



Jerry Lambert,
Executive Director
of Planned Giving
& Advancement

Merry Makers

After church a young boy announced to his mother, "Mom, I've decided to become a minister when I grow up." "That's okay with us, but what made you decide?" "Well," said the little boy, "I have to go to church on Sunday anyway, and I figure it is more fun to stand up and yell than sit down and listen."

A boy was attending his first wedding. After the service his cousin asked, "How many women can a man marry?" "Sixteen," the boy responded. His cousin was amazed he knew the answer so quickly. "How do you know that?" "Easy," the boy said. "All you have to do is add up what the preacher said: 4 better, 4 worse, 4 richer, 4 poorer."

A boy was watching his father write a sermon. "How do you know what to say?" the son asked. "Why, God tells me," answered the dad. "Oh! Then why do you keep crossing things out?"

THE TRUE HEART OF GIVING

Some time ago the Internal Revenue Service received this letter:

"Gentlemen: Five years ago I cheated on my income tax, causing me considerable worry and many sleepless nights. Enclosed is \$25.... If I still can't sleep, I'll send the balance."

Many people's basis for giving is rooted in the selectivity of their judgements.

We see this at Christmas, where giving is conditioned by the value the "giver" places on the "receiver." If the "receiver" is considered important, the ensuing gift shows it.

John 3:16 portrays God's basis for giving: "God so loved the world that he gave." The emphasis of true giving is on the "giving," not the value of the "gift receiver."

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- "God will always ask you to do some thing beyond your ability: pick up your bed and walk, feed the five thousand, give me your last cake and cruse of oil."
- "Doing the natural in faith triggers the supernatural. God has miracles He wants to do through you, but it starts by you doing something natural."
- "If you lose your focus, God does not lose His grip."
- "Sinking in the water with the hand of Christ is better than sitting in the boat."
- "When you obey God in faith, it increases the worship experience of God in others."

Robert Fant Jr., a prisoner of the Vietnam War who was released in 1973, illustrates one of the greatest examples of giving. Upon arriving in America, he wrote this letter to his church.

"Here are my tithes for the years of imprisonment. Had it not been for the grace of God, I would not be here to enjoy this good life in America." Enclosed was a check for \$10,000.

That's true giving! Mr. Fant didn't attend one worship service, didn't hear one sermon, nor did he receive any personal attention from his church family for years. He understood the truth of Acts 20:35, which states, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

My prayer for each of our Open Bible leaders is Rom. 10:17 in reverse order: 1) May God send you a word; 2) may you hear it; 3) may it spawn in you faith and obedience. Amen



STEWARDSHIP STORIES



Jeff Farmer,
President of Open
Bible Churches

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Jeff's JOURNAL

Insider Notes, News, Trends and Resources from the President's Office

Gems From Johansson

"Ever-Increasing Faith" was not a convention theme chosen quickly...it was directed by the Holy Spirit. Open Bible leaders have a mandate from God to begin thinking, acting, and moving in greater dimensions of faith. I am not referring to called men and women quitting their jobs to live without income or insurance. Rather, I am calling on Open Bible ministers:

to stagger not at the promise of God.
to see that which is not, as though it is...because God said it would be.
to value faith in God's Word over fear of failure.
to refuse to sit still when God says stand up and walk.

I invited Paul Johansson to be a keynote speaker at our convention because I was confident you would hear from a vessel whom God had stretched. He has lived his life responding to God in faith and obedience. You can always tell when you're listening to a man possessing a testimony aflame with passion versus one with mere theory. I want to deposit seed into Open Bible from Paul's message. Here are some "Gems from Johansson." His text was Matt. 14:22ff...a boat story.

P rayer & Intimacy with God
L eadership Development
A dvancement Funding
N etwork: Communication & Technology
T he Great Commission
E thnic Ministries
R esource Churches & Leaders
S ingleness of Purpose

- "In every experience God has for you, you have to get in a boat. In the boat you have no control...God is in control."
- "The church is the only agency God has to extend His kingdom in the earth. The church must move in power. The only way a vision has power is when it comes out of burden. Burden comes out of relationship; vision comes out of revelation! Burden keeps you on your knees; vision gives you direction!"
- "We do not move out of title; we move out of our gift. The title can be laid down; the gift we must give an account for."

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Teri Beyer,
Secretary/Treasurer

THE NECESSITY OF TITHE ENVELOPES

Tithe envelopes are a protection to churches and donors in an IRS audit. Cancelled checks do not suffice. Proving that a check issued to a church was intended for and received as a tithe or offering, without a tithe envelope, is nearly impossible.

