to ask if I would send my seminary bills to their address?** (What? Are you kidding me?) **I sent them the billings each semester.** Each semester they were **"Paid in Full"** and I completed school with **no debt.**

Years later, I was thinking of them one day. Overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude, **I sent a thank you**. Told them what it meant to us, what an incredible thing it was to receive such a gracious start to our ministry.

NOTE came back: Thanking ME for thanking them!

One part of the note caught me off guard. It said, **“It was such a joy to help you with your school expenses. We’ve watched you through the years and it has always been a blessing to think we had a small part in your ministry.”** (Then the shocker) **“It was one of the greatest joys of our lives.....to send 9 seminary students through school!”** They were willing to share.

Notice what they wrote **“One of the greatest joys of our lives...”** (not drudgery, not a bill, not a duty, not an obligation.....a joy, a privilege!!!)

They had learned **the secret of open hands**, getting some separation from their possessions. They were **willing to share**.

Let me say this:

If you’ve **participated in giving** here this year, you’ve been **part of the generosity that has been extended** to many:

You’ve said Yes, to

the **children**

the **youth**

the **adults** coming here to find a spiritual home.

How **TREMENDOUS!**

But, there’s more, much more you may, or may not, know about.

Our giving – this year – **has resulted in life-changing ministries BEYOND THE WALLS OF CLAY! External Ministries!**

DID YOU KNOW...that this year **our OPEN HANDS AND HEARTS** – if we reach all our goals – have touched lives all over the world!

(Last year) External Ministries \$154,625

Clay Church

United Methodist Apportionment Goals	Benevolences and World Service!
Mission on the Move (Tapachula, Mexico)	Getting children out of prison!
United Methodist Committee on Relief	World Relief!
Water (Burkina Faso, Africa)	Digging fresh water wells!
Pastors Training School (Zambia, Africa)	Training 150 African pastors!
Akase Hospital (Ghana, Africa)	Hundreds receiving medical care!
Habitat for Humanity (Matthew 25 House)	A home for a family
Hope Ministries	Support for the poor!
Clay/Harrison Partnership	Educational support for children in poverty!
Community Emergency Fund, (Assistance)	Assistance for people in crisis!
Food Pantry:	Hungry people fed!
Musical Mission	Youth making a difference!
Sidewalk Sunday School	Inner city children touched with love!
Bridges	Developmentally disadvantaged loved!
Miscellaneous external ministries	Other needs met!
Plus: Harrison School, Food Pantry, Goodwill, Trees of Love, Thanksgiving Basket donations!	

Invite you to watch this REAL STORY and reflect on the meaning of what Paul said:

GENEROUS LIVES

WILLING TO SHARE

LIFE THAT IS TRULY LIFE!!!

Don't we WANT to be **world-changers?**

Don't we want **to be generous?**

Don't we want to **be partners with GOD?**

Don't we want to **be the church of "open hands and open hearts?"**

Don't we want to **change other people's lives?**

INVITATION

Tomorrow, Monday, you will receive a letter and a **Commitment Card** and you'll be invited to say **YES**.

And next Sunday, we'll gather back here in worship with our commitment cards, we will say "YES" together....

YES to **the open hands**

YES to **children, youth, and adults**

YES to the **external mission of world-changing**

YES to **generosity**

YES to **God!**

I'm praying that EACH AND EVERY individual and family will say YES to GOD in the coming year!

Because **we know there is a place where we fit in God's generosity** for the world!

Amen

Where Do I Fit In? Sample Follow Up Letters

November 15, 2010

Dear Clay friends,

During this stewardship series, we've had one question in the forefront:

Q: "Where do I fit?"

And the answer is?

A: "We all fit it in what God cares about and what God is doing!"

Paul says, "to each one of us grace has been given (Eph. 4:7). Yes, it's true! And, it is a tremendous privilege for us do join God's team to bring God's grace to the world.

This year we ask you to prayerfully set four specific, spiritual goals for 2011:

1. How will we **CONNECT** to God and neighbor in corporate worship?
2. How will we **GROW** as a follower of Jesus Christ?
3. How will we **SHARE** God's love with the world?
4. How will we **GIVE** tithes and offerings to God through Clay Church?

To set those goals for 2011, each of us will need to look at both sides of the enclosed commitment card. One side is for our personal, spiritual goals on the discipleship path of Connect/Grow/Share. The other side is for our 2011 financial commitment.

Please join us for COMMITMENT SUNDAY, November 21st, as we return our cards in the worship services. It will be a great celebration with our chancel choir, bell choir, and praise team participating in both services. If you cannot attend that day, please mail your card in the enclosed envelope, or return it in worship on November 28th.

Several of our friends at Clay have already made their commitments for 2011. I hope you are encouraged by this early support of God's work at Clay (**see reverse side**)!

It is a profound joy to be the pastor of a church that is "on the move." I know the church is moving because people like you are striving to **Live In Faith Every day**. You inspire me. Your faithfulness energizes and encourages me every day.

Thank you for living your life for Christ.



Herb Buwalda

NOTE: If you are unemployed, or are going through a difficult financial period, please return the card anyway. Setting our personal discipleship path goals are also very important to each of us, and to our ministries in the new year!

Dear friends,

Below you will find our stewardship report as of December 1, 2010. As you can see, we have received a wonderful response from many families, and we still have many to hear from! We know our goals will be reached if we hear from every family at Clay Church! Our thanks to all who have already responded and set their four spiritual goals for 2011.

