

EPIC 2020

Opening Giving Doors

Definition of Stewardship

In his book, Ask, Thank, Tell, Charles Lane suggests that "The goal of our stewardship ministry is to help God's people grow in their relationship with Jesus through the use of the time, talents and finances God has entrusted to them." (pg. 11) Today, we are going to focus primarily on opportunities for people to share their financial gifts and briefly on helping people share their time and talents.

Three Questions

1. How many of you know how much cash you have in on your person today?
2. How many of you have a checkbook with you?
3. If we were to take an offering right now to support a ministry you believed in strongly, would you be able to make the gift you wanted to make?

In the recent past, most financial support for a congregation came through an offering plate on Sunday morning, but today people have more options for giving than ever before.

Opening Multiple Giving Doors

There are at least seven giving doors you could open to support God's ministry happening through your congregation.

Spontaneous Giving

- Impulse Giving Opportunities: Impromptu offering, financial or in-kind, for specific ministry need
- Limit these opportunities to ministries where there is a clear connection between the gift being given and the ministry being accomplished

Major Community Sundays

- Special Sundays when members of the community are likely to be present and have the opportunity to support God's ministry through your congregation
- Christmas and Easter
- Could create additional opportunities that fit the needs of your community, for example Blessing of the Backpacks, and specifically invite community members to participate

Special Offerings

- Projects in the congregation or community that support a specific ministry need
- Dollars 4 PNG Scholars, Scholarships for Youth attending camp or youth event

Major Projects

- Significant projects in the life of the congregation such as a capital improvements on facilities or increases to staffing
- Often these projects involve asking for giving commitments over multiple years
- Traditional rule of thumb is that for the right project, a congregation can raise 60% of their annual giving per year for up to three years

Annual Investment in Ministry Plan

- The unified plan to support the core ministries being accomplished by a congregation like worship, education, youth ministry and pastoral support.
- In many congregations, undesignated gifts and Sunday offerings all support the Annual Investment in Ministry Plan.
- Many congregations ask for estimates of giving to support their Investment in Ministry Plan.
- Consider using a Narrative Investment in Ministry Plan to better tell your ministry story.

Enduring Gifts (Bequests)

- One of the largest transfers of wealth in human history is happening right now.
- Create opportunities for individuals to make an enduring gift to support specific areas of ministry.
- Having a policy in place to receive gifts before you receive them is critical.

Grants

- The Virginia Synod Fund for Mission provides a total of \$30,000 per year to support new ministry initiatives in local congregations.
- For small projects, consider recruiting Thrivent members to sponsor specific ministries using Thrivent Action Team grants.
- Very few grants will support operational costs or facility repairs, but congregations engaged in ministries impacting the community like feeding ministry or ministry with senior adults can often find grant support.

Ways to Give

Most people give in the way that they pay their bills. It is helpful to provide options for giving that are simple, easy to use, and match the other options in society for sharing and using their financial resources.

- Offering Plate and envelopes
- Checks
- Debit/Credit Cards
- Automatic Transfer/Online Bank Bill Pay
- Church Website/Church App
- Text
- Qualified Minimum Distribution (70 ½ and older)
- Stocks
- Property Transfer

Time and Talent

Questions to Ask . . .

1. Is your time and talent survey focused on the need of the individual to give or on the needs of your institution?
2. Do you use the information you gather to support ministry?
3. Is the survey available online?
4. Do you only ask once a year or do you ask for people to share their time and talents on a weekly basis?
5. Do you thank people who participate in the survey?

Say 'Thank You!'

It is both faithful and helpful to respond to gifts with generous thankfulness. Consider the following suggestions for acknowledging and thanking people for their generosity.

- Send five giving statements per year - April/May, June/July, September, December and January
- Say "Thank You!" Put a thank you note in each giving statement. Use pictures. Tell a Story. Connect financial gifts to ministry being accomplished, but keep it simple.
- Write personal thank you notes to individuals who share their time to support God's ministry through your congregation.