



EQUIPPER

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Dear steward of God's grace:

Last month I was in Kansas City, MO to conduct the Ministry Development seminar "Missional Church" for the pastoral network led by district pastor Ray Meyer. This seminar addresses the beliefs, values and practices of churches that participate actively with Jesus in his ministry that is fulfilling the Father's mission to the world.



"The amount of money you have has nothing to do with financial security or contentment. Neither can satisfaction be found in wise investments, careful budgets, or debt-free living. Instead, the secret to financial freedom and joy is directly linked to one thing: the willingness to be generous with what you have."

-Ron Blue in *Generous Living*

Following the seminar, Ray, who also pastors *Living Grace Fellowship* in Kansas City, spoke with me concerning the related topic of **Christian stewardship**. He noted that faithful stewardship of time, talent and treasure (finances) is a key part of being a missional church. He noted that pastors sometimes hesitate to teach stewardship, fearing that doing so is legalistic or otherwise inappropriate. He also noted that some churches fail to make the offering a meaningful and visible part of the weekly worship service.

Because I think *Equipper* readers will benefit from hearing what Ray shared, I videotaped our conversation and have posted it on *It Looks Like This* (go to <http://gci-usa.blogspot.com/p/nurturing-believers.html>).

I encourage you to help your church (including its young members) practice financial stewardship. For ideas, watch the video, note the resources below, and read the article on page 2. Note also that teaching financial stewardship (including debt reduction) is a great way to reach out to non-churched people.

Thanks for your faithfulness in God's service,
Ted Johnston, CAD communications

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Ministry Resources

- **Igniting a Life of Generosity** is an excellent small group curriculum on Christian Stewardship. Order it at <http://www.ecfa.org/Content/Igniting-a-Life-of-Generosity>.
- **The Sower** (*redefining the ministry of raising kingdom resources*) is a helpful book on Christian Stewardship by Scott Rodin and Gary Hoag.
- **Five Disciplines of a Generous Church** is a helpful article on Christian Stewardship. Read it online at <http://tinyurl.com/6k7mo8f>
- **Living Loved** is the 2011 GenMin camp curriculum. It would make a great sermon series following camp. Go to <http://genmin.gci.org/Web%20Documents/Curriculum%202011.pdf>.
- **Exponential Conference 2012** is in Orlando, FL next April. Your spouse can attend with you free if you register by June 15, 2011. See <http://www.exponentialconference.org/>.

Outfitting churches, ministries, pastors and ministry leaders for ministry on journey with Jesus.

Encouraging consistent and generous giving

By Ted Johnston

Here are five things pastors and other church leaders can do to encourage their members (and other donors) to be consistent and generous in giving financially to the church.

1. Build relationships

Members are generous toward the church when they trust its leaders. They tend to trust those that love and care for them.

Ask this question: *What are we doing as leaders to build relationships of trust and love with our members?*

2. Help them understand

Money tends to follow vision. Giving rarely increases when there is nothing to stretch toward. When a church has three or four objectives they want to accomplish through their budget, and they highlight those objectives to the congregation, making a specific request for financial support, people are moved to give.

Ask this question: *What are we trying to accomplish over the next 12 months that we can clarify for our congregation so that they understand the financial need?*

3. Educate about stewardship

Few pastors routinely preach and teach about stewardship. Yet this is a primary topic in Scripture. Part of discipling people is to help them share actively in God's generosity (*generous God, generous people*).

Ask this question: *What will we do in the year ahead to teach the theology and practice of stewardship in sermons, offering messages, Bible Studies and articles in the church newsletter or bulletin?*

4. Give information about church finances

It is important to give donors timely, accurate and meaningful information about the finances of the church. Doing so builds confidence, clarifies needs, and shows how finances are used to advance the church's mission and vision. Some congregations publish in their weekly bulletin the amount received in last week's offering. At a minimum, all donors should receive a quarterly financial report (see GCI financial reporting requirements in the Financial Management Manual).

Ask this question: *How can we do a better job of providing to our donors meaningful information about the finances of the congregation?*

5. Receive the offering in an act of worship

Instead of rushing through the offering, or putting an offering box in the back of the room, make the offering an integral part of worship. Giving offerings to God is a profound act of worship—a way we participate in the generous heart of the Father toward all humankind. Take time in presenting the offering—explain its purpose and value, and receive it in a worshipful way, including ending with a prayer of dedication (for a good example of how this is done, see the last part of the video with Ray Meyer noted on page 1).

Ask this question: *How can we make the weekly offering more worshipful?*

