

The Stewardship Journal

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**From My Desk
to Your Inbox**



**Cards are Cool, But Cash
Builds Building**



**The Coach's Quick-Step
Follow-Up Plan**



Eagle Saints

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From My Desk to Your Inbox

When raising capital dollars, remember: "It ain't over until it's over!" In this issue of *The Stewardship Journal*, Mark Brooks, the Stewardship Coach, continues the series Giving Away the Farm to help you hold a successful capital campaign of your own.

Cards Are Cool, But Cash Builds Buildings reveals how to turn pledges into tangible donations. Then, in the bonus section, Mark provides ***The Coach's Quick-Step Follow-Up Plan*** for what to do in the first thirty to sixty days after commitments come in.

Finally, Dr. Bruce McCoy, Associate VP of Institutional Advancement at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, shares long-term follow-up pointers in his post, ***Eagle Saints***.

Keep in mind, all past issues of *The Stewardship Journal* can be found at stewardshipjournal.com or LouisianaBaptists.org/Stewardship.

Keep Looking Up,



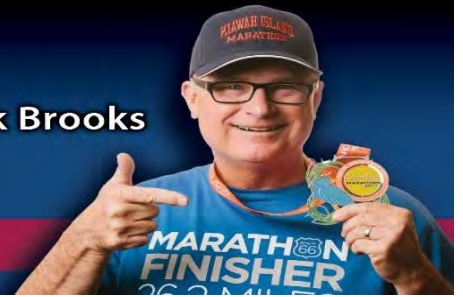
Dr. Steve How

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THE STEWARDSHIP COACH
REVERSING THE DECLINE IN GIVING

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Mark Brooks



Cards Are Cool, But Cash Builds Buildings



Cards Are Cool, But Cash Builds Buildings is the title of this Coach, and it's a truth you can't afford to overlook. Having a stack of pledge cards the day after your campaign commitment is a good start, but what really matters is turning those pledges into tangible donations to fuel your ministry dreams. I'm here to guide you through this process as we near the end of my series on conducting your own capital campaign, **Giving Away the Farm**.

We have been focusing on the ramp-up to the public commitment phase of the campaign. After the Commitment Weekend, you now move into the Follow-Up period of your campaign. In the commitment phase of your campaign, you asked, "How can we get people to make a pledge?" Now, in the follow-up period of your campaign, you need to ask, "How can we motivate them to complete their pledge?" A new reality is that in the 21st century, with pledge-resistant members, we must also ask, "How can we motivate people to give even though they will not pledge?" I'll guide you on how to make this crucial transition.

Our goal is to turn those cards into cash and the uncommitted into committed campaign donors, thus increasing your participation and the amount of money you raise. You should focus on the total amount of dollars pledged and given, and the number of people pledging and giving. The higher the number of commitments and people giving, the higher the level of buy-in to your vision.

So, what is the key to fulfilling a high percentage of commitments? Here are some thoughts.

You must realize the campaign isn't over when the commitment phase ends. This is the number one mistake that churches and pastors make. They go silent on the campaign, thinking it's done. But, in reality, you've just crossed one milestone and found yourself at the start line of another race. The campaign is a continuous journey that requires your ongoing attention and effort.

Imagine entering the local 5K race for some charity. You spend weeks training and give it your all on race day. You cross the finish line with a personal best time. As you begin to celebrate, the Race Director approaches you, screaming, "Run, run, run!" It is then that you realize you entered a double race. The end of the 5K was the start line for a marathon. That's what the end of pledging and the start of the giving period can feel like.

The difference is a matter of rhythm and pace. The intensive part of the campaign leading up to Commitment Weekend can feel like a 5K. You are running as fast as you can to get to one finish line and, often, you are too exhausted to think about anything campaign-related for months, if not years! Follow-up for a campaign, no matter the length of time, has a much slower purposeful rhythm and pace. It's easy to forget to focus on a campaign and fall off the pace. If you fall too far behind, you can never make up the lost ground. One key to a successful campaign is a quick start.

