

# The Stewardship Journal

In partnership with [StewardshipJournal.com](http://StewardshipJournal.com)



**From My Desk  
to Your Inbox**



**It Starts  
With a Vision**



**Let's Make a Case  
for Your Vision**



**The State  
of Giving**

# THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

## From My Desk to Your Inbox

I pray you had a great 4th of July.

This issue of the *Stewardship Journal* asks one important question: How clear is your vision?

Mark Brooks, the Stewardship Coach, continues his series Giving Away the Farm with his posts ***It Starts with A Vision*** and ***Let's Make a Case for Your Vision!*** Mark provides practical advice on how vision sparks a capital campaign and six pointers for crafting your vision to prepare you for your best capital campaign ever.

The final post, ***The State of Giving***, shares a sobering report on the state of charitable giving in America. You'll want to check out what this report could mean for your church.

Remember, all previous issues of the *Stewardship Journal* can be found at [stewardshipjournal.com](http://stewardshipjournal.com) or visit [LouisianaBaptists.org/Stewardship](http://LouisianaBaptists.org/Stewardship).

Keep Looking Up,



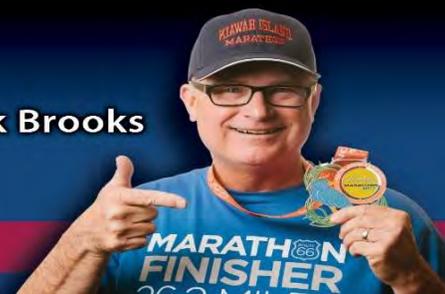
*Dr. Steve Ham*

# THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

THE STEWARDSHIP COACH  
REVERSING THE DECLINE IN GIVING

sponsored by  OnlineGiving.org | acts17coach.com

Mark Brooks



## It Starts With a Vision



**If you want to raise significant dollars in a capital campaign you must realize *It Starts With a Vision*.** That is the title of this Coach and the key to a successful campaign. I'm starting back my series on how to do your own capital campaign, entitled ***Giving Away the Farm***. For the next few weeks, I will be sharing with you the keys to organizing and successfully managing your capital campaign. The advice I will be giving you, depending upon the size of your church, would cost you thousands of dollars from a stewardship consultant. I'm giving it away for free!

**One of the first things you need to learn is that teams don't raise money; vision does.** I led our industry to focus more on working on, establishing, and communicating a compelling vision. I rarely used a team approach because it is a waste of time and doesn't raise a church more money. If anything, it turns people off.

In the past, stewardship firms organized a multitude of teams to ensure the success of a campaign. The reasoning was that the more people were involved in a campaign, the more pledges would be made. So, we organized various teams and then attempted to sign people up to make calls, set up tables, or whatever work we could come up with. Most of it, frankly, was busy work. In the '80s and '90s, that might have worked. It doesn't work in the 21st century. Why would we put all our marbles in something that no longer works? **Teams don't raise money; vision does!**

The better you communicate that vision, the more likely your campaign will be a success. Your vision, properly communicated, will connect with your people, causing them to willingly give more to support that vision. This is true in good times and in bad times.

In the fall of 2008, I started writing my first book, ***Recession Proof Your Offerings***. One of the chapters of that book was entitled "Vision: The Reason People Give." If you remember, we were in the midst of what became known as The Great Recession. Scores of churches ceased to exist due to the financial pressure the economy created upon giving. I contend they did not have a giving problem. They had a vision problem. Here is what I wrote in 2008:

"Vision, when it comes to stewardship, is the main driver of why people give. Vision is what keeps me giving even when the economy is down. Never will vision be more important than in stressful economic times. Several years ago, I coined this truth: **Good Vision Trumps Bad Economy!**"

The economy impacts giving, and our economy is not good, so you need to utilize **the connecting power of vision to trump this bad economy.** But how?

I feel we have often made casting a vision more difficult than it needs to be. We have focused more on making vision statements cute and catchy. There are scores of books on vision and how to develop one. In fact, it has been one of the most written about and talked about subjects in Christian leadership circles. I think finding your vision is much simpler than we have made it. I believe it comes down to **what is in your heart.**

Vision starts in your heart. David had a vision to build a temple. He cast that vision in I Chronicles 28:2, which says, "King David rose to his feet and said: "Listen to me, my brothers and my people. ***I had it in my heart to build*** a house as a place of rest for the ark..."

# THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

**What's in your heart?** Remember the ad that asks, "What's in your wallet?" When it comes to raising capital dollars, the question is, what's your vision? **Vision starts with the Senior Pastor.** Let me illustrate.

**A God idea or a good idea?** Once, during my twenty years as a pastor, I rose on a Sunday night to address a certain issue that needed the approval of our church. Time has eroded my memory of exactly what I was proposing. But I remember the question my wife, Valerie, asked me later that night at home. At dinner, she asked me, "Do you really believe this is God's will for our church?" When your wife asks you a question like that, you know you are in trouble! I immediately asked her, "Why are you asking me that?" She replied, "In the past, when you made a recommendation you believed in, you always looked us in the eye. Tonight, you never looked us in the eye but read from your notes." Ouch!

