

Guidelines for Developing a Strong Stewardship Ministry



Catch *the*
Vision

*...a church of Growing and
Committed Christian Stewards*

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Guidelines for Developing a Strong Stewardship Ministry

Every church is different and unique, but each congregation needs a ministry that will encourage members to develop as Christian stewards. And...it's a ministry all churches can have.

Think about your church as you read through this material and pray that God will impress you on how your church can have a more effective stewardship ministry to and for your members.

Developing a ministry of stewardship in the church requires planning and organization. In many churches different groups (*i.e. finance committee, counting committee, etc.*) often operate independently of each other to carry out stewardship functions. A ministry of stewardship calls for these groups to be related in a way that better focuses the church's attention on stewardship development and growth.

A better approach to an effective stewardship ministry is to enlist and elect a committed and functioning committee or team with the specific assignment of leading the church in a ministry of stewardship. Everything related to stewardship in the church would be the responsibility of that group, creating a more consistent and coordinated ministry.

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Why Have a Ministry of Stewardship?

To affirm and proclaim the biblical teachings on stewardship.

The Bible teaches that God is creator and owner of all things, and we are stewards and managers of all that He entrusts to us.

-  God commanded His earliest creation, ***Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground*** (Genesis 1:28).
-  In the Old Testament, He taught, ***A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD*** (Lev. 27:30).
-  In one of Jesus' parables He said, ***Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns*** (Luke 12:42-43).
-  Paul challenged the Corinthian church, ***But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving*** (2 Cor. 8:7).
-  Paul explained that their efforts to rightly deliver the financial gifts ***in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men*** (2 Cor. 8:19-21).
-  Peter concluded, ***Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms*** (1 Peter 4:10).

Note some of the key words and phrases in these significant verses.


 subdue

 rule over

 a tithe...belongs to the Lord

 faithful and wise manager

 excel in this grace of giving

 what is right... in the eyes of the Lord... also in the eyes of men

 use...gift...to serve...faithfully administering God's grace.

The calling to be responsible and faithful stewards is a high and holy calling that God has given to each of His children. The church has a primary task to teach the Scriptures and to help Christian stewards fulfill the tasks that God has given them.

To teach and encourage members to use sound principles of management.

To be a *faithful* and wise manager over the material things that God entrusts to His people calls for an understanding and commitment to basic principles of money management. This involves how Christians earn, spend, give, and plan for the final distribution of their material resources.

Leaders who have knowledge and experience should be enlisted to prepare and teach members those principles. This might be church staff personnel, selected members, denominational leaders, or other available persons from outside the church.

Members also have a management responsibility for the spiritual gifts and abilities God has given them. As they develop their gifts and use opportunities for ministry, the church will be stronger, its outreach more compassionate, and the members *faithfully administering God's grace will be fulfilled*.

To challenge members to reach their giving potential

Most congregations identify money and giving with stewardship. While it is not the whole of Christian stewardship, giving is a major aspect of stewardship and remains vital to both members and the church as a whole. Individual Christian growth is enhanced through growth in giving. Ministries cannot succeed without adequate financial support.

A primary purpose of stewardship ministry is to find ways consistent with biblical teachings that will encourage and challenge members to remember that the *tithe... belongs to the LORD and to excel in this grace of giving*.

To provide the church with careful budget development, promotion of ministries, and administration of funds received throughout the year.

If the church maintains great expectations of individual members, it must model what it expects. That calls for careful and prayerful planning; developing a biblical view for using financial resources; making wise investment of resources; and sound management of how money is received, counted, recorded, distributed, reported, and audited.

All of those concerns must be addressed so that the church will have credibility *in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men*.

How to Organize for a Ministry of Stewardship

Two basic “people essentials” are needed to have a positive stewardship ministry in your church.

First is the commitment and full participation of church leaders to this ministry. This includes the pastor, other church staff members, and elected church leaders. They must lead, encourage, and provide training and support for this ministry. That could range from visible pulpit support to helping committee or team members in their planning. Most certainly it involves the stewardship example of all leaders.

The other essential concerns those persons specifically related to the stewardship ministry. Persons who serve in the organization used by your church should be committed to understanding and practicing biblical stewardship in the fullest sense. They should be generous givers through the church, be concerned and committed to the mission of the church, be willing to train and carry out their responsibilities, and participate in all group meetings.

Based on your church’s size, potential, and needs, use one or a combination of the following:

Committee Model

This will be especially effective if your church uses the committee approach to accomplish its tasks. This committee may replace a current finance or budget committee.

Ideally, the committee should have a minimum of five persons including the chairperson. The committee should give attention to the areas of stewardship education, budgeting, and accounting. Any ideas or suggestions would be considered by the whole committee and implemented as determined.