One way for a church to handle this is to announce that if money is not received in a tithe envelope, the donor will not be given a receipt. However, this is not practical and is difficult to achieve. Therefore, the church treasurer should make an envelope for every contribution check received without one. Though a burden on the treasurer, this will save the church and the donors in an audit.

This article is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is presented with the understanding that neither the author nor the publisher is engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional service. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought. (From a Declaration of Principles jointly adopted by a Committee of the American Bar Association and a Committee of Publishers and Associations.)

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- "If we haven't heard a word from God, we have no basis for our faith. It is impossible to do the will of God if you do not know the voice of God. Faith is the ability to hold the promise until it happens."
- "The word (you receive) is not your word – it is God's word. Never negotiate the word! Negotiate the time."
- "The perfect will of God always involves perfect storms, and perfect storms are in the middle, i.e., half-way across the sea."
- "God wants to encourage you to take steps like never before. When you move by the word of the Lord, there is no risk in it! The risk is in not doing it; the risk is in holding back."
- "When a bush keeps burning (in your life), the thing to do is investigate. There are many bushes that burn and are consumed. But some keep burning. It is out of the investigation that God speaks! If you don't investigate, God can't speak to you."
- "The church must adjust its attitude from the fear of catching things to the joy of giving things."
- "Faith...to be powerful...must be simple. If God said it, just believe it. Don't complicate it!"
- "'In the day of My power, I do not need your power,' says the Lord. 'For where there is mixture, my glory is in jeopardy.'"

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CHURCH LAW

If a church cannot prove that a check was for tithe or offering, the donor may lose the amount of that check as a charitable contribution. That eventually would cause the donor to have to amend his or her taxes. Without tithe envelopes, the IRS could refuse (not necessarily would refuse) to accept ALL contributions. Why take the chance? Provide tithe envelopes. Encourage their use. If a check for a contribution is received without an envelope, make one.

Tithe envelopes should be kept for seven years per IRS regulations. After seven years they can be destroyed.

Prayer & Evangelism

Prayer is the sweat of the soul.

Martin Luther

Talking to men for God is a great thing, but talking to God for men is greater still.

E. M. Bounds

To pray is to change.

Stephen Foster

When we have met our Lord in the silent intimacy of our prayer, then we will also meet Him...in the market and in the town square. But when we have not met Him in the center of our own hearts, we cannot expect to meet Him in the busyness of our daily lives.

Henri J. M. Nouwen

My house is full but my fields are empty. Everyone wants to sit at my table, but none go out to serve.

Dallas Holm

We shall have all eternity in which to celebrate our victories, but we have only one swift hour before the sunset in which to win them.

Robert Moffat

Evangelism is not a professional job for a few trained men, but is instead the unremitting responsibility of every person who belongs, even in the most modest way, to the company of Jesus.

Elton Trueblood

Book Briefs

The Unnecessary Pastor

by Marva Dawn and Eugene Peterson,
Eerdmans
144 pages

In their own words: It is better to be the flame than the match.

"If we are the lamp, we don't light ourselves, do we? Nor do we set ourselves on the lampstand. Nor do we invite the people into the house. God sets us on fire by grace, appoints us to our places of ministry by grace, brings the people into our lives by grace – and by grace liberates us simply to shine!"

Peterson and Dawn's book is a path back to the altar of honesty. They have come to set us free of our addictions to self-importance. It has always been better to be needy than necessary.

Building a Contagious Church

by Mark Mittelberg, Zondervan
389 pages

Evangelism is one of Christianity's highest touted values, but the least practiced. In a country where only 14 percent of pastors credit their churches with earnest evangelism, Mark Mittelberg's book calls churches to take up the frontline in the battle for the lost.

Since the world has changed, Mittelberg says evangelistic methods must also change. This book offers a practical, insightful strategy for increasing a church's effectiveness in evangelism. It also weaves anecdotes and studies into a call for transformation in the church.

Mittelberg's insights, while mostly from a large church perspective, have practical implications for mid-size to smaller congregations.

Health Hints

Portion Distortion

With over 60% of the U.S. population overweight, and almost 30% of the population obese, portion distortion is one of the stumbling blocks to healthy eating. People think they're eating the "right" kinds of food and they may be – just too much of it. The larger the serving the more calories – it's just that easy.

Helpful Hint – If you go out to eat and receive an enormous portion, ask for an extra plate or box right away. Get the food off your plate before you start eating. Either share it or take it home.

Exercise - It's a Family Deal

What can parents do to encourage their children to be more active? According to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, here are five strategies parents can use to help their child get moving.

1. Set limits on the amount of time your children spend watching TV or videos and/or playing computer games.
2. Be a physically active role model.
3. Plan and participate in family events that include physical activity.
4. Help facilitate your children's participation in school and community physical activities and sports programs.
5. Encourage your child to be active on a regular basis.