

Preaching Stewardship

Video Presentation Notes

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These following outlines are adapted from Bishop Craig A. Satterlee's book "Preaching and Stewardship: Proclaiming God's Invitation to Grow," (The Alban Institute, Herndon, VA, 2011). Participants in the workshop or users of the two-DVD set are expected to purchase the book. These notes only cover some of the points in the DVDs.

Disk #1 Presentation #1

Preaching Stewardship Overview

- a.) A homiletic method specifically for preaching stewardship.**
- b.) Stewardship myths and strategies for addressing the myths.**
- c.) Consider what the Bible says about giving.**
- d.) Discuss the question: Why is preaching about stewardship and money so hard?**

1. Define what you mean by "stewardship."
 - a. Don't assume everyone knows what you mean when you say stewardship.
 - b. Don't assume everyone has the same understanding of what a steward is.
 - c. Stewardship is care of time, talents and treasure.
 - d. Name what you are talking about. If it's money, then call it money and not stewardship.
 - e. If you mean volunteering time, say that and not stewardship.

2. When preaching a stewardship sermon, God, not money, is the subject of the message.
 - a. Preaching stewardship is not fundraising.
 - b. God, not money, is the subject of the sermon.
 - c. Preachers must name the “good news” in giving.
 - d. Exhortation follows proclamation.
 - e. Jesus does the talking.
 - f. The gospel calls for invitation.
 - g. The sermon appeals to the best in people, to their identity as God’s beloved children.

3. Connect the good news of giving as a faithful response to the gospel.
4. Invite people to grow in their giving.
5. Give them a biblical plan.
6. Use a tone appropriate to the gospel.
7. Partner with a stewardship campaign or plan.

Disk #1 Presentation #2

Myths and Strategies, Part 1

I Myth 1: Everyone knows what we mean by “stewardship.”

- a) It's a church word that means something different to everyone who uses it.
- b) Strategy: Say what you mean by “stewardship.”
- c) The meaning or definition of stewardship can change over time.

II Myth 2: There is one, correct, divinely instituted way, theology and practice of stewardship.

- a) Many preachers and congregational leaders assume that ways of practicing stewardship – including spoken and unspoken norms about how the preacher will (or will not) address money from the pulpit, the form or format of the annual stewardship campaign and budgeting process, and ways of receiving congregants' responses – are the way God wants stewardship done, as if stories of giving in the Bible – Abraham giving Melchizedek a tenth (Genesis 14:17-19), Israel bringing “first fruits” into the house of the Lord (Exodus 23:20; 34:22), the people putting their gifts into the temple treasury as Jesus looked on (Mark 12:14; Luke 21:1), the church after Pentecost distributing the proceeds from the sale of their possessions to all according to their needs (Acts 2: 44-45), and Paul's collection for the church at Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:1-3) – are instances of an unchanging stewardship practice that extends throughout the biblical narrative and the church's life to our day as ushers pass plates, bags or baskets each Sunday in worship.

- b) Strategy: Explain that God does not give us a single, eternal, divinely authorized practice of giving money to the church.

In his book, “In Pursuit of The Almighty’s Dollar: A History of Money And American Protestantism,” James Hudnut-Beumler says “Stewardship is a peculiarly North American phenomena.” (2007, University of North Carolina Press)

Like worship practices and biblical interpretation, stewardship is a way the church attempts to faithfully respond to God and the gospel, and this faithful response has changed over time.

- c) Strategy: Encourage voluntary giving in a systematic manner by appealing for unified giving in the church.

- i) Acts 5:1-11. Story of Ananias and Saphira

- ii) 1 Corinthians 16:1-2. Collection for the saints.

- d) Strategy: Help God’s people understand how the work of the church relates to and is connected with New Testament missional priorities.

What are the approaches to money and giving that are consistent with the gospel we preach?

III Myth 3: Stewardship is purely a theological practice.

- a) Protestants across traditions preach about money in the same way.

- b) Stewardship was invented in the United States 1885-1917.
- c) The Great Privatization – relocating religion from a public good to a private, voluntarily supported good.
- d) Privatization began during “The Great Awakening” in the 1730s – 1740s.
- e) Christians began making choices about giving rather than fulfilling an obligation.
- f) Churches have two models for support:
 - The private club model
 - The voluntary member supported institution
- g) Strategy: Preachers and congregational leaders must plan so the congregation’s stewardship and fundraising efforts complement rather than contradict each other.
- h) Preaching anchors fundraising techniques in the gospel and holds fundraising accountable to the gospel that is preached.

