

Ask, Thank, Tell, Charles Lane; Augsburg-Fortress, 2006 (128 pp).

Introduction:

The goal of this book, says author Charles Lane, is to perform a dramatic rescue of stewardship, freeing it from any connection whatsoever to "paying the bills." When the Bible talks about stewardship it almost always talks about the intimate connection between how a person handles financial matters and that person's relationship with God. Stewardship is an intensely spiritual matter that lies close to a disciple's relationship with Jesus.

The book is designed especially for use in congregational planning and study. Congregational stewardship leaders will come back to three foundational verbs — ask, thank, tell — over and over as they help individuals experience the joy of giving generously. The author makes the convincing case that there is little in life today that can help a disciple grow in relationship with Jesus more than a solid intentional biblical stewardship.

About the Author

The Rev. Charles Lane – The background and insights I share grow from serving three different Lutheran congregations over twenty one years, working with hundreds of congregations while on staff of the N.W. Minnesota Synod of the ELCA for nine years, and now serving congregations as an ELCA church-wide staff member. (from the Preface)

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Preface for Episcopalians in El Camino Real:

Bishop Gerard Mpango of our companion diocese of Western Tanganyika, Tanzania concluded his sermon at Trinity Cathedral, San Jose, Sept. 20, 2009 with these words.

“And finally, the third lesson we learn from this passage (Mark:9:30 – 37) is to focus our attention on our Lord Jesus Christ. Every time the disciples looked to themselves and began to discuss greatness among them, they ran into trouble. It is very easy for us to focus on our own feelings, our activities, etc, and not focus on our Lord Jesus Christ. There is something John Stott

calls Church-ianity – as opposed to Christianity. Church-ianity is our love to church more than our love to the Lord of the Church. My prayer is that whatever we do together in this wonderful partnership, we will always be mindful of our Lord Jesus Christ. We want Jesus to be at the center of our plans and our commitments. Otherwise we can easily make the church become another “humanitarian organization.” We do not want the church to be another “NGO.” A church without Jesus at the center is another NGO. May God help us to become a Christ-centered church partnership.”

Six Characteristics of Being a Disciple

Canon Jesus Reyes; SLO Deanery, 6-6-09

1. Rooted in the Scriptures:

- takes the gospel very seriously; Jesus says, “*I am the vine you are the branches.*” Scriptures are a source of connection.
- Quality of fruits will depend on the health of the roots that feed the plant.
- Pay attention to process, not outcome, sometimes the health of the plant is more important.

2. A clear sense of identity:

- How can I use my gifts to promote the cause of the kingdom?
Instead of being salt and light in the world often we bring the conflicts of the world into the church.
- Be clear in how we project our identity to the world.
- To be a Christian is to be able to deal with our differences without destroying one another.

3. Joy in worship, the experience of being in God:

- Prayer is not an action but a process of moving from noise to silence at first; then moving from silence to finding the ‘word’; and then feeling the call to action. Action will fill our soul with noise again and we begin the cycle anew.

4. Finding your own gift and recognizing it:

- What particular attributes do you have to give to others?
Any gift is a blessing and every blessing is a seed. It is up to us to plant the seed and see it develop.

5. Disciples are people of faith, hope and love.

- Set an example by just doing what you think is right.

6. A disciple is an ambassador for Christ.

- Desmond Tutu is a good example of how we are called to engage difficult realities with an eye of invitation to find reconciliation, not judgment.

Chapter 1. Discipleship, Not Membership

A suggested mission statement for your congregation's stewardship ministry:

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.

As opposed to: The goal of our stewardship ministry is to raise enough money to pay the bills next year.