When Valerie said that, I realized what I was proposing was a good idea, but I couldn't say it was a God idea. That didn't make it wrong. It simply meant it didn't carry the same amount of passion from me, and if I wasn't passionate about whatever it was, how would I get others to rally around it? I wouldn't. Good ideas don't raise money; God ideas do.

Let me end with this question about the vision for the capital campaign you are trying to connect your people to. **Does it burn in your heart?** If not, it will not burn in the hearts of your people.

**One key goal of your next capital campaign will be to use the connecting power of vision to raise more dollars!** I'll share more about how to craft your vision statement in the Bonus Section. Let's start clarifying and sharpening your vision!

**Here is a review of My Eight Lessons for a Successful Capital Campaign Overview** – Here is a thumbnail of what I will be sharing over the next few weeks:

- Lesson #1**    **It Starts With a Vision** – How to craft your vision for maximum results!
- Lesson #2**    **Setting Realistic Targets** – How to start right to end right!
- Lesson #3**    **Leading Leaders to Lead** – How to identify and cultivate giving leaders.
- Lesson #4**    **Campaign Boot Camp** – Mastering the basics of a capital campaign.
- Lesson #5**    **The Fourth C** – How to communicate your vision effectively.
- Lesson #6**    **The Power of the Pulpit (or Platform)** – How to preach for success.
- Lesson #7**    **It's Not Fund Raising; It's Faith Raising** – Spiritually engage your congregation.
- Lesson #8**    **Follow-Up** – Commitment cards are cool, but nothing beats CASH!

Now is the time to renovate, redo, update, build, and relocate for the next decade of the 2020s. Whatever you do, you will need a chunk of change to accomplish it. Let's hold a capital campaign designed to help meet the needs of your church facilities through the next decade. I'm offering you my services as your coach! The time to start is now!



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach  
[mark@acts17generosity.com](mailto: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/>.

# THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

## Bonus Section

### Let's Make a Case for Your Vision!

When I work with a client for a significant giving initiative, I start by asking the Pastor to write out the vision behind whatever we are raising money for. Technically, this is called a Vision Case Statement. I want a broad overview of what we are raising money for on one-page, front and back. I advise you to do the same thing.

**What is vision?** My friend, Herb Buwalda, came up with what I think is the best definition. He says, "Mission" answers the question, "Why are you here?" "Vision" answers the question, "Where are you going? What is God asking of you now to impact the mission?"

**The 3 C's of Vision Casting** – Your vision must contain these three C's to be heard. When it comes to your vision:

1. **Make it Clear** - Above all else, do your members clearly understand what it is you are attempting to do? Is your vision clear? Can your members easily tell their work associates, neighbors, and friends what you are doing and why? When visions are not clear, people will not donate even in the best of economic times.
2. **Keep it Concise** - Donors have basically two questions: does this make sense, and can you pull it off? Answer those questions, and you will get their dollars. Remember the old KISS acronym? It stands for Keep It Simple Somehow. KISS is good advice for communicating your vision.
3. **Cast it Compellingly** - The most important thing of all is to make your vision matter in the hearts of your members. A compelling vision that motivates the heart will, even in the worst of economic times, cause dollars to come to your ministry. Show your donors how their gift will make a difference and they will rise up to support it financially.

If you don't hear anything else, hear this. Have you ever said that in a sermon? Well, here is my if you don't hear anything else hear this statement. To raise the money, you need...

#### Here Are My Six Key Points on How to Craft the Message of Your Vision

1. **Don't make it about you. Make it about your donors.** Use lines like, "Because of your generosity..."
2. **Be positive, not negative.** Appeals that sound desperate for survival never work.
3. **It's not about making your budget; it is about changing lives!** The number one reason most giving campaigns do not maximize their potential is because the emphasis is not about vision but about making budget.
4. **So, make the appeal about missions and ministry, not making budget!**
5. **Focus on what you have done and what you have yet to do.**
6. **Make the appeal appealing by personalizing the message.**

To accomplish the above-mentioned points, you need to remember one of my Brooks' mantras...

**Get a story, work your story, tell people about your story and people will willingly give to support that story!**

# THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

## The State of Giving

The following is a repost that can be found at <https://www.onlinegiving.org/support/the-state-of-giving>

“Giving Continues Its Decline, Down 2.1% in 2023. Can Fundraisers Turn the Tide in 2024?”<sup>1</sup> That was the headline of a recent post I read by The Chronicle of Philanthropy on Giving USA’s annual survey on giving. When you delve deeper, you find that giving to Religion, when you factor in inflation, declined by 1%, which means that the actual purchasing power of these donations has decreased. That is not the mid-year news you would like to hear.

