



EQUIPPER

The monthly e-magazine from the Church Administration and Development team of Grace Communion International

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Dear steward of God's grace,

A topic we address from time to time here in *Equipper* is that of stewardship.

It's an important topic because through Scripture, the Holy Spirit calls upon us to be "good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10 *KJV*). The grace Peter refers to in this verse is that of spiritual gifting. For example, if the Spirit graces us with a gift of hospitality, Peter exhorts us to steward it faithfully—using it cheerfully and generously, not begrudgingly (v9).



Of course, stewardship is not merely about our *doing*—first and foremost, it's about our *being*. Being a faithful steward means sharing in the being (character) of our triune God, which is love. The outflow of this sharing is our joyous participation in God's faithful doing—in this case the Holy Spirit's stewardship of the things of Jesus Christ, including all the wealth of his creation. Note our Lord's words to his people in Psalms 50:

I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine (vv9-11).

The Lord God, who is Creator and Sustainer of all, owns all. Therefore, he has no need that his people give him anything. However, he desires that they be faithful and generous stewards of the resources he shares with them so that they may participate in his lavish generosity toward his creation. Teaching stewardship is thus a vital part of facilitating the spiritual formation of God's people.

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It's a challenge to teach stewardship—particularly *financial* stewardship. This is so for several reasons, including the major cultural/generational shifts now occurring in our world. These shifts are helpfully addressed in *A New Day for Fundraising*, an article reproduced on page two. I trust you will find it helpful and I encourage you to discuss it with your preaching/teaching and financial teams.

In Christ's service,

Ted Johnston, *Equipper* editor, regional pastor and ministry developer

A NEW DAY FOR FUNDRAISING

By George K. Brushaber, President Emeritus, Bethel University

This article is reproduced from the summer 2011 issue of *NAE Insight* at http://www.nae.net/images/content/Insight_2011_Summer.pdf.

Churches, denominations, and evangelical ministry organizations are deep into a major paradigm shift relative to stewardship and how contribution support can best be sought and realized. The changes are big and far-reaching but also full of potential and promise.

This paradigm shift in donor attitude and behavior coincides with the ascendancy of the generations born after 1960 that now constitute the major contingent of givers on whom churches and ministries must depend for financial support. These congregants are not less generous than their elders nor do they have less capacity. But they have some key differences from the previous generation now moving into their retirement in large numbers.

Most post-1960 church members are less wary of calls for financial support than were those of the prior generation who caused many pastors to shy away from the topic. A fresh message of stewardship presented in new and effective ways brings them to action.

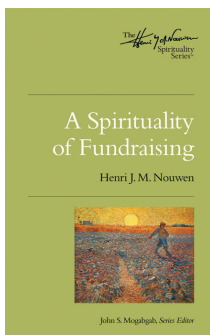
A powerful and compelling vision of ministry must be communicated in the form of an invitation to join in, to serve together with others, and to take "ownership" of the initiative or program. This invitation must reflect the high priority we place on their own personal spiritual growth as they enlist themselves, their skills, their time and their financial resources in ministry opportunities. The new perspective on stewardship builds on a discipleship agenda for growing Christ-followers. It defines generous giving as spiritual transformation and not merely as a financial transaction.

But this generation of givers has other key differences from the previous generation. Most are heavily dependent on technology and media for information, engagement and motivation. Newsletters and direct mailings have minimal effectiveness. A good website is essential for them, as are opportunities to participate actively in online social networks with fellow congregants and ministry leaders.



Since the majority manages their personal finances online, including banking, they expect ease in making contributions to the church by credit card or systematic electronic bank transfers. (Online giving grew 35 percent last year.) Post-1960s donors will demand clear and timely reporting, will want to see measurable results from their gifts, and if possible, will want hands-on participation in the ministry they support.

It can be a joy to extend a ministry of stewardship to this new generation of parishioners.



Church Administration and Development recommends three books on the related topics of stewardship and fundraising:

- ***Spirituality of Fundraising*** by Henri Nouwen. This book helpfully shows how fundraising, as a process integral to ministry, entails the conversion of our hearts and minds.
- ***Contagious Generosity*** by Chris Willard and Jim Sheppard.
- ***Church Giving Matters*** by Joel Mikell and Ben Stroup.