Discipleship	Membership
<i>Focus:</i> Primary relationship with Jesus Christ	Focus is the Congregation / Institution / Needs / Activities
How is Jesus Christ active in my life?	
How am I growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ?	* Dichotomy between spiritual & business * Stewardship is a business venture * Congregation is a club
<i>Expectations:</i>	
1. Doing the ministry is a partnership that belongs to all God's people.	1. I give money so that other people, ministry professionals can do ministry.
2. Giving is part of a growing relationship to Jesus Christ.	2. I pay to maintain the institution, keep the utilities on, staff the committees, run the youth programs.
3. Living life in community – small group and congregation	3. Church member is a good citizen in the community. Live an upright life.
<i>Assumptions:</i>	
1. The mission field starts at the front door of the church.	1. Mission field is some place else, often far from where we live.
2. The goal of the congregation is to make disciples for Jesus Christ, prior to church programs.	2. The goal of the congregation is to get and keep members.
3. There are high expectations for a disciple of Jesus Christ.	3. There are few expectations of members so that you won't drive them away.

If stewardship ministry focuses on the givers need to give, not the church's need to receive, then:

- We will help people grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ through the use of the time, talents, and finances that God has entrusted to them.
- We will use the language of discipleship, not membership.
- We will find in God's Word an invaluable wealth of resources to enrich our understanding.
- We will ask the right question, not "How much does the church need?" but, "How is God calling me to respond to God's presence in my life?"

Chapter 2: It All Belongs to God - (Stewardship themes in the Old Testament)

God's blessings shouldn't be called "gifts." They are not given to us to own.

1. Creation: **Psalm 24:1-3** *"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers."*

If we really believed the radical nature of this claim, how would it change the way we live? This is the starting place of all the Bible has to say about the world where we live. This debunks the myth that we are the owners of what we have.

2. It is God who gives you power to get wealth: **Deuteronomy 8:11-18** *Take care that you do not forget the LORD your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. {12} When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, {13} and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, {14} then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, {15} who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, {16} and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good. {17} Do not say to yourself, "My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth." {18} 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. (NRSV)*

* Moses speaks these words to God's people as they are ready to enter the promised land. The words address us today as they describe the accumulation of wealth and the temptation to take credit for all our material successes.

* The proper response to the blessings of this life is to give God the glory and the thanks and to ask the serious questions about how I am called to use what God has entrusted to me.

3. Dominion: **Genesis 1:27-28** *So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. {28} God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."*

* Humanity has the highest place in the created order. **Ps. 8:3-5** *When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; {4} what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? {5} Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.*

* God the creator transfers some authority over creation to human beings, a partial delegation. **Psalm 8:6** *You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet.*

* There is not a transfer of ownership, God the creator is still God the owner. We are accountable to God for how we exercise our dominion

Addendum: The deep relationship among God, humans, and the Earth framed Israel's understanding of themselves as people of God.

1. The two Creation stories of Genesis 1&2 reveal a clear job description for humans:
 - a. grow families and communities, care for the Earth as a just ruler would care for his kingdom, and till and keep the land.
2. The land belongs to God and God alone.
 - a. For the Israelites, the land represented the promise of God's favor, something that could be used but not owned.
 - b. God tells the Israelites: *"No land may be permanently bought or sold. It all belongs to me – it isn't your land, and you only live there for a little while"* (Lev. 25:23).
 - c. Unlike kings in surrounding regions, the king of Israel was expected to,
 - (1. *"manage the land as a gift entrusted to him but never possessed by him."*)
 - d. Humility and justice were to characterize human dominion.
 - (1. The land was to be held and worked for the good of the community and the Creation..)
3. By following God's rules for Creation they could secure abundance and peace.
 - (1. *"Faithfully obey my laws, and I will send rain to make your crops grow...your harvest of grain and grapes will be so abundant that you won't know what to do with it all. You will eat and be satisfied, and you will live in safety"* (Lev. 26:3-5).

4. Definition of a Steward:

- a. not the owner
- b. has a position of high authority in the household of the owner and is given great responsibility.
- c. cares for the possession of the owner both for the benefit of the owner and for the benefit of other people who depend on the owner for their well being.

5. What does this mean for us today?

- a. Two cautions:
 - (1. I give back to God my tithe (10%) and the rest belongs to me. No, all belongs to God, 100%; Your faith influences all that God entrusts to you. How much of God's money do I dare keep for myself?
 - (2. I have what I have because I deserve it, earned it with my own intelligence and hard work. No, our brains and ability to work are entrusted to us by God. Try to list some of the countless factors out of our control that brought us what we have and our successes.
- b. Celebrations:
 - (1. God has named us as stewards – a place of high esteem and responsibility
 - (2. God has promised to be with us as we go in God's name and provided with all we need.
- c. If God's people think they are the owners and that everything they have is from their own accomplishments then a right understanding of stewardship is almost impossible.

