

Key Points from 3 Keys for Stewardship Success in 2022

4 reasons to be intentional about stewardship:

- the church was Jesus' idea, not ours
- the church will gather
- people want to make a difference
- steward formation takes place almost exclusively at/through church



Key 1: Stewardship truths:

What does the Bible say about our identity as God's stewards that can be the foundation of your church's stewardship ministry/actions in 2022?

Why?

- Stewardship is about God, not the congregation. God created us to be stewards. In biblical times, a steward was a trustworthy and respected person who was entrusted with his employer's possessions. When people have a biblical understanding of themselves as stewards, they begin to see how they can and **should** live differently, **serving God** with what's been entrusted to them, not themselves.
- *Stewardship, giving, & generosity* aren't the same. When we use "generosity" or "giving" as a replacement for "stewardship", we may unintentionally reinforce the idea that what we do with all we have is about us and that it's a choice. We choose to give (or not), we choose to be generous. By embracing the word "stewardship" and anchoring its use in what the bible tells us about it, we again enable people to see the inextricable link between stewardship and their spiritual lives, as well as see themselves as stewards.
- Law to love: the motivations for giving shift from law in the Old Testament, meaning we HAVE to do it, to love in the New Testament, meaning we GET to do it. In the NT we see the example Jesus set for us of loving others and of giving selflessly. If we truly are followers of Christ, we do what Jesus did. We love others and give selflessly. We respond to the boundless love given to us by God.
- God doesn't need our money; rather, we need to give. God wants our hearts. God knows our hearts follow where our money goes. The Bible is full of scripture about how money impacts our relationship with God; exploring these verses as a church helps reframe our thoughts around what we truly need, both as individuals and as the Body of Christ, helps us look honestly at our motivations for stewardship, and helps open our eyes to what God wants for us.

Key 2: Stewardship questions:

What stewardship questions would you like everyone in the congregation to be able to answer?

Examples:

- What does it mean to be God's stewards?
- What do we steward, as individuals and as a community of faith?
- What is the role of money in our lives, as members of the body of Christ?

Why?

- We make assumptions about what people know and understand about stewardship. We even avoid talking about it for fear of people's response. We allow people to be comfortable. "We don't need to talk about stewardship. We're doing ok."
- How are people being formed as stewards or growing in their stewardship if the church doesn't talk about stewardship, or only does so once a year in one specific way (i.e. when it's time to prepare next year's budget)? A lack of steward formation steps is a misstep; linking stewardship mainly with committing money to the church is steward mis-formation.

Key 3: Stewardship concepts:

What stewardship concepts would you like everyone to understand by the end of 2022?

Examples:

- All we are and all we have is entrusted to us by God.
- Stewardship is using and caring for all the resources God has entrusted to us in ways that make God happy.
- As stewards we use our lives to reflect God's love and generosity in who we are and in all we do.
- Stewardship is about love.

Why?

- Jesus did it. Steward formation doesn't happen by accident, and we can't make assumptions about what everyone knows about stewardship; we have to teach. Jesus taught. A lot. His disciples, the crowds, in the synagogues. He taught about money. Also, Jesus' ministry was about people and about love. He healed, he performed miracles, not for himself, but for others. He used his life as a testament to God's love and generosity. He never struggled with the tension we experience in using all that's been entrusted to us for God's purposes; Jesus embraced God's plan in every aspect of his ministry. He was a true steward.

Next steps:

How do you identify stewardship truths, questions, and concepts, and then put them to use?

1. Find people to join you. Think about who at your church cares about what the church is up to and the people who are a part of that ministry, who is excited about serving, who has a passion for helping others and caring for Creation. Bring that group together for conversation around the 3 key areas and see where the Spirit bubbles up. Also, don't go it alone means let MMFA join you.
2. Set goals. Select one scripture verse to guide your stewardship steps over the next 11 months, one stewardship question you'd like everyone to be able to answer by the end of the year, and one stewardship concept you would like imprinted on everyone's hearts. Be intentional about the goals you set. Spend time describing what success will look like, how much that success depends on others, what your current reality is, what's holding you back that needs to change, and what's working that could be built on to help you reach your goals. Involve church leaders in this conversation.
3. Utilize an action plan/template.
 - "seasons of stewardship" model: winter is the season of discernment, a time to identify and bring stewardship leaders together, to study and reflect, to review and assess past years actions and results, and to set goals/determine steps for this year.
 - MMFA can provide a workplan that plugs your 3 keys in and helps identify what will done to teach, preach, and reach with them
4. Let MMFA help. It's free. www.mmfa.info
 - Workshops
 - Stewardship health assessments and recommendations
 - Sunday school, bible study, book study leadership
 - Stewardship message during worship
 - Board and/or stewardship leader conversation
 - Multi-month stewardship and gift planning programs
 - Freed Up Financial Living faith-based financial management course
 - Financial stewardship: sample letters, articles, themes
 - Year-round stewardship best practices and planning guides
 - Narrative budgets
 - Creation care
 - Small group study ideas and guides