

The Stewardship Journal

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**From My Desk
to Your Inbox**



**Using Gratitude to Sow Seeds
for Future Generosity**



**Key Pointers for
Expressing Gratitude**



**Because of
Your Generosity**

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From My Desk to Your Inbox

As we approach Thanksgiving, this edition of *The Stewardship Journal* looks at the many ways gratitude can increase generosity.

Mark Brooks, the Stewardship Coach, gives us reasons why expressing gratitude is critical in his article ***Using Gratitude to Sow Seeds for Future Generosity***. The follow up article, ***Key Pointers for Expressing Gratitude***, provides easy advice that any pastor can implement!

Finally, ***Because of your Generosity*** looks at the example of one church that succeeded in showing gratitude while educating donors on what their gifts accomplished.

Remember, all past articles of *The Stewardship Coach* are available for you at stewardshipjournal.com or LouisianaBaptists.org/Stewardship.

Keep Looking Up,

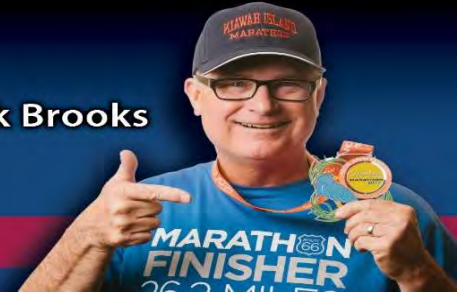


Dr. Steve Ham

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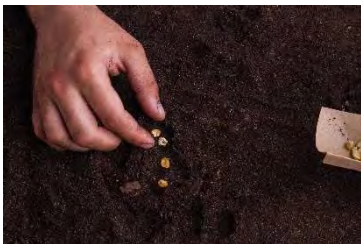


Mark Brooks



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Using Gratitude to Sow Seeds for Future Generosity



"If you had it (being a pastor) to do all over again, what would you do?" I was in my second year of the stewardship ministry when a couple of staff members asked me that over a cup of coffee. As I write these last few editions of my stewardship newsletters, questions like that roll around in my mind. There are many things I would do differently if I were a pastor today. One major thing I would change would be my attitude and approach to gratitude. With Thanksgiving days away, I wanted to write on ***Using Gratitude to Sow Seeds for Future Generosity***.

And, before you tune me out for using the word *using* in my title, let me explain. I get criticized for seeming to only care about people's money. I've always replied that I want what people's money represents to be given to the Lord, their hearts. In addition to that, I want Christians to be the most financially secure people in America. Teaching them to live life as faithful stewards of what God has entrusted to them will result in their being financially secure. They, then, will ensure that the church they are attending faithfully is financially secure. That's how you save your church.

That journey to a lifetime of generosity and God's blessings could all begin with one simple but heartfelt thank you. In this edition, I'm going to show you the value of saying thank you and how to do that. I call it The Gratitude Lane. I'm going to show you how establishing a Gratitude Lane will lead to an increase in giving and givers. Let's start by looking at why you need a Gratitude Lane.

First, it shows you value the donor's 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? Saying thank you is one of the biggest overlooked needs for churches. Too many have the attitude that saying thank you to donors is wrong. Here is a real-life example.

Several years ago, a pastor asked me to write for him various letters on giving. As I met with him, I remarked that in their recent stewardship campaign they never sent out a thank you letter to those who committed to the campaign. The pastor said, "I think it is inappropriate to say thank you to people for what they should be doing." That ended our meeting! I went home and told my wife what the pastor had said. Her reply was priceless...

"When is gratitude ever inappropriate?"

Exactly! I know Christians should give. Yet what is wrong with saying thank you? How is showing gratitude wrong? Frankly, it is not. Have you ever resented someone saying thank you to you? Probably never. Yet, when someone doesn't say thank you it does make an impact.

To increase giving and givers, you need to regularly say thank you to your donors. Non-profits put the church to shame with regard to this. One reason they do this is that a thank you builds the platform for the next "ask." Here is my view of thank you notes.

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Thank you are the most positive reminder of giving you can make!

I am always trying to build for the next gift. I want people to give once, then again, and again until they “get” the joy of generosity. Saying thank you builds toward the next gift.

If we show we value the donor, they will be much more apt to donate again!

A second reason you need a Gratitude Lane is that it sets you apart from the crowd.

“WOW! Everything about PCC continually blows me away and exceeds all of my expectations!” That was the reaction a first-time donor gave after a pastor wrote her a handwritten thank you. The woman wrote back to the pastor because she was amazed he responded. Obviously, that had never happened to her before. I think PCC has a much better chance of getting another gift from this woman simply because the pastor took the time to say thank you. Before you say you don’t have time, let me point out that the pastor in this story has three campuses running around 2,000. Yet, *every* week, he takes time to say thank you.

Another reason you need a Gratitude Lane is that you are continually losing donors. We track clients’ giving and average anywhere from a 15% to 20% loss in givers *every* year. We call this The Churn Rate. Every church loses donors each year. Some die, some move away, and some simply stop coming or giving. Some churn is out of your control. Your goal is to minimize your churn rate. Giving experts are thus focused on donor retention, especially top-tier donors. A regular plan of expressing gratitude can help minimize your Churn Rate.

