

# Year-Round Stewardship (pp.37-41, Strategic Church Finances, Ben Maxson)

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## Introduction

“Year-Round Stewardship” is a concept at the heart of a congregational stewardship strategy. Stewardship cannot be limited to an occasional “program” or weekend seminar. Instead, it needs to become a philosophy and style of ministry which permeates the life of the church.

This approach to stewardship provides a foundation for the spiritual growth of a congregation and a balanced ministry program. As members accept and integrate the lordship of Jesus Christ into their lives they mature and become involved in active ministry.

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## Defining reality

Understanding reality is the starting point for an effective stewardship ministry. A local church strategy comes from a leader’s vision and sense of reality. This reality is more than perception or discernment—it includes verification of that reality. You cannot go where you want to go, if you do not know where you are! Max DePree states, “The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality.” (*Leadership is an Art*, p. 11).

- An effective stewardship strategy that focuses on growth in the lordship of Jesus Christ begins with facing the congregation’s reality.
  - The initial reality forms the base line to determine the success of one’s strategy
  - Reality can be measured objectively and subjectively.
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## Seven commandments

The Seven Commandments of Current Reality are:

1. Thou shalt not pretend.
2. Thou shalt not turn a blind eye.
3. Thou shalt not exaggerate.
4. Thou shalt not shoot the bearer of bad news.
5. Thou shalt not hide behind the numbers.
6. Thou shalt not ignore constructive criticism.
7. Thou shalt not isolate yourself.

(Taken from *The Courage to Lead*, by Andy Stanley, Injoy Life Club tape.)

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## Year-Round Stewardship (pp.37-41, Strategic Church Finances, Ben Maxson), Continued

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**Defining points** The initial reality can be defined by what percentage and which members are:

- Attending regularly
  - Involved in active ministry
  - Maintaining an active and regular devotional life
  - Growing spiritually
  - Tithing
  - Supporting the local church budget
  - Supporting the wider church with offerings
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**General points** Stewardship is a broad ministry, providing a spiritual and philosophical foundation for all other ministries in the church. While we cannot address all the components of good stewardship in this material, we will touch on several key factors:

- **Mission** – the mission of the congregation is closely connected to the vision, and must include what God is doing locally as well as world wide.
  - **Vision** – the vision of the church will to a great degree determine the direction and effectiveness of a stewardship strategy. And as has been mentioned earlier, the pastor is the key person in casting the vision. This vision has to be understood and “owned” by the rest of the church, especially the leadership.
  - **Leadership growth** – it is vital that congregational leadership be growing. This growth must be in their spirituality, their abilities in ministry, and their leadership. They must know God, understand and accept the gospel, integrate Christ’s lordship into their lives and ministry, and be givers.
  - **Discipling process** – every member needs to be involved in a spiritual growth process. Stewardship grows in proportion to the spiritual growth of the members.
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## Year-Round Stewardship (pp.37-41, Strategic Church Finances, Ben Maxson), Continued

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### General points (continued)

- **Strategic plan** – Vision and mission are important, but they must transition into effective ministry, and a strategic plan is the crucial link between thinking about ministry and having an effective ministry program.
  - **Strategic budget** – the congregational budget should be strategic—based on the strategic plan for ministry and mission which the church has developed, not based on simply perpetuating the status quo.
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### Strategic stewardship preaching

Pulpit ministry is an important part of an integrated stewardship strategy. In addition to the topics on money mentioned earlier, a comprehensive stewardship preaching strategy will include the following topics on a regular basis:

- The gospel – a clear presentation on the simplicity of salvation. I believe this should be at least once a quarter. And once a month it should be included as a significant portion of the sermon.
  - The lordship of Jesus Christ – Jesus Christ is Lord, and the believer's growth as a disciple is dependent on his or her acceptance and integration of this lordship into daily life.
  - The role of the Holy Spirit – He is the one who convicts, transforms, and empowers each individual in our walk with God.
  - Ministry and the use of spiritual gifts – God has blessed each member with special gifts for ministry. Every member is a minister. Every member has a ministry.
  - Call for commitment – members need to be challenged with the need for high commitment. Too often, we make religion a low commitment exercise rather than a high commitment life.
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### Training elements

In addition to the organizational and preaching elements listed above, there are several training elements which need to be included in a “Year Round Stewardship Strategy” which can be done in special seminars and/or mentoring:

- Discipleship principles

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## Year-Round Stewardship (pp.37-41, Strategic Church Finances, Ben Maxson), Continued

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### Training elements (continued)

- Devotional disciplines and skills
  - Biblical stewardship
  - Biblical money management
  - Family budgeting and getting out of debt
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### Additional elements

There are a number of things which help implement an effective “Year Round Stewardship Strategy:”

- Stewardship leaflets – presenting stewardship as a lifestyle.
  - Church bulletin stewardship highlights – presenting lifestyle stewardship nuggets.
  - Tithe and offering envelopes – emphasizing systematic benevolence.
  - Regular church financial statements – done in a way that helps the average member understand church finances.
  - Church bulletin giving updates – presenting year to date figures on tithe, local and mission giving compared to budget and previous year.
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## Conclusion

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As pastors, our part in stewardship as a ministry is a leadership responsibility and privilege, for we have the opportunity of helping people mature as they grow in the in their relationship with God. We can help them apply biblical principles to daily living—thus helping to make them disciples. We partner with God in building His kingdom.

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