Chapter 3: Money and Possessions in the New Testament

Jesus talks about money and possessions more than he talks about prayer, forgiveness, his own death. The Epistles are filled with material about money and possessions.

Teachings of the N.T. tell us that there is an intimate connection between Faith and Finances.

- Finances can either threaten or strengthen faith. Money and possessions pose a threat to our relationship to Jesus Christ. The more we have the greater the threat.
- Having money and possessions places on a person the duty to use these to alleviate the needs of those who have little of them.

A. The Threat of Money and Possessions.

1. The central core of the problem is that Jesus wants to be in relationship to you and to have your heart (motivations and will) turned toward him. Money and possessions can turn your heart away from Jesus.

- a. **Matthew 6:24** *No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.*

2. Having wealth one is tempted to trust in wealth – something taking God's place

a. Fact: We are all rich by any standards. Western society after 1950 achieved a standard never before achieved in the world. Don't dismiss the warnings about wealth and possessions. They are about dangers we face every day.

b. In the U.S. I am firmly convinced that we try to do both, serve God and wealth.

(1. *The American heresy*: We see absolutely no problem trusting in Jesus for our spiritual needs and eternal life while we trust in financial security for economic realities.

(2. Problem is the impossibility of serving two masters. Jesus says it will not work.

1 Timothy 6:6-10 *Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; {7} for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; {8} but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. {9} But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. {10} For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.*

c. When we place ourselves in this situation our love will go one way or another. Jesus doesn't want to risk losing you.

(1. Rich young ruler, *Luke 18:18-23* is a very hard story for us in the Western world.

d. Money not itself the evil, but rather it lures us to trust in it, to stake our future on the accumulation of wealth. We think that without it we are nothing.

e. A further problem: Wealth cannot deliver on its promises. The rich fool: *Luke 12:16-21*

(1. Wealth has allure because this world defers to those who have much wealth.

(2. Rather, Jesus tells us there is eternal importance to have our treasure stored up with him.

B. The Duty of Being Wealthy

1. *Prominent theme in O.T. and continued in N.T.:*
 - a. God owns everything.
 - b. We are managers of what God has entrusted to us.
 - c. This management exists for the good of others.
 - d. Therefore, God has blessed the wealthy with material things not so they may hoard but to use this wealth to benefit others.
 - e. Rich man and Lazarus, Luke 16:19-31; The sheep and the goats, Matt. 25:31-46; They had all things in common, Acts 2:44f, 4:34f.
2. *Generosity is the natural consequence of abundance for Jesus' disciples.*
 - a. Generosity is the way we can deal with the threat of wealth;
 - b. The best way to deal with the power of wealth is to give it away generously, recklessly.
 - (1. For many, this is the tithing.
 - (2. This is the way for us to say we will not serve God and wealth.
 - (3. To cling to possessions and give a pittance to the church seems to show we have not broken the hold of wealth as a master.
 - c. Caution: we still have responsibility for how we use what we keep.

Chapter 4: Portrait of a Biblical Giver – Values of a Steward

1. Intentional – Develop a plan and follow through. **2 Cor. 9:6-7** *The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. {7} Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*
 - a. The annual Pledge Commitment – helps us be intentional
2. Regular Giving – Establish a pattern. Example: 1 Cor. 16:2 – each week. Follow your plan with action.
3. Be Generous – the most basic stewardship value, the essence of discipleship. **Luke 12:34**, *“For where your treasure, there will your heart be also.”*
 - a. If your treasure is not with Jesus then your heart will not be with him.
 - b. God’s generosity is basis of any call for generous stewardship. God has provided for us abundantly in all creation.
 - c. Example of Macedonian Christians – **2 Cor. 8:1-2** *We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; {2} for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.*
 - d. Average giving in the ELCA about 2% - a sorry commentary on the state of discipleship and low spiritual health.

