

The Stewardship Journal

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**From My Desk
to Your Inbox**



**The Generosity Lane: Using
Gratitude to Increase Generosity**



**Key Pointers for
Expressing Gratitude**



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From My Desk to Your Inbox

In this edition of the Stewardship Journal, Mark Brooks, The Stewardship Coach, talks about "**The Generosity Lane: Using Gratitude to Increase Generosity.**" He outlines five key strategies, one of which is expressing gratitude to those who gave on Easter. Check it out.

This week's Bonus Section follows up on the first post by offering practical ideas on how you can express gratitude towards those who gave.

The final post is a Baptist Press re-post entitled "**5 Reasons Pastors Should Attend Summer Camp.**" If you haven't blocked off summer camp on your calendar yet, this post will encourage you to do so.

I hope this newsletter gives you the practical help you need to resource the vision God has given you for your church.

Find past editions of the Stewardship Journal here: stewardshipjournal.com.

Or visit: LouisianaBaptists.org/Stewardship for additional resources.

Keep Looking Up,



Dr. Steve How

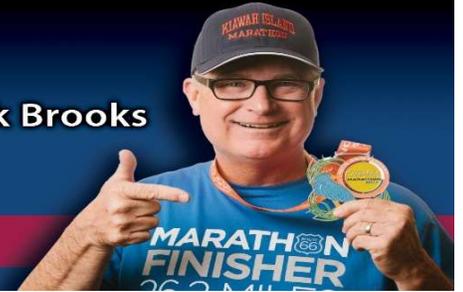
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THE STEWARDSHIP COACH
REVERSING THE DECLINE IN GIVING

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Mark Brooks



The Generosity Lane: Using Gratitude to Increase Generosity



What do you do on Monday after Easter? The tendency after Easter is to pass out on the couch to rest up. Yet, if you want to keep your giving tank full, you must continually think about your generosity lanes. I'm continuing my series on the key generosity lanes you need to increase giving and givers. This Coach is about ***The Generosity Lane: Using Gratitude to Increase Generosity.***

The days after Easter are key to finalizing a successful Easter offering. My goal for the Easter offering is to raise a significant amount of money *and* to see new donors begin their generosity journey. Studies show that "A thank you call from a Board Member to a newly acquired donor within 24 hours will increase their next gift by 39%."¹ What would be the impact of the Senior Pastor reaching out to new donors? This Coach will show you how.

A few years ago, I devised five key post-Easter strategies. Let me share those with you with an emphasis on gratitude. Here are the five steps I recommend you take on the Monday after Easter.

Rejoice. Take a breath and simply thank God for what happened. Forget about the numbers. Forget about the stress. Focus on what you can rejoice over. What can you take away from Easter as a positive experience to rejoice over?

Reflect and Review. What went well this weekend? What needs improvement? Don't beat yourself up over mistakes; learn from them to better yourself next time.

Reach out (in gratitude.) I know you are tired but let me encourage you to do one last Easter offering-related thing - thank your donors. I believe you should thank your faithful donors for continuing to support the work your church is doing. Without their generosity, you would not have been able to hold the Easter you did. Is there someone who needs a personal word of thanks? Reach out to them. Don't forget all those first-time donors who gave to your church on Easter.

Here are **four reasons why you need a first-time giver plan.**

First, it shows you value their gift and that they are not simply another number. Few people ever show true gratitude. Do you say thank you enough when it comes to your donors?

Second, it sets you apart from the crowd. Saying thank you is one of the biggest overlooked needs for churches. Charities outdo churches in saying thank you. Let's change that.

Third, since you continually lose donors, you *must* add new donors every year. We track church giving, and most average anywhere from a 15% to 20% loss in givers every year. You must have a larger front door than your back door to stay fully funded.

Fourth, it paves the way for the next gift! Your thank you note, letter, call, or text builds a bridge to the next "ask."

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How can you build your Gratitude Lane? Here is what I recommend as an ongoing strategy for expressing thanks to your donors. Start by publicly thanking donors all the time. From your offering time to social media, you should regularly express thanks to those who give. Here are a few other ideas.