We hope you are praying, as well, for how you and your family might connect your lives to what God cares about and what God is doing through the ministries of Clay.

Please return your card today and be listed with "This Week's Stewards!"

In Christ,



Herb Buwalda
Pastor

P.S. It is possible that your commitment card crossed in the mail at the time of this mailing. If so, you will be included next time in "This Week's Stewards." Thank you!

"Where Do I Fit?" Goals – December 1, 2010 Summary Report

Connecting (in worship): 3 1x/month, 21 2x/month, 291 3x+/month

Growing (in small group): 56 1x experience, 78 short term, 145 ongoing group

Sharing (in mission): 74 1x event, 53 short term, 161 ongoing ministry

Stewardship:

 222 # of families responding

\$ 851,011 total \$ committed to date 52 Tithe 102 Proportional giving

\$ 1,357,000 Operating Fund goal for the year

 428 # of families yet to hear from

THANK YOU TO ALL OF THIS WEEK'S STEWARDS! (see the back)

The back listed the names of those that had made commitments

THANK YOU!

We express our thanks to all the members and friends of Clay Church who have already made their commitments to the **"Where Do I Fit?"** stewardship campaign. We are inspired by the passion and energy to Live in Faith Every day!

It is exciting to focus on reaching our own spiritual goals in the new year. You are an inspiration. Thank you for all you do to empower our congregation in our pursuit of what God cares about and what God is doing here!

In Christ,



Herb Buwalda
Pastor

"Where Do I Fit?" Goals – December 1, 2010 Summary Report

Connecting (in worship): 3 1x/month, 21 2x/month, 291 3x+/month

Growing (in small group): 56 1x experience, 78 short term, 145 ongoing group

Sharing (in mission): 74 1x event, 53 short term, 161 ongoing ministry

Stewardship:

 222 # of families responding

\$ 851,011 total \$ committed to date 52 Tithe 102 Proportional giving

\$ 1,357,000 Operating Fund goal for the year

 428 # of families yet to hear from

THANK YOU TO ALL OF THIS WEEK'S STEWARDS! (see the back)

The back listed the names of those that had made commitments



Please pray daily for the stewardship response of our congregation as we seek to expand our ministries with children, youth, and adults in the New Year.

New Initiatives for the 2012 Operating Budget

Children

Reaching children for Jesus Christ through Summer Camp and Vacation Bible School Scholarships

Youth

Reaching youth for Jesus Christ through camp / retreat scholarships and facility development at Firehouse

Young Adults

Reaching young adults for Jesus Christ through community, study, worship, and service

The Poor

Reaching the poor for Jesus Christ as we expand our work with those in need

Staff Leadership

Reaching our stewardship goals to support our staff in their ministries with children, youth and adults

Closing the Gap

Reaching our stewardship goals to insure support for facility costs and mortgage payments



Please pray daily for the stewardship response of our congregation as we seek to expand our ministries with children, youth, and adults in the New Year.

New Initiatives for the 2012 Operating Budget

Children

Reaching children for Jesus Christ through Summer Camp and Vacation Bible School Scholarships

Youth

Reaching youth for Jesus Christ through camp / retreat scholarships and facility development at Firehouse

Young Adults

Reaching young adults for Jesus Christ through community, study, worship, and service

The Poor

Reaching the poor for Jesus Christ as we expand our work with those in need

Staff Leadership

Reaching our stewardship goals to support our staff in their ministries with children, youth and adults

Closing the Gap

Reaching our stewardship goals to insure support for facility costs and mortgage payments

Stewardship Commitment

My/Our financial commitment to God for the 2011 ministries of Clay Church is \$ _____.
(Please list total for 2011.)

This is a 1st time commitment.
 This is a proportional gift.
 This is a tithe (1/10).
 Please send me Financial Peace University information.

Offering envelopes will be mailed to you.

THANK YOU
for your generous support of God's ministries through Clay Church.

Please return this card on/or before Sunday, November 21. Please know that we regard your gifts and correspondence in a manner that respects confidentiality.

Where Do I Fit?

To each one of us grace has been given.
Ephesians 4:7

Name _____
(Please Print)

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Signed _____

Stewardship Commitment

My/Our financial commitment to God for the 2011 ministries of Clay Church is \$ _____.
(Please list total for 2011.)

This is a 1st time commitment.
 This is a proportional gift.
 This is a tithe (1/10).
 Please send me Financial Peace University information.

Offering envelopes will be mailed to you.

THANK YOU
for your generous support of God's ministries through Clay Church.

Please return this card on/or before Sunday, November 21. Please know that we regard your gifts and correspondence in a manner that respects confidentiality.

Where Do I Fit?

To each one of us grace has been given.
Ephesians 4:7

Name _____
(Please Print)

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Signed _____

Stewardship Commitment

My/Our financial commitment to God for the 2011 ministries of Clay Church is \$ _____.
(Please list total for 2011.)

This is a 1st time commitment.
 This is a proportional gift.
 This is a tithe (1/10).
 Please send me Financial Peace University information.

Offering envelopes will be mailed to you.

THANK YOU
for your generous support of God's ministries through Clay Church.

Please return this card on/or before Sunday, November 21. Please know that we regard your gifts and correspondence in a manner that respects confidentiality.

Where Do I Fit?

To each one of us grace has been given.
Ephesians 4:7

Name _____
(Please Print)

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Signed _____