4. Give to God First – Give to God first and then live off the rest rather than taking care of our own needs and wants first and then giving God the rest.

- a. *Deut. 26:1-2* Take some of the first fruit of the ground and take it to the Lord’s dwelling.
- b. Write your check to the church first. If you don’t you’ll short change God every time.

5. Give Proportionally – Give in proportion to the blessing you receive.

- a. Tithing (10%) is the best example from scripture.
- b. Widow with two coins, *Mark 12:41-44*; Jesus said that in giving out of her poverty she gave more than the wealthy who put in bags of money.
- c. For those with small finances, proportional giving is a word of great comfort. The gift of the poor is not of little consequence.

6. A Cheerful Giver – **2 Cor. 9:7** “*God loves a cheerful giver.*”

- a. The key to cheerful giving is to be generous, intentional, and regular. Otherwise You can’t be cheerful about it.

* The task of stewardship leaders is to encourage these values. **Luke 12:32-34** “*Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. {33} Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. {34} For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*”

- When we do this Jesus says we will have treasure in heaven; then your heart will grow close toward Jesus.
- Act your way into thinking. If I wait till I feel like tithing, I may never get to it.
- What God’s people do with their money has a profound effect on their relationship to the Lord.
- The promise is: Grow in your giving and you will grow in relationship with Jesus.

Chapter 5: Practicing Biblical Stewardship

A. Talk Plainly about Money

There are many cultural taboos that work against open, plain talk about money in congregations.

1. *Money is considered a private topic*, no one else’s business (like sex & politics)
 - a. The root is fear of offending someone.
 - b. Refusal to talk about money will put a huge roadblock in the way of stewardship ministry
2. Second taboo: *Financial life is separate from spiritual life* – even inferior to it.
 - a. Financial life in the church is a necessary evil handled best by a small group of “financial types.”
 - b. Keep it under wraps so congregation can give their undivided attention to spiritual things.
3. *N. T. shows money to be a huge issue in people’s relationship to the Lord.*
 - a. Can be a real problem or a real catalyst for strengthening that relationship.

- b. If you don't talk about it you are guaranteeing that it will be a problem in people's lives.
- c. The only way to move from money as a problem to money as a catalyst is to talk of it openly and a lot.
- d. Talk about money because doing so can be faith strengthening rather than faith threatening.
- e. Don't talk about it only when the congregation needs money. Focus not on the congregation's need but on strengthening their relationship to Jesus Christ.

B. The Role of the Pastor in Stewardship Ministry

1. *Many congregations don't want their pastor involved in either stewardship of the financial life of the congregation.*

- a. The taboo of the dichotomy – separating the spiritual and the financial.
- b. Fear may be that the pastor might change things or discover that people's financial stewardship is not what it should be.
- c. As long as dichotomy in place people don't have to hold up their financial lives to scripture. Religion can be kept in a safe box that won't impact their business for the rest of the week.
- d. These are issues of power and control.

2. *Pastors may be as much a part of the problem.* They may be no more comfortable than others and want to avoid making people angry.

- a. Talking about giving may sound self serving – to get a raise for themselves.
- b. Maybe their own stewardship is in disarray and so they can't talk to others about theirs.
- c. The conspiracy of silence – the unspoken agreement that everyone will keep quiet. This will maintain the dichotomy of spirituality/finances and limit the possibility of growth.
- d. The pastor is the one in a unique position to shatter the conspiracy of silence. He/She must do this for the health of the congregation.

3. *How can the pastor talk about money?*

- a. Preach on stewardship when the lectionary deals with it.
 - (1. These passages will not be about the need of the church to receive but about the need of the giver to give, which will help blunt any criticism about raising the issue.
- b. Pastor must be a part of the Stewardship Team
 - (1. The pastor is uniquely equipped through theological training to keep the stewardship team on track. Pastor must be a key leader.
- c. The pastor should know what each person gives in the congregation.
 - (1. The criticism that this will influence his/her pastoral care.
 - (2. If that happens then you have much bigger problems than what your pastor does or doesn't know.
 - (3. How can the pastor help each person grow in their relationship to Jesus Christ if he/she is kept in the dark about how much people give?
 - (4. The pastor handles money matters just as everything else the pastor knows confidentially and pastorally.