Disk #1 Presentation #3

Myths and Strategies, Part 2

IV Myth 4: A good stewardship sermon and response can turn financial situations around quickly.

- a) Stewardship that invites people to deepen their faith works slowly.
- b) It changes people and communities over weeks, years and lifetimes.
- c) Inviting people to grow in giving in response to the gospel can sometimes seem to be impractical.
- d) Strategy: Be honest about the churches financial realities.

V Myth 5: We can talk about giving as a part of one's overall stewardship.

- a) Leaders complain people are eager to give to particular causes.
- b) Leaders complain people hesitate to support the ministry of the church.
- c) Encourage giving in a systematic manner.

- d) Some church leaders appeal to the distribution principle (Acts 2:45); Goods were held in common and distributed as needed.
- e) Others site 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; A portion of their income was set apart and given to the church on the Sabbath.
- f) Strategy: Encourage voluntary giving in a systematic manner, appealing for unified giving in the church.

VI Myth 6: People only care about the building.

- a) Leaders frequently attempt to save money by cutting spending on the congregation's mission and ministry.
- b) More for the building, but can we cut elsewhere?
- c) In the years leading up to the Civil War, American Protestants established a lasting pattern of building churches as needed and rebuilding or improving churches as acts of devotion and self-expression.
- d) Church buildings proclaim how a faith community conceives of and experiences God.
- e) Church buildings are one way congregations draw people and show how they are different from other congregations.
- f) A church building is God's house and worthy of any expense so people can indulge their tastes.

- g) Church is usually associated with a place and seldom referred to beyond the congregation, such as the synod and churchwide organization.
- h) People tend to give first to the building, then to the local faith community, and finally to the church beyond the congregation.
- i) Strategy: Try to transform your church building from a spiritual home to a community's center.

VII Myth 7: Stewardship is different from fundraising.

- a) By the end of World War II, the church had partnered preaching stewardship concepts with fundraising techniques.
- b) The three most pronounced and lasting fundraising techniques used are (1) the every-member canvas or visitation, (2) pledge cards, and (3) the divided envelope, on which church members specify what portion of their weekly offering is to be given to the congregation and what portion given to benevolence.
- c) Christians are trained to give to the church from an early age.
- d) Over the years funding techniques by the church have expanded to employ a professional fee for service companies.
- e) Strategy: Preaching must be partnered with a stewardship (fundraising) campaign. Preachers and congregational leaders must plan so that preaching and the congregation's stewardship or fundraising campaign complement rather than contradict each other.

Disk #1 Presentation #4

How Should We Give?

We will look at the biblical question:

“How are we to give to God and how much?”

- a) In terms of money and giving, Scripture’s greatest gift is to keep before us the reason we give is God. We give to God in response to all that God has given us – particularly in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus – and as a way of sharing in God’s own will for and work in the world. In other words, we give in response to the gospel.
- b) We offer our gifts as part of the Sunday service because we give to God as *an act of worship*. In accounts of giving in the Old Testament, this unnamed woman in Mark’s Gospel, and pilgrims visiting holy places today, we see that worshipers bring things they value to God’s altar and leave them there as an expression of their love, adoration and devotion to God or Christ.
- c) Scripture indicates that we give to *participate in the mission, reign or kingdom of God*.
- d) We give as *an act of resistance* to the powers at work in the world that are opposed to God. Giving money away is a concrete means of living into the new life accomplished in Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Describing stewardship as an act of resistance invites the church to transform giving from a routine matter into a discipline by which believers resist the powers of death at work in the world.
- e) Giving is also a way we bear witness to God as giver and provider, and ourselves as stewards or caretakers of everything that God gives to us. “But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today” Deuteronomy 8:18.

- f) Giving, specifically tithing, is a biblical and spiritual discipline by which we allow God to enter into our lives and shape us in a way that our imagination, our thoughts, and our words cannot. The spiritual discipline of giving – like worship, prayer, fasting, reading Scripture, and works of charity – is a way we allow God to continue to shape us into the image of Christ by engaging in a practice that brings us further into the kingdom of God.
- g) Some preachers teach that the reason for people to give is in part to receive, to be blessed by God in the here and now. Yet, while we can point to a few passages that seem to suggest we give in order to receive material prosperity, recognition, or power and influence, the bulk of Scripture indicates that God does not work this way. God gives first, and God gives without regard for what we do or do not give.

How should we give?