The committee will need to meet regularly to cover all the important areas of its work. Specific suggestions for enhancing stewardship in the church should be considered and implemented. An annual plan of stewardship activities should be planned and events should be included in the church’s calendar planning process.

Team Model

The team model parallels the committee approach except it assigns more responsibility to each area and enables the group to have greater flexibility. The team leader should be a person who can relate well to the church staff and other church leaders in areas of stewardship; schedule and preside at team meetings, and lead and coordinate the work of the team.

The three primary areas of concern will be addressed best by assigning section or work leaders to each of the three primary areas (education, budgeting, and accounting). These persons would take the lead in the area assigned.

The person(s) focusing on stewardship education would explore ways to teach biblical stewardship through existing church channels, recommend new and ongoing activities for the church calendar, and serve as a resource person for the team on stewardship education matters.

The person(s) assigned the budgeting concern would be mindful of the church's purpose and mission and keep aware of mission and ministry support needs as the best methods for budget development, promotion, commitment, and administration are determined. This would include careful planning of all needed events and consistent communication of budget needs and opportunities.

The accounting section person(s) would lead a constant review of how the church receives, counts, deposits, records, distributes, reports, and audits financial records. Careful attention to these matters builds confidence in the church's stewardship and provides a model for individual members.

- 👍 *Regular meetings and clear communication are essential as each section shares its concerns and work with the entire team. The entire team should make major decisions.*
- 👍 *Specific activities should be calendared and ongoing work evaluated and reviewed.*
- 👍 *Staff members and church leaders should be kept fully aware of the team's work.*

Individual Leader Model

- ✓ If your church is a smaller membership congregation, an individual leader may be effective. If possible, select someone other than the treasurer to involve more people.

In consultation with the pastor, the stewardship leader should determine needs and activities in stewardship education, budgeting, and accounting for all funds. All existing channels in the church should be used to help and challenge members to understand and practice biblical stewardship. In cooperation with the pastor and other leaders, plan at least one stewardship activity during each year.

When possible, the leader should encourage the church to expand the stewardship planning to an approach involving more than one person and more than one activity.

- ✓ If your church is a larger membership congregation and you have several committees or groups involved in areas related to stewardship (i.e. finance committee, audit group, etc.) that you must retain, consider a stewardship leader who could explain, coordinate, and challenge members of these groups to think in terms of developing stewards through the work they have been assigned.

- ✓ Plan at least one meeting annually (and more if possible and needed) of all groups to make each aware of what other groups are doing. Focus their attention on the contribution they make to the stewardship growth of the congregation. In consultation with the pastor or staff members, explore ways to broaden the vision and concern of these fellow members.

If possible, plan to phase in an organization, such as a Stewardship Ministry Team, that will more effectively serve your church.

Combination Model

Your church may want to adapt suggestions into a planning group that meets your specific needs. Some churches may take existing groups or committees related to stewardship and develop a council approach. Leaders from these groups should meet to coordinate their work, determine areas of need, and find the best ways to respond to those needs. Such an approach calls for the church and staff to commit to this method and provide support and encouragement for persons involved.

REMEMBER...to be most effective the organization that best fits your church should include:

- The following focus groups:
 - ✓ Stewardship Education (*affirming, encouraging, and teaching*)
 - ✓ Budgeting (*developing, promoting, committing, and administering the church budget*).
 - ✓ Accounting (*responsible handling and reporting on all funds received*).
- All functions of the church including worship, Bible study, ministry, proclamation, and education to accomplish a year-round ministry of stewardship.
- Plan, calendar, and promote specific activities that will strengthen your church and enable individual members to grow as stewards.

The model best suited to help your church is the:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Team |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual leader | <input type="checkbox"/> Combination |

Provide training for those serving in the stewardship ministry.

Training members will encourage and equip them to lead the church in this ministry and help them do the best job possible for the church. Contact your State Convention's Stewardship Office for assistance.

Schedule regular meetings.

At each meeting take time to review your plan and evaluate how things are going. Enlist at least one participant to share a stewardship testimony or a selected Scripture or thought. Participating members should be learning and growing throughout their period of service.

Action Plan for a Ministry of Stewardship

Basic Actions

1. *Be committed to Christ and the fulfillment of your church's mission.*

This calls for your growth as a Christian steward, dependence on God's leadership, and your prayerful participation and faithfulness in helping develop a strong ministry of stewardship for your congregation. .

2. *Evaluate your church's stewardship needs and plan actions to meet those needs.*

Examine the purpose of your church and how stewardship relates to it. Members should know that their stewardship development is important to God, vital to their spiritual growth, and essential for the church to fulfill its mission. The needs of your church may be different than other churches. In light of those needs, determine an annual plan of action and calendar necessary activities for the church's stewardship ministry.