Chapter 6: Ask: The Annual Response Program

In the vast number of congregations this is a vital time of stewardship education and financial response to God's blessings. It is the cornerstone of stewardship ministry for the opportunity to reflect and to challenge. But it is a part of a larger overall effort.

A. The Basics:

1. Remember the Stewardship Mission Statement – helping people to grow in their relationship to Jesus Christ.
2. Be Biblical – God's Word challenges, encourages and causes growth. Be sure people hear God's Word as the basis for what you say.
3. Never use a budget!! Save it for after the completion of your ingathering.
4. Ask for growth. If you do, generally about 50% of your people will increase.
 - a. You can use % giving charts, step charts showing the breakdown of giving the past year.
5. Use 'Estimate of Giving' cards.
 - a. These provide the source for the vestry to plan the budget.
 - b. These provide a way for individuals to plan and be intentional
6. Be clear and direct.
 - a. Be prepared to talk about money.
 - b. Be clear in giving directions to people of what you are doing.
7. Go first class. Make sure you use materials that are of high quality.

B. Plan – Conduct Follow Up – Thank

1. Step #1: Plan your annual response program 4-5 months before it is to begin.
 - a. What? Don't use the same program more than 3 years in a row.
 - b. When? Set your calendar for all the events you will do for 3 weeks of your program, talks, letters, turning in response cards, follow up.
 - c. Who? Plan who will be needed to be leaders and helpers.
2. Step #2: Conduct the program over about 3 weeks of inspiration, information and encouragement.
 - a. Use a different theme each week.
 - b. Be sure everyone knows what is expected of them.
 - c. Always be asking people to consider an increase in giving.
3. Step #3: Follow Up. Have these plans in place before you begin your program.
 - a. Follow up soon after the ingathering.
 - b. Send a letter to those who have not yet responded with a card and self addressed envelope.
4. Step #4: Thank all who have returned their card quickly and include the amount they have given on their cards.

C. Annual Response Program Examples

1. It is often best to use a program already prepared and follow the directions closely for best results. In all these programs the three weeks of lead up to making an estimate of giving is fairly common. They differ in where and how the individual is asked to make their estimate of giving.
2. Commitment at Worship; Relay; Fellowship Meal; Dessert and Prayer; Home Gatherings; Home Visits; Mail are examples.

Chapter 7: Making the Pie Larger

The Annual Response Program is the cornerstone of the Stewardship Ministry but not the end all of stewardship. Need to make additional opportunities to give through the congregation. Increase the giving pie from an 8” pie plate to a 10” pie plate.

1. Give people the opportunity to be inspired from stories of successful ministries.
 - a. How often? A good choice would be once a month.
 - b. Combine giving and serving. Hearing stories of special ministries may motivate people not only to give money but of their time and talent.
 - c. Special ministries we may become involved with begin with an offering. These stories may bring powerful growth in discipleship.

2. Giving from regular income:
 - a. Mission of the month – local, national and global.
 - b. Sponsorships (e.g. gifts to individuals on special missions)
 - c. Regular appeals (e.g. United Thank Offering)
 - d. Special needs. (e.g. Episcopal Relief and Development)

3. Giving from Accumulated Assets: These specialized gifts often require specialized outside help. It is usually well worth the investment to bring in this help.
 - a. Capital Fund Appeals –
 - (1. These are not only used to raise money for building projects.
 - (2. Tithe from the income of a capital campaign to another ministry.
 - (3. Ministry Fund Appeal – adding new staff or program
 - b. Endowment Funds:
 - (1. Must have a plan in place before receiving a large gift or it can wreak havoc on a parish.
 - c. Giving begets giving. Additional opportunities for giving creates interest in new ministries, creates new connections with the congregation and beyond.

Chapter 8: Improving How You Ask

1. There are many ways to ask.
 - a. These can be ranked in effectiveness from two people asking face to face with the giver to holding a church wide event.
 - b. Analyze your past asking, vary your methods and move up the list of effectiveness.

