



# The Stewardship Journal

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**From My Desk  
to Your Inbox**



**The Three-Day  
Weekend Edition**



**A May Strategy  
for Summer Giving**



**The Seasonal  
Giving Strategy**

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## From My Desk to Your Inbox

Summer sports, hunting season, holidays—football. The calendar impacts giving, and being prepared can help you capitalize on special dates throughout the year.

In *The Three-Day Weekend Edition*, Mark Brooks, The Stewardship Coach, focuses on how planning for three-day weekends can curb the effects of an attendance slump. Plus, just in time for Memorial Day, check out *A May Strategy for Summer Giving* that could save you money as well as generate a steady stream of offerings throughout the summer!

This week's final article, *The Seasonal Giving Strategy*, provides an overview of seasonal giving plans and how you can begin to develop your own.

I pray this edition of The Stewardship Journal is one you'll reference as a valuable resource throughout the year and, remember, you can find all the past issues at [stewardshipjournal.com](http://stewardshipjournal.com) or visit [LouisianaBaptists.org/Stewardship](http://LouisianaBaptists.org/Stewardship) for more resources.

Keep Looking Up,



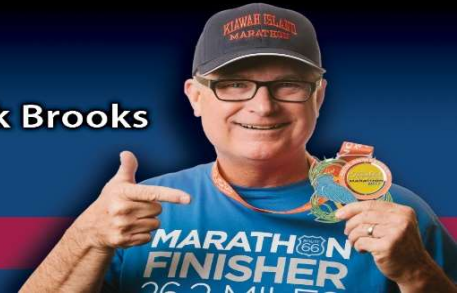
*Dr. Steve Howie*

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Mark Brooks



## The Three-Day Weekend Edition



Pastoring a church miles from Razorback Stadium, where the University of Arkansas Razorbacks play football, made me aware of the need to pay attention to the calendar when it came to planning. When I started in the stewardship ministry, I quickly learned that even giving initiatives must pay attention to the calendar. The Sunday after Alabama plays Auburn isn't a good time to culminate a pledge drive, one Alabama pastor wisely counseled me. One side is happy the other is sad. And the first weekend of deer season isn't a good time either for churches in the South, said another pastor. So, it pays to have a seasonal giving strategy, and this edition, entitled ***The Three-Day Weekend***

***Edition***, will give you a heads up on one seasonal event coming up, Memorial Day.

Memorial Day in Northwest Arkansas presented a unique challenge-not the Hogs nor a beach, but Beaver Lake, a mere fifteen-minute drive from our parking lot. The allure of its clear water and abundant fish often drew many of my members away on a three-day weekend. Consequently, Memorial Day weekend consistently marked the year's lowest attendance. I didn't have a stewardship coach to guide me then, but you do now. Here's what I've learned about giving, not just on Memorial Day, but on three-day weekends in general.

**Three-day weekends are offering and momentum killers!** Why? Here is my list of reasons:

- Your people are at the lake, beach, or ball game. Wherever they are, they are in holiday mode.
- When attendance/engagement is down, giving is down too. Sure, they can now tune in and give from the beach. Few, if any will. Thus, your offering totals on Memorial Day are going to be far less than a typical last Sunday of the month. This means that the weekend offering will put you behind, which leads to another reason...
- Falling behind makes it difficult to catch up. If you are caught up, a three-day weekend like Memorial Day kills whatever momentum you had. Which leads to my final reason...
- Memorial Day kicks off your busy summer schedule, and the last thing you need is to be behind budget and struggling to keep up.

What should you do? As I always say, you must get ahead of the curve with a **good plan of action**. What are the keys to a successful Memorial Day offering, or any special offering time for that matter? Here are some keys.

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- **Planning!** You can't decide on Saturday night to do something on Sunday and expect great results. The more you plan out the offering, the better your chance of success.
- **Vision!** The more appealing the appeal, the better the results. Take the time to craft a compelling vision, and you will see greater success.
- **Remember, every "ask" needs a driver!** What will motivate your potential donors to give you a gift on your special offering day? Just asking people to give for the sake of giving will not generate the dollars you need. Make the "ask" compelling!
- **Execution!** Having a plan is not enough! You must implement that plan across all existing platforms and tell your story.

