

Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees

Stewardship Conversations



Session Three – Number Eight

Talking about Forming Stewards

Charles R. Lane writes in *Ask, Thank, Tell*:

What is the mission statement of your congregation's stewardship ministry? As your Stewardship Committee gathers to do its work, at what goal are you aiming? Let me suggest a goal for you to consider:

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.

If your congregation is like many congregations, this goal hasn't exactly been on the front burner as you have thought together about stewardship. My hunch is that most congregations haven't thought about a Stewardship Mission Statement, but, based on how they function, it would be something like:

The goal of our stewardship ministry is to raise enough money to pay the bills next year. (Page 11)

Lane then goes on to say, "I hope you see the difference."

- What is the difference between the two goals?
- Which goal is your congregation pursuing in its stewardship ministry?

Lane continues, "Let me say it as clearly as I can: Your congregation's stewardship ministry is first and foremost about making and growing disciples."

- What does Jesus say about disciples in Matthew 28:19-20?

In his book, *The Christian Faith*, Robert Kolb writes: "The theology of the cross presupposes that the life of the believer, the life of discipleship—learning from and following after Christ—is a life under the cross."

- Read Matthew 16:24-26 and discuss the two questions Jesus asked:
 - What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?
 - What can a man give in exchange for his soul?

Kolb continues, “Life under the cross crucifies the habits of hell. The strong pruning hook of the Law combines with the believers’ confidence in Christ’s deadly death, and these believers find they have no need to use their hellish habits to defend themselves. Life under the cross gives rise to the habits of heaven. Faith perceives how God succeeds, in his own self-sacrifice and self-surrender, in his submission to human needs, his suffering, and his willing service.” (Page 27)

- What are some of the “habits of hell” that life under the cross crucifies? Read Galatians 5:19-21.
- What are some of the “habits of heaven” that life under the cross gives rise to? Read Galatians 5:22-25.
- How is our Stewardship Board or Committee helping members grow as disciples as they live under the cross?

Herb Mather, in *Stewardship*, suggests the following values and goals as a congregation forms stewards: (Pages 16-17)

1. Focus on the need of the giver to give rather than on the need of the church to receive. Focus on God’s love and one’s response to it in the totality of life.

- How are we as a congregation doing in this area?
- How can we improve?

2. Change is more likely to come through modeling and invitation than through argument. When people model faithful stewardship of all aspects of their life, others are encouraged to live out their faith in their vocations.

- How are we as a congregation doing in this area?
- How can we improve?

3. Encourage church leaders and other members to envision the future. Be intentional about stewardship plans to help disciples grow.

- How are we as a congregation doing in this area?
- How can we improve?

4. Work toward the goal in the next five to ten years of giving 20 percent or more of the church’s total annual offerings toward local and denominational benevolences. This goal could be achieved by giving 10 percent or more of the church’s total annual offerings to local community needs and 10 percent or more to denominational and worldwide missions.

- How are we as a congregation doing in this area?
- How can we improve?