2. Motivations for Giving
 - a. Build a strong volunteer base, a huge asset in the congregation where most of your givers are already involved in some way.
 - b. Make sure the pastor is involved in asking through preaching and teaching.
 - c. Tell a compelling stewardship story – it lets people know their gifts are making a difference in people’s lives.
 - d. Plan if possible that people are asked by someone they know.

3. Focus on the Giver.

a. Regularly ask yourself the most basic stewardship leader's question: "What can we do to help people grow in their relationship to Jesus Christ through their stewardship?"

b. Don't be side-tracked by what works best for the stewardship team. What works best for the givers?

4. Think Generationally

a. Big difference between givers under 50 and those over 50.

(1. Under 50 not as committed to institutions and don't consider this their duty.

(2. Over 50 want to give to organizations where they can be involved with time & talent and where they can see that their giving makes a difference.

b. Don't treat all givers the same.

5. Be Positive

a. Don't threaten people with what will happen if they don't give.

b. People are motivated to give to an organization making a positive difference in the world.

c. They are not motivated to give simply to keep a program alive.

6. Variety

a. Sameness causes boredom and you get tuned out.

b. Don't keep pulling out the program from last year and tweaking it a little.

Chapter 9: Thank

A. Most congregations should do much more thanking that they do.

1. This should be a part of the culture of every congregation.

2. People who are actively involved in the life of the congregation and community should regularly be recognized and thanked for the work they do.

3. Paul regularly uses his letters as opportunities to thank God for his fellow believers.

a. Romans, Philipians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon all contain strong statements of thanksgiving to God for Paul's fellow believers and their faith.

b. **Philippians 1:3-5** *I thank my God every time I remember you, {4} constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, {5} because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now.*

B. Creating a Culture of Thanksgiving: There are few things that will do more to build up a congregation. It makes people feel appreciated, valuable, wanted and needed. They will quickly volunteer for the next project whether of time, talents or finances.

1. *Start with God:* Thank God for what you have under your stewardship management, in worship, sermons, etc.

a. When you do this thanking God will become a way of life for the congregation and deepen your understanding that God, not you, own all that you have.

b. Have a petition each week in your prayers of the church thanking God for one or two.

2. *Plan your thanksgiving* – make this a part of every stewardship program. Plan in advance how to do this both for those who make a pledge and the leaders.

3. *Expand the circle of thanks-givers.* Pastors take the lead but are not the only ones. Encourage all leaders to give thanks.
4. *Thank the entire congregation* in worship at the program end with announcement of the results.
5. *Thank personally* – a brief note from the pastor or congregational leader.
6. *Thank immediately* – the sooner it is made the more sincere it is perceived. This takes planning. The pastor could send a thank-you at the beginning of each week for those who contributed to the last Sunday's worship.
7. *Pass on thank you's* to the congregation sent from outside people or groups.
8. *Hold Thank You trips* – to a nearby ministry that you support to give thanks for their work.

C. Some Great Opportunities to say Thanks

1. For every pledge card returned as they come in – either from the pastor or a stewardship leader. This could include thanks to God for what the congregation has accomplished in the past year and what we are looking forward to in the next. Include the specific amount of their estimated giving.
2. At the end of each quarter along with the records of giving. Highlight one or two ministries of the congregation.
3. Every gift mailed to the church – especially if the giver has been gone for awhile. Have a system in place for every kind of gift.
4. Acknowledge anyone who has been recognized in the community for some special reason.
5. Thanks to volunteers. Give a volunteer thank you notes, envelopes and stamps to do this.
6. A personal note from the pastor to those who have made a special contribution of time, talent or treasure. Ask for nothing, just say thanks.
7. Saying Thank You is just as important as asking.

Chapter 10: Tell

A. Members of our congregations want to know that their giving makes a difference in people's lives. Each giver deserves the joy of knowing that God's work has been done because of their giving.

