



Recommended Resource

Plain Talk about Churches and Money

Alban Institute

Based on "the most thorough study of church giving ever undertaken" (over 600 churches and 11,000 laypersons), *Plain Talk* holds up a mirror to the ways churches deal with financial stewardship and offers helpful insight and thought-provoking perspective on several key questions confronting church leaders and congregations today such as:

- **Why are pastors uneasy about money?** *Plain Talk* discusses reasons such as inadequate seminary training, fear of the congregation's response, acknowledgment of personal financial failures, and fear of comparison to televangelists.
- **How do other churches approach financial stewardship?** Several approaches to stewardship and tithing from a variety of denominations are presented, as well as emerging trends in church stewardship.
- **What motivates people to give?** *Plain Talk* identifies and examines four main motives for giving: reciprocity with a social group, reciprocity with God, giving to extensions of the self, and thankfulness.
- **Doesn't "stewardship" really boil down to fundraising?** The differences between "stewardship" and "fundraising" are presented. While most pastors agreed in the concept of biblical stewardship, the practical distinction with fundraising is not always so clear in reality.

Strengths:

- *Plain Talk* is a refreshingly honest take on the varied ways churches deal with monetary stewardship, with unfiltered assessments of what's effective and what isn't.
- The authors do an excellent job of weaving raw interview comments from lay leaders and clergy into their own analysis, freely sharing input from those who are discouraged as well as those who have been transformed.
- The book includes discussion questions as the end of each chapter and would be an excellent discussion starter for stewardship committees, leadership teams, and small groups.
- Although written by research professors, *Plain Talk* is surprisingly free of academic references, jargon, and data tables. Busy professionals and average lay people will find this book very readable.
- *Plain Talk* includes interesting historical references to church giving - even before the twentieth century.

Things to be aware of:

- By design, the book offers "descriptive research" - not "theological judgments". In other words, *Plain Talk* explains what is actually happening in churches without attempting to say which approach(es) God prefers. Some may find *Plain Talk* to be long on descriptions, but short on prescriptions. For example, in the chapter that discusses pastors' fears about money, there is a thorough explanation of the problem, but only a couple of paragraphs on how some churches are addressing the issue.
- The copyright date is 1997 - but the content all seems very relevant to today's church.

Available from www.Alban.org



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