

The Stewardship Journal

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**From My Desk
to Your Inbox**



**Why You Need a
Summer Giving Plan**



**Putting the Tools Together for
Your Best Summer Giving Ever**



**Common Mistakes
to Avoid**

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From My Desk to Your Inbox

If you haven't already, now is a great time to put together your summer giving plan. This week's issue of the Stewardship Journal is designed to help you do just that.

First, in ***Why You Need a Summer Giving Plan***, the Stewardship Coach, Mark Brooks, reviews seven reasons your church should consider planning ahead and creating a summer giving plan.

In the bonus section, ***Putting the Tools Together for Your Best Summer Giving Ever***, Mark shares practical ideas and tools for implementing your plan for summer giving.

And finally, ***Common Mistakes to Avoid*** points out what to avoid when planning an online giving strategy. This reposted article is a must-read if your summer giving plan involves utilizing online giving to its fullest potential!

Remember, you can find all the past issues at stewardshipjournal.com or visit LouisianaBaptists.org/Stewardship for more resources.

Keep Looking Up,



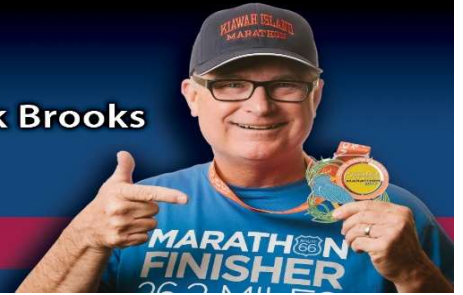
Dr. Steve How

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Mark Brooks



Why You Need a Summer Giving Plan



“Did you or anyone on your staff think of that?” That was my reply to an Executive Pastor of one of the largest churches in America after I had laid out a plan for summer giving. His comment was, “This isn’t hard at all.” His comment was meant as a dig over my value. My actual reply was, “I never claimed this was rocket science, but did you or anyone on your staff think of that?” His silence to my question told me the answer.

How will that impact giving? That is always my question. So, let me ask you: without a summer giving strategy in place, how will that lack of a plan impact giving? My answer is in this Coach entitled ***Why You Need a Summer Giving Plan***.

Around this time last year, I wrote a post entitled ***7 Reasons to Make Summer Giving Plans***. You can find it here: <https://www.onlinegiving.org/support/7-reasons-to-make-summer-giving-plans>. Here are my seven reasons for why you need a summer giving plan:

1. **The Post-Easter Slump** – Post-Easter attendance plummets until fall, which impacts giving.
2. **Your past history**—If your past summer giving has been challenging, what will change this year?
3. **Increased competition (e.g., Disney, lake, beach, sports, etc.) leads to declining engagement and participation.** This is largely the reason for the post-Easter slump in giving.
4. **If you are already behind in giving** – The further you fall behind, the harder it is to catch up.
5. **If you don’t have a strong fourth quarter** – Some churches can use a strong fourth quarter of giving to stage a comeback. But if historically you don’t have a strong fourth quarter then you must have a plan to make up lost giving ground.
6. **If you want to stay ahead** – It takes continual work to ensure your church’s financial stability.
7. **If you want to connect your summer vision to giving, move everyone up the generosity ladder** – You can inspire your congregation to give generously and support your initiatives by articulating a compelling vision.

Let me ask you a question. **Do you have a summer giving plan in place?** The above points are why I make sure you start immediately after Easter, planning a strategy to offset the potential decline in giving the summer always produces. We are weeks away from summer, and now is the time to prepare. You will be glad you did come July.



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach
mark@acts17generosity.com



OnlineGiving.org, the leading online giving processor in America, sponsors my writing. [Find out more about their services at https://www.onlinegiving.org/.](https://www.onlinegiving.org/)

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Bonus Section

Putting the Tools Together for Your Best Summer Giving Ever

Your vision is the driver, but the best driver in the world is worthless without **effective vehicles to drive the vision to those you want to impact**. This section of the playbook will share the essential tools to effectively launch your summer giving strategy.

In the 21st century, we must use multiple tools to achieve success.

What systems should you have in place?

1. **Dynamic website.** Your website is the first place most people will visit BEFORE they ever darken your doors. Make yours a good one!
2. **Robust online giving platform, including text giving.** You should be working toward most of your giving coming in via digital means. We can help at <https://www.onlinegiving.org/>.
3. **Social Media platform and presence.** Like it or not, social media is where many people spend the great bulk of their time. If you are not there, you miss an opportunity to connect with people.
4. **Postage-paid envelopes.** I know this sounds old school, but this can be a great tool if used properly.
5. **Extensive database of your donors.** A given is to have all your member's email addresses. Yet you need also to have the ability to break this list down by various subgroups like first-time givers, consistency, etc.
6. **A mass email platform, such as Constant Contact or MailChimp.** There are many platforms to help you send out emails in multiple batches. Some offer free services for a limited number of sends. Most cost only a few dollars a month. Find the tool that suits your church database best.
7. **Offering talks.** On-campus or live streaming, it is essential that each offering time has a talk connecting your vision to giving. One thing that you must do is keep changing what you do during the offering.

