



EQUIPPER

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Dear steward of God's grace:

In 1 Peter 4:10 (NRSV), we are exhorted to be *"good stewards of the manifold grace of God."* The focus here is the faithful and generous use of *"whatever gift"* that God has given us to *"serve others"* (NIV). These gifts for ministry in and through the church include hospitality (v9), speaking and serving (v11). These and other gifts are mentioned in Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.

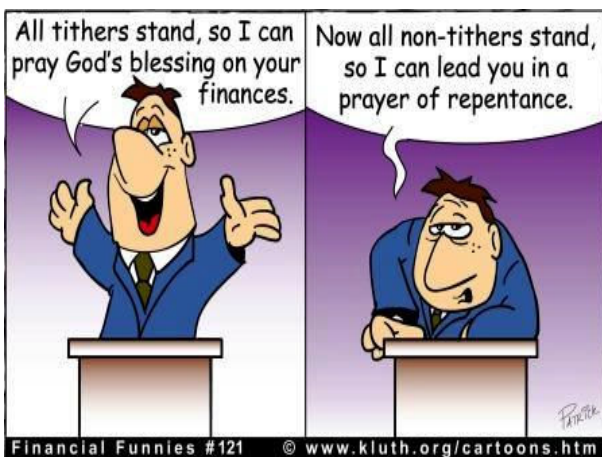
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Being gifted by God for ministry is not merely about God sending us abilities from afar, then asking us to use them on his behalf as he looks on. Rather, these gifts become ours as we participate in the new life that we have been given in Jesus:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... (1Pet 1:3, TNIV).

As children of God, the Holy Spirit unites us to Jesus and leads us to participate with our Lord in his ministry to the world. As we do, we share in Jesus' own divine-human ministry abilities (indeed, he possesses all the gifts!). It is thus in union and communion with Jesus that we become good stewards of God's grace.



There are, of course, many aspects to this stewardship, for Jesus' ministry extends to every aspect of life. Indeed, he is Lord of all — all we are and possess. In this issue, we examine one aspect of this "whole life stewardship"—financial stewardship.

Unfortunately, many hesitate to speak about money in church. They view it as self-serving (*"Give more or I'll lose my job!"*) or an act of desperation (*"Give more or the church will close!"*). Of course, we must avoid coercing people into giving (see the cartoon at left). However, as church leaders, we are called to teach God's people, through our example and words, to live out their calling to share in Jesus' life of good stewardship—and that includes the faithful stewardship of our God-given financial resources.

For some best practices concerning financial stewardship within the local church, see the article on page two. And here are links to some other helpful articles:

- The June 2011 *Equipper*: <http://mindev.gci.org/Web%20Documents/Equipper6.6.pdf>
- Articles on personal money management: <http://www.gci.org/series/money>

In Christ's service,

Ted Johnston, CAD communications

Best practices for effective financial stewardship

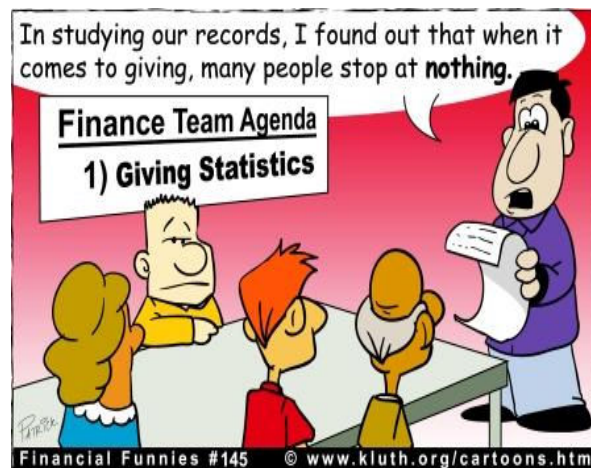
This article is adapted from one by David Bell of *Design Group International* (www.davidsbell.org/Home.html). It offers best practices related to the stewardship of money in local churches and is provided to stimulate thinking and encourage new perspectives. We suggest discussing it with your leadership team.

DISCIPLESHIP

- Provide opportunity for people to live a lifestyle with values other than consumerism.
- Promote the faith-based joy of generous giving, starting with the church leaders. [The positive example of the pastor and other church leaders is, perhaps, the most powerful way for a congregation to learn to be generous and consistent in giving].
- Focus on the need of the giver to give, rather than on the need of the church to underwrite its operations budget.
- Establish the offering as an integral act of worship. Link the offertory prayer to other aspects of the worship service.
- Consistently teach children and youth about Christian stewardship through activities and teaching.
- Promote a vision of ministry that attracts people and changes people's lives. Most people are not motivated to give out of survival issues; they are motivated by mission and ministries.

CULTIVATION

- Emphasize percentage giving at least once a year.
- Celebrate giving often and frequently provide opportunities for people to be able to give.
- Provide a course in personal budget planning.
- Tell people how they can include the church in their wills, endowments and bequests. [Refer them to <https://www.gci.org/participate/donate>.]
- Invite a different person/couple to breakfast or lunch once a month for a discussion about their faith commitment and money.
- Offer people the opportunity to discover their spiritual gifts and to find ways to use those gifts in the church and with others.



CONVERSATION

- Talk about money! Lift the taboo on discussing money in church.
- Be intentional about telling stories of the work, mission and ministry of the church. Ask, "How is our church changing people's lives – within the congregation, in the community and around the world?"
- Prepare a narrative budget for the congregation—tell the story as it relates to money.
- Rather than perpetuating a crisis mode, focus on the potential of the congregation.
- Inform the congregation of their giving patterns – set goals; provide follow-up information; personalize giving statements. Be sure to hand out or post the congregation's quarterly and end of year financial reports—keep your donors informed!
- Promote systems (at church, online, etc.) that provide ease in giving.