- **Write up-to-date automated thank you notes for your online giving receipts.** For more ideas on how to do this, see my blog post at <https://www.onlinegiving.org/support/because-of-your-generosity>.
- **Write periodic notes to your top donors in your own handwriting expressing your thanks.** I leave it to you to decide what percentage or amount generates a thank you note. I would suggest that you at least consider your top fifteen percent.
- **Write a note of thanks to all your first-time donors.** I have a follower who typically runs around 1,500 each weekend, yet he writes a personal handwritten note to all who give for the first time, thanking them for their gift.
- **Make sure every appeal expresses thanks for past gifts and consideration for giving in response to your appeal.** We are always looking for the next gift. For more practical advice on showing gratitude, see the Bonus Section.

The bottom line is to be thankful *and* express thanks to those who give to your church. They help fuel the missions and ministries you do. It takes very little effort to say thanks, but the return on that is enormous. Find regular and creative ways to express your appreciation to your donors, and the time you invest will bring a harvest. **Check out the Bonus Section for more information on building a Gratitude Lane.**

Oh, and let me share with you the final two points of my five-point post-Easter strategy...

Reboot for summer. Easter is over. Now is the time to start planning out your summer giving initiative. You know summer is always a challenging time for giving, so plan ahead of time so that you can be fully funded.

Relax. Get some rest and relaxation. The best always know how to rest and relax. Your year is not done, and there is a lot more work to be done. There is another sermon to preach, another committee meeting to attend, another...

You can't be at your best if you are worn out. Jesus often withdrew from the crowd, so why don't you? Turn off the cell phone. Don't look at your email. Disconnect. Take a walk with your spouse. Go play golf or hike the mountains. My point is that you need to relax. You can't replay Easter. You can only keep moving forward. These five keys can and will help you navigate the week after Easter. And by showing gratitude, you will pave the way towards fully funding your summer initiatives.



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach

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1. <https://grin.coop/the-importance-of-saying-thank-you-to-donors/>



OnlineGiving.org, the leading online giving processor in America, sponsors my writing. OG is owned and operated by committed Christians active in their local church. Find out more about their services at <https://www.onlinegiving.org/>. You can also read the blog post I wrote for them at <https://www.onlinegiving.org/blog>.

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Bonus Section

Key Pointers for Expressing Gratitude

Years ago, I wrote a post on the key pointers for expressing gratitude. I've edited it down through the years, but the points remain good thoughts. Pastor, this would be a great discussion starter for your staff or Finance Team. So, here are my thoughts about crafting a thank you card, email, letter, or text...

- **Get to the point!** It's about saying thanks, not telling them how great your church is. So,
- **Don't make it about you!** Remember, you are thanking *the donor*.
- **Make it brief.** People are busy these days, and they won't read more than a paragraph or two or a sentence or two.
- **Personalize it.** The most successful responses use the person's name. That is a start, but make their gift come alive by helping...
- **Connect the dots for them.** Briefly share what their gifts do in helping advance the Kingdom of God, making our world a better place to live in. When people see what their gift is doing, they are more apt to give again.
- **Make it interesting.** Tell some real-life story that makes the note readable. Say NO to boring letters and emails!

Say thank you often and to everyone! Don't limit yourself to thanking first-time donors—thank everyone! Carve out thirty minutes to an hour each week specifically for thanking donors.

Here are a few segments to consider thanking...

- **First-time donors** – One of your goals is to start a conversation with these donors that will lead to the next gift given, and ultimately, that donor will realize the joy of generosity.
- **Top tier donors.** The average church sees 15% of their donor base give 50% of all that is given. These people put the gas in your tank for missions and ministry. Why not write a personal note of thanks to one from this key group each week?
- **The faithful but forgotten.** Who is your widow's mite giver? Why not pick someone in your church who gives faithfully year after year? Send one note a week saying thanks and praying for that person who gives faithfully no matter what the amount.

Publicly say thank you regularly and often. Every offering time should be a time to thank those who donate to your church. You can also say thanks through your Social Media posts. Showing gratitude to those who help fuel your missions and ministry will help increase giving.

