

STAN O. GLEASON



**A CULTURE OF
GENEROSITY**

HAVING THE STEWARDSHIP CONVERSATION

INCLUDES

**+ 104 SHORT OFFERING MESSAGES
+ 10 SAMPLE SERMONS ON GIVING**

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CHAPTER 1

PREACHING COMMITMENT

Pastors who are reticent to preach commitment are not doing themselves, those they serve, or the kingdom of God any favors. Without preaching commitment you will never know who is in your crowd on Sunday. Jesus taught us this principle in John 6. Perhaps the greatest pragmatic miracle that human eyes ever beheld was the feeding of the five thousand men (plus women and children). Jesus multiplied five small loaves of bread and two fish, and the disciples distributed the food to everyone's satisfaction. Like the water He turned into wine, I've wondered if it was the best food they had ever tasted.

This was perhaps the largest gathering Jesus ever spoke to. What a great opportunity He had to influence this mass of people to follow Him. What would His message be today? Would He appeal to their carnality and pleasure? What would He offer next week? Miracles and dinner on the grounds are hard to beat. Would He preach something like, "Follow me and get more free stuff?" Or perhaps, "Welcome to country club church where there are plenty of perks, privileges, and pacifying sermons?" Or, "No expectations or requirements here; just come as you are, stay as you are, leave as you are, and come back again just the way you left."

Jesus wanted to find out who was with Him. His model for church building was not the popular attraction model that is

CREATING A CULTURE OF GENEROSITY

fashionable today. He was looking for disciples, not fans. He knew He could not impact the world with uninvolved bystanders. There is only one way He could determine who was on board to help Him change the world. He would have to preach commitment. His message of “eat my flesh and drink my blood” was shocking and offensive. His message was completely rejected by many who turned and walked away from Him permanently.

There are a lot of messages that are fun to preach, but commitment is not one of them. It is much easier to present messages of hope, deliverance, healing, recovery, miracles, and salvation. But until we preach commitment, we will never know who is with us. To be sure, when we preach commitment, we will lose people just like Jesus did, but at least we will choose who we lose. I’ve never had a committed person become upset with me because I preached about having a prayer life, making disciples, being faithful to worship services, or giving. No one who practices tithing has chided me for a message on tithing. In fact, they are probably happy to hear it so others will catch the vision and blessing of tithing, plus help shoulder the load.

Preaching and teaching commitment is a calculated risk that every pastor must take, but preaching about giving should be done in balance. I do not often preach or teach on giving. I typically give an annual message on stewardship, and I do so in January. I have discovered that January is the prime month to present the stewardship message because it is the time of year when most people are open to change. My dad taught me that if you emphasize everything then you emphasize nothing. Harping on giving every week will dull the ears of the hearers, but an annual message will pack a punch that most will appreciate.

When I speak about giving, I usually warn my listeners (tongue in cheek) there are probably cheaper churches in town, but you get what you pay for. Years ago, I subscribed to *Leadership Magazine*. It was a Christian periodical that published great articles and ideas about church leadership. The best thing about it,

however, were the cartoons. I recall one that depicted two men standing outside their local church near the welcome sign. They were talking after the service, dressed only in their tee-shirts and boxer briefs, and one said to the other, “I believe that’s the best sermon I ever heard Pastor Johnson preach on giving; how about you?” Well, we don’t want to do that good of a job, but you get the message.