

The Stewardship JOURNAL

From the Desk
of Our Executive Director

An Interview with Dr. John Yeats
and Mark Brooks

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January "Recurring Giving Month"

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From the desk of our Executive Director

1 in 5 churches in America could close their doors due to the lockdowns in the next 18 months. That was a report by the Barna Group last year. That's a sobering statistic. I don't want any of our Missouri Baptist churches to be in that number! Now more than ever, our state, our nation, indeed, the world needs every church advancing the Kingdom message of Hope.

One major reason many churches close is a lack of finances. Giving to the church has been in decline for many years. COVID-19 hastened the decline many are experiencing. We must turn this around! This new resource, ***The Stewardship Journal***, we believe helps our pastors and church leadership navigate these challenging times. Our goal is to produce a journal that is informative, as well as practical.

Each Journal contains thoughts, reflections, and testimonies from various Missouri Baptist Convention staff and other leaders and pastors from across the state. Additionally, we are pleased to announce a partnership with Mark Brooks, The Stewardship Coach. I've known Mark for over 40 years. No one has written more on stewardship than Mark, and his wisdom and insight are practical and above all biblical. Combined with our team, we are looking to provide you the best help in the SBC.

Now here is a preview of the pages that follow.

Check out the **Rob Phillips interview with myself and Mark Brooks** – Rob Phillips, who serves as our Ministry Support Director, interviewed with myself and Mark where we outline in more detail our objectives and goals for ***The Stewardship Journal***.

"It Starts With You" is a lead post by Mark Brooks, where he lays out the key toward being fully funded in the New Year. Every Journal contains key thoughts from Mark, along with practical steps for increasing stewardship.

Offering Talks – Each edition of the Journal contains a freshly written offering talk that helps you set the stage for a great offering.

Bonus Section – Each week, we give you practical help in this section. We want to provide you with more than theory. We want to provide you with simple tools to increase giving and givers.

I am excited about this new opportunity to serve MO Baptist! Let us know what you think *and* what ideas you have for us.

Advancing the Gospel!



Dr. John Yeats

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An Interview with Dr. Yeats and Mark Brooks

Rob Phillips

Half of the pastors surveyed see a coming negative economic impact for the church, according to a LifeWay Research survey conducted late last year. As we enter into the new year, we continue to battle the negative impact of COVID-19 on both attendance and giving. This is creating financial difficulty for many Missouri Baptist churches.

MBC Executive Director John Yeats is determined to take steps to address these challenges. Dr. Yeats announced his intentions to meet this challenge in an article posted in *The Pathway*, saying, “The mission of Missouri Baptists to transform lives and communities with the gospel is too important to risk losing any of our churches over failure to disciple members with stewardship principles. As I read and reviewed the current stress on giving, I knew we had to take action and provide our churches with the tools and resources to help them stay financially secure. That’s the reason we’re launching *The Stewardship Journal*.”

We interviewed Dr. Yeats and Mark Brooks, a key writer for the new journal, as we launch this new tool.

Rob: Dr. Yeats, what was the driving idea behind the creation of *The Stewardship Journal*?

Dr. Yeats: All of us are concerned about how COVID-19 and the lockdowns are impacting giving. It now appears the pandemic is going to be with us for many more weeks. Our goal is to serve our churches by resourcing pastors with practical tools. I felt we needed to be proactive rather than reactive. The Journal is one step we are taking to combat the decline in giving.

Rob: What can Missouri Baptists expect from the Journal, and how is it different from our other publications?

Dr. Yeats: The Journal is dedicated *specifically* to stewardship related issues, which separates it from our other publications. Additionally, we are partnering with a friend of mine who has a very successful ministry, Mark Brooks, known as The Stewardship Coach. Mark has, for years, written a newsletter called *The Stewardship Coach*. We are benefiting from Mark’s writing and the writing of many of our staff and other leaders in the Missouri Baptist Convention. We are glad to have Mark on the team!

Rob: Mark, welcome to the team! Give us an idea of what our readers can expect from the Journal.

Mark: Thanks, Rob, and thank you, Dr. Yeats, for this amazing opportunity. While I grew up in Oklahoma, I was born in Kansas City and lived there through the fifth grade. I still have a lot of family living in Missouri, so I have a special interest in helping Missouri Baptists accelerate stewardship. That is the goal of the Journal – to accelerate stewardship for pastors and church leaders. We want to give them key insights into stewardship, but most of all, we want to provide practical help that increases both giving and givers.

Rob: Dr. Yeats, how do you see pastors and leaders using this tool?

Dr. Yeats: First, we are providing insights and updates into the state of the plate. Our leaders are well acquainted with the issues they need to address. Stewardship is just one of them. Then we give them weekly help such as offering talks, sample letters, emails, etc. While the issues discussed might not fit your need for this week, we archive each issue so, at any time, you can come to find the help you need for the challenges you face.

Rob: We look forward to reading your thoughts.