However, the most pressing concern is the decline in the number of Americans who give to non-profits, a trend that could have a significant and immediate impact on the operations of these organizations. This is a quote that underscores the urgency of the situation,

“For years now, nonprofits have been worried about the decline in the number of Americans who give. This year’s “Giving USA” report won’t allay their concerns: Giving by individuals in 2023 dropped 2.4 percent. The share of overall giving that came from individual donors continued to decline, albeit slightly, from 67.4 percent in 2022 to 67.2 percent in 2023. As recently as 2013, individual donors accounted for 73 percent of overall giving.”<sup>2</sup>

These two numbers clearly show that the state of giving in America is in trouble. Yearly declines in giving fluctuate often, depending upon the state of the economy. For instance, while giving to Religion declined by 1% due to inflation, actual dollars given rose by 3%. If inflation eases, we might see a slight uptick in giving for 2024. The decline in the number of people giving is the most troubling. With fewer people giving and our key donor base aging, we can predict a troubled giving future ahead. The question is, what can be done to reverse this decline? Let me share some thoughts with you.

First, we must be aware of the decline in giving. Not enough church leaders are paying attention to the numbers. One reason is that the decline in giving has been so slow that a 1% decline doesn’t seem like much. Yet, year after year, we have seen a decline, and those slight yearly declines add up to significant losses in revenue. Those losses will continue to increase as time moves on. It’s time we face the facts and do something about it.

To do that, we must change the conversation about giving. Jesus talked more about money and finances than any other topic. If our Lord saw the importance of discussing this topic, why would we not follow Him and do the same? Let’s let the Bible establish the conversation. Jesus called us to make disciples, and being a good steward is part of discipleship. When we practice faithful biblical stewardship, God rewards us by opening the “floodgates of heaven and pouring *out a blessing for you without measure.*” When we teach biblical stewardship, we do our members and guests a service; we are not simply asking for money.

Then, we must change the messaging around giving. You must connect how a dollar given to your church impacts the world for good. I call that connecting the dots. Non-profits are masterful in telling their story and asking people to give to support them. People give to a compelling story! Make your story compelling, and people will give to it. At OnlineGiving.org, our platform makes communicating your vision easy and effective. Does your digital giving provider do that for you?

Finally, we must provide the tools that make giving easy. Now more than ever, it is easy to make giving easy. Americans love options, and this includes how they do commerce. Fewer checks are written today, and most carry little to no cash on their person. We must give our members and attendees the means to give by the means they most enjoy. The easier you make it for people to give, the more apt they will be to give. This is why we offer ten-plus ways by which you can give through OnlineGiving.org platforms.

# THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

At OnlineGiving.org, we are passionate about helping you increase the number of givers at your church. We know that a full “offering plate” means missions and ministries can be fully funded. We come from a church background and actively attend local churches. We are in this with you! This is why we are more than a processing company but a true partner helping churches sustain their mission and ministry.

The recent Giving USA report shows that the future of giving is perilous. For you, the real question is, how is giving at your church? Do you have the funds to pursue the ministry you feel led to pursue? Do you have the number of donors needed to fund your future ministry? And finally, what, if anything, are you doing to ensure the financial security of your church? Let’s stop wringing our hands over bad reports and work to fix the problems those reports show. Halfway through the year, this report on giving is a wake-up call for church leaders to act now to reverse the decline in giving.

Let us show you how our platform and tools can help you increase the number of donors you have while increasing the number of dollars you receive for missions and ministry by contacting us at (615) 206-4000 or [support@onlinegiving.org](mailto:support@onlinegiving.org).

1. [https://www.philanthropy.com/article/giving-continues-its-decline-down-2-1-in-2023-can-fundraisers-turn-the-tide-in-2024?utm\\_campaign=cop-eng-rg-gvgusa-june-24&utm\\_medium=em&utm\\_source=mkto&utm\\_content=24-06-25-v1&mkt\\_tok=OTMxLUVLQS0yMTgAAAGT7ug-bqkBZ44Qk4u-D2OfyXzkDdDMyOSZnKd933vSYOt08YNbjPGFdj\\_jc7qj8KRafuB1dUHTpqHGd3Wju-69JMYCEj4ebJgPKAvWkfVB7nvo&bc\\_nonce=8rb4vd4xa9dtpuw0z5p9o&cid=reg\\_wall\\_signup&sra=true](https://www.philanthropy.com/article/giving-continues-its-decline-down-2-1-in-2023-can-fundraisers-turn-the-tide-in-2024?utm_campaign=cop-eng-rg-gvgusa-june-24&utm_medium=em&utm_source=mkto&utm_content=24-06-25-v1&mkt_tok=OTMxLUVLQS0yMTgAAAGT7ug-bqkBZ44Qk4u-D2OfyXzkDdDMyOSZnKd933vSYOt08YNbjPGFdj_jc7qj8KRafuB1dUHTpqHGd3Wju-69JMYCEj4ebJgPKAvWkfVB7nvo&bc_nonce=8rb4vd4xa9dtpuw0z5p9o&cid=reg_wall_signup&sra=true)

2. Ibid.