- h) Fearfully
 - i) For 50 years, beginning in the 1870s, Christian stewardship literature was filled with the notion that the failure to give at least a tithe or 10 percent to the church was tantamount to “robbing God.” As these preachers interpreted Malachi 3:8-12, God will curse those who rob God.
 - ii) This understanding of Scripture contrasts what we know about the gospel.
 - iii) “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:18-19).

i) Gratefully

- i) “What shall I return to the Lord for all his bounty to me? I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call on the name of the Lord” (Psalm 116:12ff).

- ii) Our gratitude to God transcends our circumstances because God always loves us, faithfully cares for us, and earnestly desires the best for us. (Philippians 4:11-13).

- iii) The key to giving to God gratefully is receiving from God gratefully.

- iv) People give gratefully when they are genuinely thankful. Our gratitude to God transcends our circumstances.

j) Freely

- i) Paul testifies that the churches of Macedonia “voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints” (2 Corinthians 8:3-4).

- ii) “With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you” (Psalm 54:6).

- iii) Encouraging people to give freely does not mean we can’t have conversations with them about how much they should give. We can ask them to be prayerful about giving according to what are their means.

k) Cheerfully

- i) “Each of you must give as you have made up your mind,” Paul writes, “not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

- ii) Advocates of cheerful giving argue that when people give cheerfully, they are aware they are giving to God. Cheerful givers bring their gifts regularly to the church as an act of worship.

- iii) They make their giving a subject of prayer. A cheerful gift represents a person’s ability to financially participate in God’s mission and may even be a sacrifice.

- iv) Giving cheerfully leads to spiritual growth. Giving cheerfully does not necessarily mean giving easily, painlessly or comfortably.

l) Generously

- i) Giving generously is a sign that God is at work regardless of circumstances.

- ii) “We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means” (2 Corinthians 8:1-3).

iii) According to Paul, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22, 23).

iv) As a fruit of the Holy Spirit, generosity is not something we conjure or cultivate by ourselves. We become generous by “not quenching God’s Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:19), but allowing the transforming work of Christ to have its full effect in shaping us to be the people God wants us to be (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:6).

m) Obediently

i) “All tithes from the land, whether the seed from the ground or the fruit from the tree, are the Lord’s; they are holy to the Lord” (Leviticus 27:30).

ii) For many Christians, giving is a matter of obeying God’s command.

iii) In response to those who say that most giving in the New Testament was voluntary, advocates of biblical obligation assert that freewill offerings are gifts in addition to the fixed law of tithes and that the fixed law of tithes applies to all times, is obligatory under all circumstances, and prescribes the minimum standard for giving.

n) Intentionally

- i) “Each of you must give as you have made up your mind,” Paul writes (2 Corinthians 9:7). The church understands Paul’s words to mean that Christians are to give intentionally with forethought that has been bathed in prayer.

- ii) We are to give according to a plan: Paul instructs the Corinthians, “On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come” (1 Corinthians 16:2).

- iii) Spiritual benefits God gives us through intentional giving:
 - (1) Intentional giving helps us to remember God.
 - (2) It brings us closer to and makes us more dependent upon God as we remain committed to our plan.
 - (3) The Holy Spirit works through a giving plan to transform us.
 - (4) It helps us to look not to our own interests, but to the interests of others.

Disk #2 Presentation #5

Why Should We Give?

Culture says we give in order to get. I think we give in order to show God that we love God.

How can we help people understand the offerings we give show how we love God?

Motives and the reasons why we should give:

- 1) We also give to participate in God's mission in the world.
- 2) We give to bear witness to Christ. An example is alms giving.
- 3) What we do with our money says we belong to Jesus and not to mammon.
- 4) By giving money away, we resist the power that money has in the church and the world.
- 5) The best way to disempower money is by giving it away.
- 6) We transform money from something that challenges the gospel to something that is a means of God's grace.

7) We give money away as a spiritual discipline. It is as important as worship, prayer and Bible study.

8) By claiming giving as a spiritual discipline, we will grow in grace.

How much should we give?

a) Give God everything

- i. According to Scripture, the place we begin to answer the question of how much we give to God is by seriously acknowledging that, in actuality, we do not give anything to God because God owns everything.
- ii. “Do not say to yourself, ‘my power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.’ But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today” (Deuteronomy 8:17-18).
- iii. God does not give things to us in the sense that we then own them and are free to do whatever we please with them. Instead, God entrusts everything we are and everything we have to us, and God desires, even expects, that we will use everything God entrusts to us according to God’s will.

b. Give first fruits

- i. Giving “first fruits” to God means that, whenever we receive income and however we receive income, we give to God first according to our predetermined plan. (Deuteronomy 26:1, 2)

- ii. Blessings that come from giving to God first.
 - 1. First-fruits giving is a way we honor God for all God gives and does for us. Proverbs teaches, “Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce” (Proverbs 3:9).