1. An important connection between Thanking and Telling: you can thank as you tell and tell as your thank.
 - a. Much of your telling can occur in the context of thanking people.
 - b. In most all of your thanking, telling will be an important part of thanking.
2. You should say something 7 different ways before you can expect people will have heard.
 - a. As stewardship leaders you need to be creative and persistent as you tell people what happens through your congregation because of their giving.

B. The Importance of Telling Your Mission Story

1. It is not so much to encourage people to give as to encourage their giving to your congregation.
2. Everyone receives countless invitations to give from many organizations
 - a. We've become adept to tune out the massive influx of appeals and messages that constantly bombard us.

3. Telling is not exactly the same thing as making a Case Statement because your members have already joined but they do need to know that good things are happening.

C. How to Tell your Mission Story – possible ways include:

1. The congregational newsletter
2. Emails to members
3. The congregational website
4. A Stewardship Bulletin Board
5. Talks in worship
6. Bulletin inserts
7. Adult Education Classes
8. A Mission Fair.

Chapter 11: Organizing for Your Stewardship Ministry

How can you effectively carry out the stewardship ministry that has been described in these chapters?

1. Three Work Groups made up of people selected for specific gifts.
 - a. Ask – planning and implementing the various ways you will ask.
 - b. Thank – a work group charged to cultivate a climate of thanksgiving in the congregation.
 - c. Tell – charged with telling everyone the wonderful ministries happening in the congregation and around the world because of their giving.
2. How should these groups function?
 - a. Think about the spiritual gifts needed for these different work groups.
 - b. For Asking: People comfortable talking about money to a group of people and who have demonstrated the gift of generous giving in their own lives.
 - c. For Thanking: People who have a spirit of thanksgiving and can cultivate it in others.
 - d. For Telling: People with good communication skills, both speaking and writing.
3. Ask people to serve on a specific work group that needs their unique gifts. Don't make a general recruitment and then ask people what they want to do.
4. Empower these groups.
 - a. Delegate authority to do what needs to be done, not dependent on getting permission for every other thing from the congregations council.
 - b. Give them authority to dream and act in their area of responsibility.
5. Make these 'Work Groups.'
 - a. No need for monthly meetings. Let the groups work.
 - b. Gather together only often enough to keep the big picture and goals in place.
 - c. Shoot for fewer and shorter meetings.
6. In larger congregations each work group may be made up of smaller sub-groups doing a specific task.
 - a. e.g. the mission of the month, thank you notes, etc.
7. Read and discuss this book as a beginning, the whole book so that everyone is on the same assumptions of how the work is to be done.
8. A Stewardship Committee could be made up of one person from each work group to function as the steering committee for the overall ministry but have fewer and shorter meetings.

Reflection Questions

Chapter 1:

How is Jesus Christ active in my life?

How am I growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

What is my need to give? to my church? to my family? in other places?

What would my church look like if the focus were Membership?

What would my church look like if the focus were Discipleship?

How would my church change if the focus were Discipleship?

Chapter 2:

If I really believed the God owned everything, how would it change the way I live?

How many things can I list that are beyond my control that enabled me to have the things I have?

How would the belief that God owns everything affect my church and the world today?

What are the implications for me that I am a steward of God's creation?

Chapter 3:

How could I better balance my possessions with my love for Jesus Christ?

Where do I feel the conflict of loyalties between wealth and my relationship to God?

What are the obstacles I feel in my duty to God for my wealth?

Chapter 4:

Could I say that I am a cheerful giver?

What do I enjoy about giving?

Is my giving regular? Intentional?

Do I know what proportion of my time, talent and possessions do I give to God?

Chapter 5:

Do we talk plainly about money at my church?

How do we understand the unity between the financial and the spiritual?

Does our church expect the pastor to be involved in stewardship? How so?

How does my pastor talk about money?

Chapter 6:

What kind of Annual Response Programs do we have at our church?

Do we practice stewardship with the goal of helping people grow in their relation to Christ?

Do we present the needs of the church up front to motivate people's giving?

Chapter 7-8:

What opportunities does our church present to give to special ministries?

Do I hear stories of ministries that call me to participate with giving of time, talent, treasure?

Chapter 9 – 10

Does my church have a culture of thanksgiving?