Work with the pastor and other church leaders to determine the best ways to communicate with the congregation. Faithfully communicate the activities and results of major stewardship-related concerns.

3. *Be aware of available resources.*

Being aware of and using resources that would help you do a more effective job will enhance your ministry. Contact the State Convention Stewardship Office for information and explanations about helpful resources in all areas of stewardship including materials on estate planning.

Stewardship Education

1. *Teach the Bible's message on stewardship.*





-  Convey to the pastor his importance to the church's stewardship ministry and affirm him when he preaches and teaches on stewardship themes.
-  Help each teacher and church leader to recognize the importance of helping members understand and practice Christian stewardship in their daily lives and through their involvement in the church.
-  Review upcoming Bible study lessons and alert teachers to those lessons dealing with stewardship.
-  In addition to the ongoing ministry of teachers and Bible study leaders, in consultation with the pastor and church leaders, plan and calendar at least one special event for teaching some aspect of stewardship to the church.
-  Explore the ways you can teach stewardship during the year through Vacation Bible School and other ongoing church events.

2. *Use stewardship features (i.e. Scripture verses, testimonies, statistical information) in church publications when possible.*
3. *Use testimonies and pre-offertory statements (Scripture or brief thought) in worship services.*
4. *Include a stewardship challenge and important stewardship information in new member orientation and materials.*
5. *Provide estate-planning information including the long-term value to the church.*
6. *Express gratitude to the church membership for their giving and faithful expressions of stewardship.*


Budgeting

Provide prayerful support and attentive involvement in:

1. Budget development

-  Lead the church to have a unified, ministries-centered budget involving as many members as possible in the budgeting process.
-  Emphasize the church's stewardship of the ministry by encouraging adequate staff financial arrangements and support.
-  Support mission giving as one important way the church fulfills the Great Commission.
-  Request budget funds to support any anticipated stewardship activities.


2. Budget promotion

-  Plan a special budget promotion activity to emphasize how members' giving makes possible needed ministries.

3. Budget commitment

-  Challenge members annually to commit and grow in their giving through the church.

4. Budget administration

-  Administer the budget according to the church's decisions and procedures.

Accounting

Maintain a careful accounting of all church funds. The church's management demonstrates its stewardship and provides an example to the members.

1. *Help develop needed policies to insure the careful handling of all church funds.*
2. *Receive the money from all channels within the church.*
3. *Encourage the formulation of policies for receiving special gifts.*
4. *Count the money and complete appropriate records.*
5. *Record all financial transactions.*
6. *Report to the church on all financial transactions.*
7. *Arrange for an annual audit of church financial records.*

Some churches may choose to add one or two additional sections or emphases depending on their needs. People relating to these areas would be a part of the ongoing organization. Examples are as follows:

Estate Planning

1. *Promote estate giving to church members.*
2. *Plan and conduct estate-planning emphases.*
3. *Participate in formulating policies for receiving special gifts.*
4. *Provide estate-planning information including the long-term value to the church.*
5. *Promote "Make Your Will Month."*

Capital Fund-Raising

1. *Make plans for conducting an emphasis on raising money for a determined church need.*
2. *Select and recommend the procedure to raise the funds for the church's approval.*
3. *Serve in the church ministry organization until this work is completed.*

Review your thoughts and decide the most important tasks for the coming year.

Use four simple questions to evaluate each selection.

What? *What exactly do we need to accomplish?*

How? *How is the best way to accomplish these tasks?*

When? *If an event is needed, select a date. If the task does not call for an event, select a time for the process.*

Who? *Who will lead in accomplishing this task?*

This year we, with God's help, we will lead our church to have a

Ministry of Stewardship

Making a difference in our church and in the lives of individual members.

It was Sunday evening and the church was involved in a special stewardship emphasis. Members were sitting around tables following a church-wide dinner. Near the beginning of the program a middle-aged lady stood up as she shared her testimony. She explained to those who did not know her well, that she had not grown up in a Christian home. Even though, she attended the church as a young lady and eventually made a profession of faith in Christ. Soon after she became united with the church and was baptized. Ever since then she had been an active member.

She thanked the church that evening for all of the blessings she had experienced over the years through the church. Foremost a Sunday School teacher, who she had known for 18 years. That teacher had helped her to see the importance of tithing to the church even though her family lived on a very limited income.

That teacher encouraged her to give just a small portion of the money earned from her baby-sitting job. That teacher explained how this small portion would be recognized through the eyes of God. She shared how fulfilled she had become learning through those teenage years to witness such a bountiful ministry develop and prosper in her community.

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