 - 2. Giving first fruits provides a way to cultivate a spirit of contentment with what we have and dependence on God to provide for us (1Timothy 6:6-8).

 - 3. Giving to God first is a key to growing in generosity, resisting the power of mammon and participating in God’s work in the world.

c. Give proportionately

- i. Scripture tells us to give proportionately according to what we have received (Deuteronomy 16:10).

- ii. Proportionate giving is a sign that Christian communities are committed to egalitarianism. In this regard, giving in proportion to our blessings means considering how financially blessed we are compared to others in the community and not how blessed and generous we feel on any given Sunday.

- iii. The good news of giving proportionately is that the size of the gift really does not matter.

d. Give a tithe

- i. “All tithes from the land, whether the seed from the ground or the fruit from the tree, are the Lord’s; they are holy to the Lord” (Leviticus 27:30).

- ii. “Set apart a tithe of all the yield of your seed that is brought in yearly from the field” (Deuteronomy 14:22).

iii. Spiritual benefits

1. “Tithing, as an acknowledgement of God’s abundance and grace, expresses gratitude for what we *have*, not for what we *desire*.” Tithing is a way we declare, “I have enough!”
2. Living on nine-tenths teaches us to take better care of all that God entrusts to us.

3. Tithing is also a way we acknowledge that we are blessed to be a blessing and chart a path to living for others, in spite of the cultural call to look out only for ourselves.

4. Tithing is an act of defiance, because giving away a noticeable portion of what we have before we do anything else sets a pattern of living in opposition to the economic forces that shape us. Tithing defies the cultural impulse to live for one's own desires.
5. Tithing is an external standard that grounds our giving in habit rather than mood.

e. Grow in giving

- i. Zacchaeus sets his own standard for giving at “one half to the poor.” Jesus asked the rich man to give everything, and, indeed, the first Christians did.

- ii. Grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ (Ephesians 4:15).

- iii. To grow in giving means Christians move from giving proportionately to support their local church community to giving sacrificially – giving beyond what the world considers reasonable.

Disk #2 Presentation #6

Messing with the Power of Money

Six steps to preparing and preaching a sermon about stewardship:

- 1- Name money.
- 2- Preach the gospel.
- 3- Connect money and giving as a faithful response to the gospel.
- 4- Invite people to grow in their giving.
- 5- Give them a biblical plan.
- 6- Use a tone appropriate for the gospel.

Preaching about stewardship is emotional.

Emotional to the preacher

Emotional to the hearer

Why are stewardship sermons so hard?

- They challenge our norms and assumptions.
- They seldom examine the reason for our discomfort.
- They name the attitudes and behaviors.
- They bring attitudes and behaviors into the open.

I Messing with the power of mammon

- a) Money, affluence or mammon exerts power in our culture, holding spirits captive and driving everyone to act on their desire causing them to acquire more and more.

- b) In the church, money opposes the proclamation of the gospel in three ways:
 - i) Mammon frames the way we view both others and ourselves.

The book: "Preaching to Every Pew"
James R. Nieman
Thomas G. Rodgers
© 2001, Fortress Press, Minneapolis

Manifestation of money in five ways

- 1- Money attempts to determine our worth.
 - 2- Money defines justice.
 - 3- Money influences us according to our labor.
 - 4- Money exerts influence over our loyalty.
 - 5- Money influences how we claim our voice.
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- ii) We consider money a private matter.
When preachers address money and giving in sermons, people empowered by money's claim of secrecy get uncomfortable and may experience preaching about money and giving as invasive, especially if the preacher moves from annually fundraising from the pulpit to regularly preaching about using money as a faithful response to the gospel and an expression of Christian faith and discipleship. Rather than resolving their discomfort by allowing

Scripture to inform their assumptions, they may attempt to enlist Scripture to justify those assumptions.

iii) Money influences how we preach and hear sermons in three ways.

1- **Authority.** People with high education or social standing question and disagree with the Bible.

2- **Preachers.** People with money tend to see the preacher as another person. People in need look to the preacher as one with authority.

3- **Sermons.** Those with modest income prefer sermons that are practical. Affluent people tend to want sermons that are logical and well thought out.

c) So preaching about money and giving is truly an act of resistance because, even in the church, the power that mammon exerts is both real and strong.

