

# Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees

## Corporate Stewardship Stewardship Conversations



### Session Three – Part One

**Introduction:** The purpose of this session is to assist the leaders of the congregation in cultivating a stewardship culture that recognizes that giving is more about identity than activity, more relational than functional, and accentuates mission and ministry more than budget.

Corporate stewardship is the faith of the church in action. As God's people are equipped for mission and ministry they are helped to show their faith and love to each other and to those within the community and the world as they proclaim the Good News of Jesus in mission.

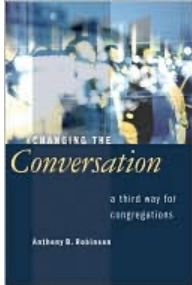
**Bible Study:** Luke 7:31-35 "Children at Play"

#### Stewardship Questions:

1. Whose church is it?
2. What is the purpose of the church?

#### Changing the Conversation to Change the Culture:

Anthony B. Robinson wrote an article for the Alban Institute entitled, "Changing the Conversation: Nurturing a Third Way for Congregations." In that article Robinson says, "Changing the culture of organizations, institutions, or a society is about changing the conversation." What we talk about and how we talk about it has an impact on culture. Conversations are important. Conversations have impact. Conversations are key to changing culture.



The stewardship culture in many congregations (perhaps most congregations) needs to be changed. That means the stewardship conversation needs to change. Below you will find some suggestions:

**Suggestion One:** Rev. William O. Avery, stewardship professor at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg suggests the stewardship conversation should center around freedom. "All stewardship talk which begins with money starts at the wrong place. The place to begin meaningful stewardship conversation is with the concept of freedom... God's love is freely given to us simply because we are God's children, simply because God loves us apart from our worthiness or unworthiness. When we learn this truth and appropriate it at the center of our being, then we are truly free."

- What is suggested as the focus of stewardship conversation?
- How can this happen in your congregation?



**Suggestion Two:** A Lutheran pastor posted a stewardship sermon on the internet. In that sermon he said, “This is at the heart of this whole stewardship conversation...the issue of trust. Every piece of money minted in this country has the same four words printed on it, ‘In God we trust.’ Sometimes I wonder if that isn’t the biggest lie in America. If we’re honest we’ll admit that most of us put a lot more trust in the security of money than we do in the security of God’s promises.”

- What is suggested as the focus of stewardship conversation?
- How can this happen in your congregation?

**Suggestion Three:** R. Scott Rodin, writing in *Stewards in the Kingdom*, says: “For too long, attempts to undergird Christian tithing and fundraising with some sort of theology have employed the term *stewardship*. The problem that should be immediately apparent is that this focus indicates a classic false start. Stewardship is the practice, the work, the vocation of a steward. It is the ‘how-to,’ the ethical imperatives of the call to be a steward. The very term indicates that we can move past the whole discussion of what it means to be a steward and focus on the practice of stewardship.” (page 16)

- What is suggested as the focus of stewardship conversation?
- How can this happen in your congregation?

**Suggestion Four:** Stewardship is primarily a spiritual issue. It reflects the way we as individuals see ourselves in relationship to God. When we come to realize that this truly is God's world, then we begin to live more sacrificially and more meaningfully. The way we manage the time, talent, and treasure God entrusts to us says a lot about who we are in Christ. The stewardship conversation needs to center on this spiritual aspect of stewardship and not only or primarily on administrative, budget, or financial issues.

- Is stewardship primarily a spiritual issue in your congregation?
- What are some concrete steps that can be taken to treat stewardship as a spiritual issue and not primarily as a budget issue?

Charles R. Lane wrote in *Ask, Thank, Tell*: “Stewardship has been kidnapped and is being held hostage by a sinister villain named ‘Paying the Bills.’”

- How is stewardship being held hostage (if at all) in your congregation?
- What are some concrete steps your church can take to change the stewardship conversation?