Every Monday, we’ll be emailing pastors and other key church leaders *The Stewardship Journal* e-newsletter. Subscription and an archive of newsletters are available to everyone at mobaptist.org/stewardship-journal.

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Current Events and Relevant Thoughts From:

The Stewardship Coach

Mark Brooks

2021 Giving Success: It Starts With You!



The experts are saying that 1 in 5 churches could close their doors forever this year. The picture on the left is of a former church we once attended in the Atlanta area. The Great Recession essentially put them out of business. If the experts are right, then signs like the one on the left will become common again.

I am going to help assure you are *not* one of those one in five churches that close. That might seem like a bold statement, but I believe God has called me to help assure Great Commission churches keep on the path to financial security. You see, the primary reason 1 in 5 churches will close is due to a lack of financial security.

Starting with this issue, the beginning of my eighth year of publishing *The Stewardship Coach*, I am going to lay out for you how to build a stewardship platform. The starting point of how to accomplish this is the title of this Coach, *It Starts With You!*

Let me assure you that I will be with you throughout the process, coaching you through the steps. This is my third crisis I have coached churches through: 9-11, The Great Recession, and now COVID-19. Each time, the churches that partnered with me kept fully functioning. The things I learned helping them, I will bring here to help you on the path to financial security. In the next few weeks, I will share with you the basics you need to develop a stewardship platform.

Let me say a quick word to those veterans on our team, some who have every issue of the Coach, about why the next few weeks will be good for you as well as those new to the team. COVID-19 has changed everything. From how you take up the offering to everything else, all our worlds have changed. I start every year going over the basics. This year those basics, due to COVID-19, must be reviewed, rethought, repurposed, etc. Here is one thing that has not changed ...

It starts with you! When it comes to helping a church be fully funded, the biggest obstacle I have to overcome in the typical church is the staff. Sometimes it is the Senior Pastor! Part of the problem is that we were never trained in stewardship development. Up until the pandemic, the declines in giving were so small few even realized what was happening. On top of all that, who has more time for one more thing?

I have the time and experience, and I will coach you through this pandemic into recovery and on to a firm path toward financial security. Consider this newsletter as a primary tool in developing your stewardship platform.

Now let's get back to, **it starts with you!** When I say it starts with you, I want you to be:

Aware – You have a lot on your plate. Reading this newsletter will help you cut out searching the Internet for answers late at night. I can't help you if you are not paying attention to the crisis around us. Giving has long been in decline and the pandemic just steepened that decline. Don't think you couldn't be one of those 1 in 5 churches closing. Members of the church pictured above never saw their decline coming either. Church leaders, it's time to step up. You know you need to do something and I'm going to coach you through what to do.

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The Stewardship Coach

The main way I keep you aware is by sending you this newsletter every week. I was asked recently, why I mailed this out weekly. The answer is seeing this every week keeps you *aware* of stewardship. My goal is to prove my value so you open the email and the newsletter. As a former pastor, I know how it goes. Some weeks you are slammed. Keep them in a file and I will be here when you need me.

This next part is crucial. When I say it starts with you, I can't help you unless you adopt ...

The Right Attitude – “I simply don't like to talk about money.” I realize that some of you are uncomfortable with any talk about money, giving, finances, etc. I hear that a lot. I understand, but my approach might surprise you. Here is one of my core principles, **it is not *that* we ask for money that people hate. It is *how* we ask for money that matters.** I'm going to show you how to create a desire within people to *want* to give to your church.

What's the right attitude for church leaders when it comes to stewardship? Let me answer that with a couple of questions. Is the mission of your church important? Do you believe in that mission or is this simply a job for you? It's eternally important and you wouldn't be reading this if you didn't deeply believe in your calling. How about this for an attitude statement?

My mission, to impact my world for Jesus, is given to me by God. We are changing the world one life at a time. Since all this is true, why would a Christian *not* want to give money to support that mission?

If you adapt this kind of attitude, you just took the first step toward building a stewardship platform to put your church on the path to financial security. While we are talking about attitude, here is what motivates me:

I believe in the mission God gave the local church and that it deserves to be fully funded!

Therefore, I view things through that lens. I'm the guy that always asks, **“How will that impact your giving?”** Then, as your Coach, I will give you my two cents and show you a series of plays to meet the need at hand. Which leads to one final thing, when I say it starts with you, ***you*** must put my plays into ...

Action - Being fully funded will not happen by accident. I believe miracles still happen today but I have found that money doesn't fall from heaven or grow on a tree. People give you money and you have to capture their attention and, most importantly, their hearts before you get their dollars. You need a plan. I am going to help you with that. Week after week, through this newsletter, together, we will work to keep you fully funded in 2021 and put you firmly on the path to financial security through this decade. That's my plan. However, if you are not willing to put the work into a good generosity plan, you will not be fully funded.