II Fussing with our own fiscal demons

a) A preacher's values about money, personal practice of giving, and willingness to preach about a subject that effects them personally all contribute to the level of anxiety he or she experiences when preparing and preaching the stewardship sermon. These demons also complicate how the congregation hears and receives the stewardship sermon.

b) Preachers therefore need to intentionally ask themselves: "What makes preaching about money difficult *for me*?" To answer this question, we examine our values about money and preaching about it. We ask, "How has money shaped – and how does money shape – me?" Preachers especially compare their values about money and giving to those of their congregations and, of course, to the values of the reign of God.

- c) Consider your and your congregation's socioeconomic status, familial norms, and personal and family financial history.

- d) Preachers might examine the financial assumptions on which their daily lives rest – order, health, security and hope.ⁱ

- e) Preachers need to explore personal demons directly connected to preaching about money.
 - i) Many preachers feel uncomfortable preaching about money and giving because they know they are not exceptional role models in their own financial stewardship.

 - ii) Many pastors are uncomfortable preaching about money because they are very aware that talking to their congregations about money and asking them to grow in their giving can be perceived as extremely self-serving.

Disk #2 Presentation #7

Challenging Congregational Norms

Talking and preaching about money and giving may challenge congregational norms and values regarding frugality.

When someone talks about money and giving in the church it is risky.

I Challenging congregational norms

- a) Congregants bring all sorts of expectations to sermons about money.

Remaining oblivious to those expectations can be like wandering through a minefield, because the preacher never knows when he or she will misstep and set off an explosion in the congregation.

To release this anxiety, preachers discover what norms and values surround conversation about money in the congregation. Preachers are then aware when the sermon challenges those norms and can determine how to deliver that challenge and deal with any fallout.

One way pastors might uncover congregational norms about money is by analyzing the ages of its members and the generational views regarding money, giving and social institutions.ⁱⁱ

Generational differences:

Builders: Maintaining the building is essential.

Millennials: Maintaining the institution is not essential.

- b) A second way preachers might uncover congregational norms about money is to explore the piety that surrounds giving.

A private matter between God and an individual

An obligation, expectation or command

Others consider preaching about money an indication that the pastor lacks faith.

Some Christians believe money is an inappropriate topic for preaching because it is inherently bad, even evil.

Some Christians believe preaching about money and giving is inappropriate because the financial life of the congregation is separate from the spiritual life of the congregation.

- c) Preachers might explore how members of the congregation understand the relationship between giving and the congregation's mission.

People hold different assumptions about what the church ought to be doing and what they ought to be expected to pay for. For example, some church members are convinced that preaching about money undercuts evangelism.

Pastors and congregational leaders need to make clear how money entrusted to the church relates to New Testament priorities and the gospel.

d) Stirring possibilities

- a. At some level, sermons about money stir up expectations that can heighten anxiety for both those who preach and those who hear.

- b. What can we realistically expect such sermons to achieve?

Thoughts for Reflection

What else can we do?

- I For good and for ill, the stewardship sermon is never a solo act, because it is always tethered with some sort of fundraising technique – in church talk, the stewardship campaign or annual response program.
 - a) In many congregations, the annual stewardship program, “that time each year when members of the congregation are asked to consider the blessings God has entrusted to them and how they will respond to those blessings through financial support of the church,”ⁱⁱⁱ is the cornerstone of stewardship ministry.
 - b) In some congregations, the stewardship campaign has remained unchanged for so long that doing something new or different may provide the impetus or leaven for renewal. Congregations ought to consider what programs they have used in the past five years and never use the same program three years in a row.

- c) Preachers need to assume two responsibilities for the stewardship campaign in addition to preaching gospel-centered stewardship sermons.
 - i) First, in the planning process, the preacher is responsible for guaranteeing that the gospel guides whatever fundraising techniques the congregation uses.
 - ii) Second, during the campaign, the preacher is responsible for working with congregational leaders to hold the stewardship program accountable to the gospel that is preached.
 - iii) Together, preachers and congregational leaders ensure that preaching and the congregation's stewardship campaign complement rather than contradict each other.
- d) Attitude and commitment are key ingredients in any successful stewardship program.
- e) As congregations decide what elements to include in their stewardship program, leaders should carefully weigh whether the congregation possesses the resources, human and otherwise, to carry those elements out successfully. Undertaking anything more than providing bulletin inserts or other literature, and passing out offering envelopes requires careful planning, committed leadership and volunteers, and a program for follow-up with members of the congregation who do not participate in the program.

ⁱ Nieman and Rogers, "Preaching to Every Pew," pp. 69-73.

ⁱⁱ Lane, "Ask, Thank, Tell," p. 67.

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