**Be sure to check out my Bonus Section, *A May Strategy for Summer Giving*, for ideas.**

I'm writing to you now, weeks before Memorial Day, to help you start your planning. I want you to start your summer on a strong note, and a simple plan to make your Memorial Day offering stronger will be a momentum boost for the rest of your summer. Let's get started planning now for your best Memorial Day offering ever!



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach

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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

### A May Strategy for Summer Giving

May is your month to help you get ahead of the curve of summer giving's challenges. The following post I wrote for my sponsor, [OnlineGiving.org](https://www.onlinegiving.org), illustrates the best way to avoid the slump three-day weekends give churches.

For every church in America, summer presents both opportunities and challenges. The opportunities run from summer mission trips to children's events like VBS and camps and student camps and activities. It is one of the busiest times of the year but also one of the hardest times of the year to stay fully funded. It doesn't have to be that way. In this post, I will show you a strategy for May that will help you avoid the typical summer slump in giving.

To head off a slump in giving for my clients, I have them focus on setting up recurring giving throughout the month of May. Each weekend of May, during the services, I have them highlight how easy it is to set up and how their gift can and will impact not just the summer but year-round missions and ministry. I will give you a few of the ideas I share with my clients later in this post, but first, let me give you some reasons why you should consider a strategy of focusing on recurring giving, especially ACH giving.

**Here are four advantages of why you want to set up recurring giving...**

- 1. It's the modern-day equivalent of writing the first check to God.** Automated giving is the best way to ensure members become consistent givers. By setting up automated giving, the decision to give is already made *before* people spend all of God's money!
- 2. It evens out your giving, especially in summer.** Summer giving is often erratic and difficult to project. With recurring giving, you better understand what will come in.
- 3. It helps you capture gifts that would otherwise go to Mickey!** When people go on vacation, they take their offering money with them and forget to pay it back after they get home. Recurring giving solves this problem.
- 4. It has the lowest percentage fee rate.** Typically, you will see under 1% to 1% charged on recurring giving. Credit cards run 2% to 3%. So, having people use recurring giving means lower processing fees for you, which means more dollars for missions and ministry!

**This is why you should make May a push for recurring giving!**

It's not that you ask; it is how you ask. It has been my contention that people are not turned off by the church's asking for money. They are turned off by how we ask. Too often, we attempt to guilt people into giving. Those types of appeals rarely, if ever, work.

Let me illustrate. Several years ago, when we lived in Atlanta, our church sent out a summer giving appeal. Here is a direct quote:

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“With the summer months bringing vacations and other Sunday activities, we, the members of the Finance Committee, want to remind you that our monthly expenses continue for things like lighting, air conditioning, maintenance of grounds and buildings, personnel costs, missions outreach, etc. This is typically the time that giving slows down and doesn’t rebound until October, causing a cash flow crunch, which makes it difficult for the church to meet its monthly obligations.”

This was a direct quote from their summer appeal letter! Would you give to support keeping the lights on? Notice that missions outreach was listed last, next to etc.! Appeals to, etc., do not motivate people to give you more money.

I have found the key to making an “ask” lies in the connecting power of vision. Instead of asking people to give to keep the AC on, why not help them see the power their gift produces? Here is a positive way to put the focus on giving.

“Recent studies are showing an increase in teen mental health issues. This summer, we have multiple opportunities to help our students build strong futures with Jesus. From providing for camps to our weekly outreach, your faithful giving will help us do this! Follow this link to set your giving to recurring, and your offering will show up even when you are on vacation!”

Make the appeal about signing up for recurring giving about fulfilling a vision rather than filling your offering plate, and you will find people willing to give to support that vision. Here is another post on using your vision to encourage giving: <https://www.onlinegiving.org/support/using-the-power-of-vision>.

With a May strategy of focusing on the impact of summer through setting up recurring giving, you will more easily navigate the difficult giving days of summer. Find out more about how we can help you use the power of your vision and recurring giving to fund your summer missions and ministry by contacting us at [\(615\) 206-4000](tel:6152064000) or at [support@onlinegiving.org](mailto:support@onlinegiving.org).

Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach

The preceding can be found at: <https://www.onlinegiving.org/support/the-seasonal-giving-strategy>

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## The Seasonal Giving Strategy

By Mark Brooks

Whether we like it or not, three-day weekends are built into our calendars. This is a major reason why churches must have a seasonal giving strategy. The following post, written primarily about an Easter offering, none the less contains valuable information about seasonal giving strategies including three-day weekends. It is used with permission.

