

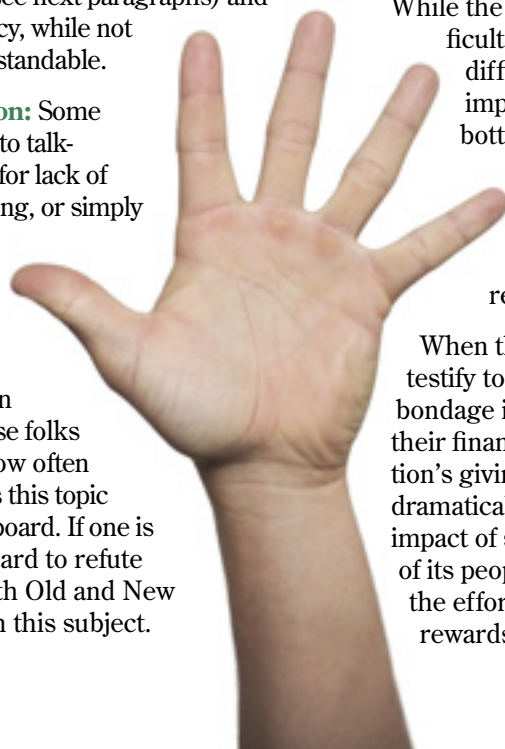


In the last (Winter) issue of this magazine, there was an excellent article by Kirbyjon Caldwell entitled “Why Do Wholistic Ministry?” In the article, Kirbyjon discussed the reasons some folks feel the church should not be involved in wholistic ministry.

I was inspired by the article and the ministry of Kirbyjon’s church. I was also moved to reflect on the reasons some (perhaps even many) folks feel the church should also not be involved in financial stewardship ministry. I believe *the* spiritual battle of our day is between God and money for the hearts of people. If that’s true, it’s important to try to understand why the church has been so hesitant to address the issue.

The hesitancy of the pastor: Let’s begin where the buck stops. According to surveys, many pastors are hesitant to address the issue of money. One reason is because they feel ill equipped to do so. And indeed, most seminaries do not offer a single course on stewardship. In addition, some pastor’s personal finances are in disarray and it’s hard to preach with integrity when that’s the case. Add the fear of your motives being misunderstood since your salary is a significant part of the church budget, and the knowledge that there will be some flack from some who don’t think the church should talk about money (see next paragraphs) and the pastor’s hesitancy, while not excusable, is understandable.

Lack of information: Some people’s opposition to talking about money is for lack of biblical understanding, or simply because the church has not addressed the issue in the past so they’re not sure it should now. Generally, open discussion with these folks and pointing out how often Scripture addresses this topic will bring them on board. If one is open minded it is hard to refute the importance both Old and New Testament place on this subject.



The Five Reasons

Spiritual Resistance: Some folks are hard hearted and spiritually resistant. This can be a more difficult situation to address. Perhaps the greatest reason that Jesus talked so much about money is that it has the unique ability to reveal the nature of the human heart. Realizing this, some do not want the topic to be discussed because they know they are not honoring God with their resources and do not want to be convicted in this area of their lives. Their protests may be loud but clearly should not be allowed to set the agenda for the church.

It’s just plain hard to be an articulate counterpoint to the messages of the culture: Sometimes it feels like spitting into a hurricane when trying to bring a biblical perspective to marketplace dialog which is dominated by extremely seductive messages of consumerism and materialism. But the church may be, as someone has said, the only place that can engage the public conversation with non-market values.

Will importance win out over difficulty? While the reasons collectively may seem difficult to overcome, the question is, “Will difficulty overpower importance or will importance overcome difficulty?” If the bottom line is, “Where’s our peoples’ hearts?” (Matt.6:21) and “Whom do they serve?” (Matt.6:24) then it is imperative that the church help them “get it right” with regard to their money and stuff.

When that happens, when individuals testify to moving from anxiety, conflict, and bondage into peace, joy, and freedom with their financial affairs, and when a congregation’s giving to the work of God in the world dramatically increases because of the impact of stewardship ministry in the lives of its people, then we in leadership realize the effort was more than worth it, for the rewards are priceless and eternal. |w