The first six to eight weeks of the start of the giving period set the direction for how the pledge-to-giving ratio will be at the end of the campaign. This statement is particularly true for those who made smaller pledges and for those who did not pledge. In my experience, if someone hasn't started giving on their pledge in the first eight weeks, it is

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doubtful that they will ever complete their pledge. While small pledges typically make up only 10% to 20%, that percentage amounts to a lot of money. **See the Bonus Section for more on a quick-start follow-up plan.**

First Fruit/Big Give Offering—To get churches off to a great start, we have recommended a first weekend or first-month offering, which we typically call the First Fruit Offering. Some have gotten cute and called it The Big Give. The point is that by focusing on the first offering of the campaign, you will help get those who pledge out of the starting blocks and give those who did not pledge a chance to show their support of the project by giving. It's always easier to run from the front than from behind. That first offering can represent as much as 5% of the total pledged.

A significant number of members will never pledge but will give if prompted. Before the Great Recession, it would not have been unusual to see the pledge percentage run as high as 80% to 100% of the congregation, especially in smaller churches. Even my large clients would see commitment averages of 65% to 75% of their regular donors making pledges to campaigns. Now, you're lucky if you see over 50% of donors make a commitment. But those who don't pledge will give if they are motivated. Follow-up has now become more important than ever.

This is why I recommend special offering times throughout the giving period. Each offering time allows you to revisit the vision driving the campaign, which in turn will lead to additional gifts, many coming from those who did not pledge. Churches that follow this strategy often see more people giving without pledging people who do a pledge.

How can you accomplish this? Here is my last and most important follow-up tip...

Keep the vision central throughout the length of the campaign. The reason your members commit to the campaign is because the vision is so compelling. So, the same thing that motivated them to commit to your campaign will be the same thing that motivates them to give to your campaign, a compelling vision. In creative, non-threatening ways, you need to keep stressing the vision and, thus, the importance of continuing to give to that vision. Too many churches go silent on why people made commitments and then wonder what went wrong in the end. If you never talk about the campaign and its vision, don't be surprised if you miss your goal at the end.

When it comes to how to conclude your campaign, think of a golf swing! We have erred in thinking that a campaign is the intensive planning part up through Commitment Weekend. That might take three to six months. The intensive part of a campaign is like the backswing and approach to the golf ball. The follow-up period is like your follow-through. Each part of the swing is important. The key to fulfilling a high percentage of your commitments is to keep your head down, your eye on the ball, and your vision, swinging the club back and through the swing.

You would never stop your swing at the point of contact with the ball. So, don't stop casting vision after Commitment Day. Your campaign isn't over until the last Sunday of your giving period. That's good because cards are cool but generating cash from those cards will help you build whatever you need for the future. That's the importance of follow-up.

There will be no Coach next week due to Labor Day. I'll be back Monday, September 9th. Have a great holiday.



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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/>.

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Bonus Section

The Coach's Quick-Step Follow-Up Plan

One important thing for churches to understand is that when the commitments are in, the campaign is not over. One phase is completed, and now you are in another. I believe the first 30 to 60 days after the Commitment Weekend are crucial. So, let me outline what I recommend for immediate next steps after Commitment Sunday. We must begin thinking weeks before we are through the pledging process.

Immediate Next Steps After Commitment Sunday

Remember, the campaign is not over! It has just started. The weeks after Commitment Sunday are the crucial last attempt to build upon what has been committed to that point. To that end, we recommend...

Platform Communication—The Weekend/Sunday following your commitment time, I would mention the campaign for only two to three minutes. I would tell them that you are off to a great start but that we still need further pledges and that you will announce the results next Weekend/Sunday. I would encourage you to have commitment cards in the chairs or racks where you keep envelopes. Make it easy for people to turn in their card and they are more likely to do so. I would also encourage screenshots and short thirty-second reminders about the campaign for the next couple of weeks after First Fruit Sunday.

Direct Appeal Communication—I have found that immediate communication right after the commitment day can help add additional commitments and gifts. I recommend a series of at least three direct appeals to be sent either by letter or email.