Does your church have a giving strategy? Most churches don't, so they struggle to be financially stable. They fall behind early in the year and struggle to get through the summer months. The typical church has more missions and ministry in the summer and thus greater expenses. A church's summer initiatives could be endangered without a good giving strategy. This is why every church needs a giving strategy.

I have been crafting giving strategies for top 100 churches and churches running 100 for nearly twenty-five years. When it comes to giving strategies, I think seasonally. I believe that every church should have a seasonal giving strategy. This is why with less than one month until Easter, I have been prompting churches to think and plan out their Easter offering.

Easter is a special day for Christians. You will have more people engaging your church both in-person and online than any other day of the year. Why not make the offering on Easter a special offering? Do special offerings work? **Yes!** If.

In my experience of working with churches of all types and sizes, special offerings work *if* you do them right. Let me make a case for special offerings.

1. **Why hold special offerings?** First and foremost, special offerings give you the ability to recast your vision every time you hold one. And that is important because dollars follow vision. When casting your vision, I advise using the three C's of vision. If you make your appeal clear, concise, and most of all compelling, you *will* raise the dollars you need. We should treat every offering moment as an opportunity to cast your vision, but it is especially true for special offerings. Special offerings help you link how a dollar given to your church impacts lives.

Casting a compelling vision for the offering allows a church to use special offerings to attract new donors. One of my primary goals for special offerings is to help new donors see the value of what your church is doing so that they willingly give you money to support that vision. That first gift can be the start of an amazing journey of generosity.

The final reason for a special offering is that, done right; they can help you close any giving gap you might be experiencing. Instead of talking about how badly you need money, talk about what money given in the offering accomplishes. When you emphasize life-change instead of a number on a spreadsheet, people will more readily give to support that life change.

2. **What constitutes a special offering?** When I talk about special offerings, I am not necessarily talking about adding another offering on a weekend though that is sometimes necessary. I am talking about making your regular offering special. Certain times of the year give us the ability to make the offering special.

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3. **Which days can be used as special offerings?** The answer is any day you choose! However, certain days and times of the year make sense. The various seasons of the year are perfect for holding a special offering. For instance...
- Holidays – New Years, Super Bowl Sunday, Valentine’s Day, Easter, Mother’s Day, Memorial Day, Father’s Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.
  - Special Needs – Think crisis relief offerings, mission appeals, appeals to fund specific ministries - like summer camps, etc.
  - Catch-up offerings – These are a last resort effort and should be used only if you are in a financial crisis. If you do your work every week, your need for a catch-up offering should diminish.

I use the calendar for my clients to write step-by-step guides on improving giving around that time. I call them Playbooks. For every season of the year, I have a strategy in place guiding churches to financial stability. These playbooks are available for free to all [OnlineGiving.org](https://www.onlinegiving.org) clients. For more information, contact [OnlineGiving.org](https://www.onlinegiving.org) today at [\(615\) 206-4000](tel:6152064000) or [drop us a line](#) and we will tell you more.

4. **What are the keys to a special offering?** Here are some keys to a successful special offering.
- **Planning!** You can’t decide on Saturday night to hold a special offering on Sunday and expect great results. The more you plan out the special offering, the better your chance for success. Now, our planning must include both in-person and online audiences and provide multiple options by which people can give.
  - **Vision!** The more appealing the appeal, the better the results. Take the time to craft a compelling vision, and you will see greater success.
  - **Execution!** It is not enough to have a plan! You *must* work that plan through all existing platforms and tell your story.

## ***So, bottom line...***

Holding a special offering around key events like Easter, Christmas, or the 4<sup>th</sup> of July can give your church a boost in giving to fully fund every month of the year. Your church will reap the many benefits of special offerings with good planning!

Our passion at [OnlineGiving.org](https://www.onlinegiving.org) is to give churches the best online platform and help them use our tools effectively. My job at [OnlineGiving.org](https://www.onlinegiving.org) is to provide tools and strategies for our churches that will help them increase giving and givers. This means our clients have a built-in Minister of Generosity providing strategic tools and strategies. If you are interested, contact us at [OnlineGiving.org](https://www.onlinegiving.org) today at [\(615\) 206-4000](tel:6152064000) or [drop us a line](#), and we will show how.

The above article can be seen as it originally appeared at: <https://www.onlinegiving.org/support/the-seasonal-giving-strategy>