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5 Reasons Pastors Should Attend Summer Camp

By Kyle Cravens

Easter is over, and it's time to think summer, as in summer camp! The *Journal* will soon turn to summer issues, but we think it is good stewardship for a pastor to attend summer camp. We say the Amen to Kyle Cravens piece below, originally posted in the Baptist Press BP Toolbox. We are honored to share it here with permission. You can find the link at the end.

It's March, and summer seems far away. But with how quickly the new year has already flown by, summer will be here before we know it. If your students are attending camp this summer, have you, as the pastor, made plans to attend with them?

If not, here are some reasons you should get those dates on your calendar and make plans to go away to camp with your students. There is power in presence. If your student minister hasn't yet made plans for camp this summer, urge him to make plans today.

1. Your presence communicates that student ministry is an important part of the church

You are the pastor of the entire church, not just the adults. When you take time to go to camp, you demonstrate to the church that student ministry is important. And you show you value students and their role in the church.

Investing in today's teenagers is necessary for church health and growth. Students are not the church of tomorrow but the church of today. Connecting with students at camp allows you, as the pastor, to impact the next generation for Christ. Involvement and investment in all areas of the church nurture the congregation and allow the church to flourish.

2. Your presence shows students you care about them and about investing in them

Camp is a great environment for relationship building. By spending time at camp, you have an entire week to get to know your students by name, learn about them, and make lasting memories. You'll have the chance to talk with students over meals, worship alongside them, play games with them, and engage in spiritual conversations.

These opportunities at camp will be much more than the few minutes you may normally have with them on Wednesday nights or Sundays. You'll more than likely get to know students better in just one week of camp than you can in an entire year of Sundays.

In return, students will have a chance to build relationships with you and see you as more than just a figure in the pulpit on Sundays. You'll have the chance to share your personal experience and mentor them as they grow in their faith.

This will also allow you to follow up and keep students accountable for decisions made at camp and for applying what they learned. As you observe students and see those with leadership potential, you can begin to see where they might be used in other areas of the church or even to help advise you on relevant issues.

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3. Your presence supports the work of your student pastor and adult volunteers

When you make attending camp a priority, you are saying that what your student minister and workers spend hours upon hours doing matters. Your presence is a huge encouragement to them and their ministry and shows that you support them and their work.

Your role at camp is to serve as an adult volunteer, not to be the one in charge. That is the student pastor's job. You shouldn't go with an agenda or to spy on what is happening or tell them how to run camp. You go to listen, watch, participate, engage in conversations, build relationships, and lead students to Jesus.

Use this time to build relationships with your student minister and adult volunteers as well. They can give you great insight into your students, which ones are struggling and need extra attention and the ones who have not yet made a decision for Christ. They may also provide knowledge about student's families.

4. Your presence helps keep you relevant

Most students desire church to be relevant and engaging, meeting them where they are. Being present with students and spending time with them at camp helps keep you connected, which in turn, keeps church relevant to them.

Pastors can lose touch with what students are facing in the world, creating a disconnect between real life and sermons and overall programming in the church. Getting to know students and their families—what they are facing in life and where they are in their faith journey—will prove beneficial as you consider future sermons and studies and the overall direction of the church. Seeing firsthand the dynamic, youthful programming at summer camp will also help you ensure some of this will be incorporated at your church to keep students interested and engaged.

5. Your presence demonstrates that you can have fun, too

Camp is meant to be a time away to draw closer to God, but it's also meant to be fun. This is a time to show students that being a Christian can and should be joyful and life-giving. It is a time for adults and for you to let go and just play and have a good time. There's nothing like a friendly game of ping pong, playing a game of three-on-three basketball, taking a hike, or conquering a ropes course with your students. It will create lasting memories.

So, while the days will be long and hot, the beds may be hard, and the food not great, you do not want to miss the chance to form lasting relationships with the students and adults from your church and to see life change happen right before your eyes at camp. It will create lasting goodwill for you and your church for years to come. Make it a priority for your summer!

Kyle Cravens serves as team leader and a camp coordinator for FUGE Camps.

For the original post go to: <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/bptoolbox/5-reasons-pastors-should-attend-summer-camp/>