Pastor Opportunity Letter/Email—This is to be sent out to all those who did not sign a commitment card. It should contain a commitment card in the mailing with a return envelope. This is the last major push to get people to make a commitment. **It should go out as soon as possible after Commitment Sunday!**

First Fruit Offering Letter/Email—This communication goes out to all those who made a commitment. Our goal is to get them out of the starting blocks by giving them something, even if it is only \$1. I encourage pastors to announce the special First Fruit Offering right after the commitments are all gathered on Commitment Sunday. Pastors often challenge the church to hold the largest single offering in its history. **This should go out as soon as possible after Commitment Sunday!**

Confirmation Letter/Email—This should come from the Financial Office. It confirms what you have recorded for each person's commitment. Often, what people put down on their cards is confusing. This allows you to confirm the amount. It is also a nice way to remind them of their pledge. **This communication can go out at any time, but hopefully within a month of the commitment weekend.**

Social Media Communication—I love to use social media to show and tell the power of a capital campaign. It's a great way to keep people up-to-date on any progress on the project, which helps motivate giving. It's easy to thank people for their commitments and gifts to the campaign by showing them the impact of their gifts.

The above is designed for the first few weeks of your giving period. But don't stop casting vision after that. Find ways to keep the vision in front of your members and you will find your campaign is more successful. As a famous guy once said, **"It ain't over until it's over!"**

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Eagle Saints

Dr. Bruce McCoy

Associate VP, Institutional Advancement, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

One key way to fund future building needs is through estate planning. We will be writing more on this topic soon. For now, we wanted to share this post by Dr. Bruce McCoy, written specifically for the *Journal*. Dr. McCoy helps us identify what he terms Eagle Saints.

Nearly two out of three people have no will. If this trend is consistent in our churches, our members leave behind untold financial assets that get heavily taxed by the government – leaving only a portion behind. Having no will suggests a significant number have missed the opportunity for the Kingdom of God to receive legacy gifts, which could strengthen the heritage of your family, your local church, and our Christian universities and seminaries.

If the next generation of gospel leaders is to soar, they will need our help. We can help the next generation to soar by making a Planned Gift. Jesus said, “...lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:20-21).

Most thoughtful people want to ensure that we have provided for the next generation. We want those who come after us to be spiritually committed to Christ, academically educated, and financially secure to meet the challenges that await them. Simultaneously, we must examine our financial plans to better support the financial challenges our churches will encounter and the rising costs of Christian education our next generation of leaders will face. Church leaders must encourage members to utilize the concept of Planned Giving to ensure that they provide for the next generation.

When it comes to Planned Giving, we can be like one of three birds: ostriches, turkeys, or eagles. Let’s start with the turkey. Turkeys gobble. If we are like the turkey, we gobble up everything and leave nothing behind for the next generation. And then there’s the Ostrich; some put their head in the sand with no vision or thought for the future. (By the way, if you know why an ostrich puts its head in the sand, please keep it to yourself, as you will ruin an otherwise wonderful illustration). But we can be like the eagle, building a secure nest and preparing our young to soar.

Consider the eagle. Eagles build their nest high on a cliff to be safe from predators. Their nests can be massive and heavy. So, when the gale winds blow, the eagle’s nest remains safe and secure. Eagles build their nest to nurture their young. Then, when the time is right, the mother eagle begins to move her head up and down, rubbing against her babies. At first, her gesture appears loving and tender. But, if the little eaglet refuses to leave the nest and fly, the mother increases her force, using her head to encourage the eaglet to fly. Now and then, one of her babies resists and remains in the safety of the nest. If so, that late bloomer eventually encounters a rude awakening. The mother will dismantle the creature comforts of the nest. She rises to the edge of the nest and begins to tear away all that is comfortable.

The little eagle may plunge into a free fall. No worries. Just in time, the mother eagle swoops down and saves the fledgling eaglet. She knows it is time for the eaglet to be forced from home and nest to soar. With the right amount of nurturing and nudging, the next generation of eagles will fly.

But eagles do more than flip and flap their wings like lesser birds. Eagles can spread their wings, catch a breeze, and soar to magnificent heights. Our Creator-God designed eagle wings with an increased curvature, creating more significant lift. God designed them to climb higher than 10,000 feet and soar for hours, riding on the currents in the atmosphere. But first, those who came before them protected, prepared, and pushed them.

I recall a pastor challenging his congregation to ensure the next generation could soar. He asked them to become “Eagle Saints.” We have heard of Eagle Scouts and applaud their achievements. But Eagle Saints commit to ensuring the next generation of believers can soar by establishing a Planned Gift. If you have a will, I hope you consider a supplement to add your church, your Christian university, or your SBC seminary.

Before you croak, gobble, or stick your head in the sand, I hope you will become an Eagle Saint. Let’s “mount up with wings like eagles” and ensure the next generation of those who proclaim the gospel will soar.