Still, no matter what you do, you, too, will lose donors this year. You can see how important it is to add new donors. First impressions are the most lasting. If a person gives to your church and never hears back, what does that say? When a donor gives for the first time and is thanked for that gift, we have a greater likelihood of receiving another gift. Which is...

The final reason why you need a Gratitude Lane is that it paves the way for the next gift! As I said earlier, a thank you is the most positive reminder of giving there is. Your thank you note or letter plants a seed to the next “ask.”

Who do you need to thank today for their faithfulness in generosity? A good step is thanking first-time donors. But don’t stop there. A church that shows generosity to its donors is a church that has a better chance of being fully funded. So, if I were back pastoring, I would establish a practice of,

Saying thanks regularly and often!



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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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Key Pointers for Expressing Gratitude

“I never, in a million years, would have ever expected a hand-written, personalized thank you note from the pastor.” Have you ever had anyone thank you for thanking them for giving? If not, it's probably because you have never thought about, nor implemented, a process of thanking donors. For years, I have recommended that pastors reach out to donors of all kinds with a short, heartfelt thank you to those who generously give.

Here are some pointers and thoughts about crafting a thank you card, letter, email, or text...

- **Get to the point!** It's about saying thanks, not telling them how great your church is.
- **Make it brief.** People are busy these days, and they won't read more than a paragraph 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 stop by only 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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I wrote the following post for my sponsor, [OnlineGiving.org](https://www.onlinegiving.org), in 2019. We find that 80% of our receipt emails after a donation are opened and read. As a result, we encourage our partners to utilize receipts as a thank you, pointing out the value of the donor's gift. The story below, used by permission, illustrates how a thank you can lead to the next gift.

Because of Your Generosity



"Because of your generosity, we were able to disciple and share the gospel with 349 middle schoolers, 389 high schoolers, and volunteers at Elevate Summer Camp this July." Donors at The Summit Church in Durham NC receive an email confirmation like this one every time they give online.

Blair Graham, Summit Church's Pastor of Stewardship and Generosity, had a big idea. He wanted to show donors what their gifts accomplished. "We wanted to grow in how we articulate generosity. We wanted to tell the story of what generosity accomplishes in a fresh way."

The Summit Church in Durham NC, reached out to [OnlineGiving.org](https://www.onlinegiving.org) to find a creative and unique way to tell the story of what offerings to the church accomplish. Working with the tools provided by OnlineGiving, they have modified the giving receipts that are sent out to tell stories of how God is using their gifts in the local community and beyond.

Graham stated that every three to four weeks The Summit changes the message of the receipts. "We try to personalize the receipts around what is going on at our church that might be attractive for people to hear about and compelling for them to give to," said Graham. The following are a few of the first sentences of past receipts:

Because of your generosity, we were able to share the gospel with 1,100 kids at six Summit campuses during VBS in June.

Because of your generosity, this Easter, we were able to share the good news of the gospel with 16,352 people who attended one of our Easter services! By God's grace, 73 of those made professions of faith!

When The Summit expanded into another campus, the giving receipt said this,

Because of your generosity, we were able to launch our Garner campus on January 13th. By the grace of God, we had 582 people worship with us, including over 100 first-time guests, 108 kids, and 27 students on our very first Sunday! What each of those numbers represents is a life, a story, that is now being shaped by the gospel. Your giving has given many a new church home!

These receipts have given The Summit another way to communicate with people, making giving meaningful through stories of life change. Dan Boorn with OnlineGiving said, "When The Summit asked us about customizing receipt confirmations, we were more than happy to respond! We love it when our clients come to us with new ideas that increases the local church's ability to share the gospel of Christ with their communities and ultimately lead to life-transformation."

The Summit is using a tool from the non-profit world of telling stories to touch a donor's heart. Look at any non-profit's website, and it is all about the story of meeting the needs of people. They then boldly ask you to give. Stories help you show people what a gift to your church accomplishes. Stories put a face on giving. A good story motivates generous giving.

Consider this giving receipt that The Summit sent out around the launch of a new campus.

Four years ago, Anna Murphy was a student at NC State and not yet a believer. She came to the pre-launch services at the Blue Ridge campus, became a Christian, and was baptized. On September 25, Anna stood in that same room where she was saved and helped launch the Garner campus.

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A donor to The Summit feels the significance of their gift and is thus more likely to give again.

The Summit family loves the receipts. Graham said, "People stop me all the time to tell me they love the receipts message. It is encouraging to people to see what a gift to our church accomplishes."

The Summit Church has found a way to connect how giving to their church impacts the world. They don't just thank people for giving, they show them what their gift accomplished. Your church can do the same thing.

My friends at [OnlineGiving.org](https://www.onlinegiving.org) can help you set up your receipts to tell the story of what your church is doing. OnlineGiving.org currently offers an incredible 12 different methods (tools) of giving, including mobile giving, text giving, and church in-app giving.

Find out why it's time for a switch, contact [OnlineGiving.org](https://www.onlinegiving.org) today at (615) 206-4000 or drop them a line at support@onlinegiving.org.

The preceding can be found at: <https://www.onlinegiving.org/support/because-of-your-generosity>