We are not out of the woods yet, but I believe there is a path forward. Let me show you that path! **Remember, it starts with you!**



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach
mark@acts17generosity.com

Find out how to access all of my playbooks at <https://acts17generosity.com/product-category/manuals/>

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Missions and Ministry Moment: Setting Up Your Offering

Every week in *The Stewardship Journal* we will write what are called offering talks. We have found that the easiest way to see an increase in giving is to improve how you approach the offering time. Instead of telling people they don't have to give, we like to show them what giving to a church accomplishes. By showing people your mission and ministry focus, you will create a desire in your attendees to *want* to give to support that life change. That's why we call them Missions and Ministry Moments.

You can read it exactly as written or use them as idea starters for how the message would fit your culture and context. This week focuses upon how people often make New Year's Resolutions. It sets up a focus on Recurring Giving.

Did You Make Any Resolutions?

Did any of you make New Year's resolutions? An article in *Inc.* magazine revealed that about 60% of us make resolutions, but only about 8% of us are successful in keeping them.¹ Based upon that, how are you doing keeping your resolutions?

If you want to keep your resolutions, you might be interested in another article *Inc.* magazine wrote entitled **7 Tips to Make Sure You Actually Keep Your New Year's Resolutions This Year.**² They said, "This is what people who keep their resolutions do." One of the tips was, set yourself up for success.

By now you might be thinking, what does this have to do with the offering? Often, Christians will resolve to give more in the New Year. They might resolve to increase the amount or the frequency of their giving. Like all New Year's resolutions, the best-laid plans often get sidetracked by the tyranny of the urgent or other distractions.

If you have resolved to generously give to support our life changing work, we have multiple ways by which you can do that. The best is by signing up to have your offering become recurring. That way you never have to remember the checkbook because most of you don't know where that is anyway. Your gift gets here whether you do or not. It's the surest way to fulfill a resolution to give.

Setting up recurring giving is easy to do. Simply go to **GIVE YOUR URL GIVING PAGE ADDRESS.** Then follow the instructions and you will be helping us make a difference here in our city and literally across the world.

1. <https://www.inc.com/peter-economy/10-top-new-years-resolutions-for-success-happiness-in-2019.html>
 2. <https://www.inc.com/amy-morin/7-tips-to-make-sure-you-actually-keep-your-new-years-resolution-this-time.html>
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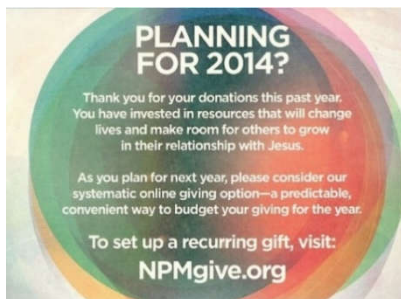
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Bonus Material

How to Make January "Recurring Giving Month"

Every week we will give you what we call bonus material. Sometimes it's an interview with a leader we feel can add value to our conversation. Sometimes you will see book reviews or other posted articles we feel will be of value to you as you build out your stewardship platform. Often, like in this issue, we share examples of how others have messaged some aspect of stewardship or there will share samples we have written.

This week's Bonus Section features recurring giving.



January is a good month to push recurring giving. The sample here, while dated, does give you an idea of how to put recurring giving in the mind of your donors. This sample was in a yearly statement from North Point in Atlanta.

How important is recurring giving for your stewardship platform? I wrote about this recently in a post entitled, ***4 Advantages of Recurring Giving***. <https://gyve.com/2020/11/25/4-advantages-of-recurring-giving/>. Here are my top 4 advantages:

Advantage #1 - Your giving will increase. Churches that offer and highlight recurring giving always raise more money than the churches who do not offer this type of giving platform. One reason why giving increases is revealed in advantage two.

Advantage #2 - It assures there is always an offering. COVID-19 has and will continue to impact attendance and thus the offering. Even when you get back, it is almost a certainty that the weather will impact your weekend services at some point. Recurring giving never is impacted by anything. As a result, your giving goes up. The last thing you need to start your New Year off is to get behind in giving due to COVID or inclement weather. Recurring giving will help you offset this.

Advantage #3 - It helps offset the summer slump in giving. Summers are notoriously one of the worst seasons for giving. By setting up recurring giving, you can avoid the summer slump in giving.

Advantage #4 - It makes your giving more consistent, helping you plan better. One church illustrated this a few years back by saying, "Recurring giving has taken the angst out of our staff meetings. We used to fret over how to pay our bills, especially in summer. Now our giving is consistent which allows for better planning." Stressing recurring giving can do the same for your church.

How do you accomplish this? Here is the simple message we work to use across all our platforms.

"Are you resolving to put God first this year in your finances? The best way to accomplish this is by setting up your giving to be automatic. We offer an easy, safe and secure way to do this. Go to (insert your web address) and follow the simple steps."

This message, or one like it, can be supported by pictures in announcements, screenshots, social media, and all print pieces at the church. Take advantage of the advantages of recurring giving!