Ideas to take your summer offerings to the next level – Since even my stellar offering talks can become routine, causing members to tune you out, let me give you some ideas on how to take your talks to the next level.

- **Use Video** – Many of my clients already use video loops for announcements. Why not use that approach for the offering? For instance, while you are talking about VBS on the screens, you could be showing shots from last year's VBS or shots of your kids in action.
- **You could also video the whole offering talk.** Today, it is so easy to do. Just take your smartphone, point, and click, and you can make your own videos. While the content quality will not rival the networks, what makes it appealing is that it is local. People love to see people they know on video. Show and tell what you are doing, and the offering plate will fill up!
- **Interviews** – Even churches without screens or projectors can take their offerings up a notch using the interview process. Let's take VBS again. A few weeks before you launch VBS, you have your director come to the platform and interview her. Tell her to look at you, not the crowd.
- **Use your offerings for previews, reports, and thanks** - My advice is to think through the entire summer. Each week, pick one specific mission or ministry endeavor to focus on. Challenge your team to think of creative and effective ways to tell the story and then ask people to support that work.

Start thinking and planning NOW what each of your offering talks will be about, and you will have greater success in being fully funded this summer!

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Common Mistakes to Avoid

By Mark Brooks

One of the easiest ways to increase giving over the summer is through an effective online strategy. I use online giving options heavily in my summer plans. Below is a recent post I wrote for my sponsor: <https://www.onlinegiving.org/>.

We are weeks away from summer, which is traditionally one of the most challenging times of the year. As I work with churches to avoid this potential financial disaster, I heavily use online giving. One pastor summed up online giving's impact on summer giving as taking the angst out of summer. By that, he meant they could pay their bills on time, fund all their summer missions and ministry endeavors, *and* pay the staff on time. Doesn't that sound attractive?

You, too, could avoid the angst of summer giving by utilizing an online giving strategy this summer. To help you do that, let me point out the most common mistakes churches make regarding their online giving strategy.

Not having an online giving strategy. Most churches in America today offer some type of online giving. Yet, few have a strategy for the use of online giving. The more successful churches in terms of online giving know their audience, their demographics of usage, and other key factors that help them craft appeals. At OnlineGiving.org, we know the value of this information, and our dashboard gives you real-time data to better plan out your strategy. Read more about our dashboard here: <https://www.onlinegiving.org/support/not-your-fathers-dashboard>.

Setting up an online giving site and then forgetting about it. Your members won't magically find your giving site. You have to continually keep online giving in the minds of your donors. Consider running a campaign announcing online giving features, explaining how easy it is, and encouraging members to sign up. Then, throughout the year, at various times and across all platforms, continually point out that people can give online.

Not driving people to your site. You can encourage more visits to your giving page by utilizing clickable links to your giving site. Every print and digital communication should always contain a clickable link that sends people directly to the giving page for ease of use. A clickable link in a social media post is a great way to show people what their gift accomplishes while allowing them to give. Follow this clickable link to find a post on how to use social media here: <https://www.onlinegiving.org/support/share-the-vision-with-social-media>.

Not making your giving site easily accessible and visible. Studies show you have less than 10 seconds once a person has landed on your website before they bail out. So, make your giving site easy to find and easy to use. It doesn't have to be a flashing light, but people should not have to search for your giving site.

Not giving multiple options by how people can give online. You must have all the major platforms people use today. From text giving to setting up recurring giving, you want to provide multiple options, thus allowing people to use what they like best. We give you over a dozen options to choose from.

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Not putting a focus on the benefits of recurring giving. In terms of online giving, this is my ultimate goal. Why? Because they will never forget their offering ever again with automated giving. As a result, your giving goes up. Also, recurring giving, especially done by ACH, is the lowest rate charged for processing. You end up with more money to do more of God's work.

For more information on the value of ACH recurring giving, see this post:

<https://www.onlinegiving.org/support/summer-proof-your-generosity>

Avoiding these common mistakes can improve your online giving results. Doing so will help you develop a summer giving plan that leans heavily on an online strategy. Your goal should be to create through your stories of life change a willingness to want to give to your church. You then must create a simple and easy path for them to give. Especially in summer, the easier you make it for people to give, the more apt they will give. Call us today at (615) 206-4000 or drop us a line at support@onlinegiving.org for more information about how our platform and coaching can help you avoid a summer slump in giving.

Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach

The preceding post can be seen at: <https://www.onlinegiving.org/blog>