

FROM THE DIRECTOR



Are you familiar with Bob Dylan's 1964 hit song, "Times They Are a Chang'n"? In it, he appeals to "mothers and fathers throughout the land" not to "criticize what you don't understand" and to realize that the "old road" is rapidly aging.

Dylan captured a common feeling among Barnabas Foundation readers—concern about the changing times and the impact it may have on future generations.

And so in this issue of *Stewardship Spotlight*, we want to explore with you how the generational changes play out in spending, giving, and planning—and how to respond from a biblical stewardship perspective.

So grab a cup of coffee if you'd like, and join us as we seek the Lord together, trusting that His "faithfulness continues through all generations." (*Psalms 119:90*)

Serving the Lord with you,



Henry Doorn, Jr. – Executive Director

Changing Times: The Impact of Credit on Stewardship

A banker gave his pastor some interesting insights into our credit-based culture, and pointed out that we are the first generation to live in such an economy. When the banker began his career forty years earlier, banks would give loans for only two reasons: the purchase of a home or the purchase of a car. If a prospective borrower came to his bank and asked to borrow money to take a vacation in the Bahamas, the officer would quickly show the customer the door!

Times change. About seven credit card companies a week offer to loan money for that Caribbean cruise. They lure the masses with "teaser rate" offers. They promise that a more fulfilling life is possible by simply activating the credit card.

"What's the big deal?" you may be thinking. "As long as I can pay the minimum on my balances, what difference does it make in terms of my Christian stewardship?"

The Bible doesn't teach that Christians cannot take out a loan. For most of us, borrowing to purchase a home makes sense. Many people finance their college education partly through the use of student loans. Credit, properly managed, isn't the problem.

But the Scriptures do teach that as soon as we borrow money, we become, says Proverbs 22:7, a "servant" to our lender.

Perhaps it is time for this generation to take a look at our credit card balances, and ask whether that next credit purchase really makes sense. This can be an important step toward greater financial freedom.

Source: "The Joy of Generosity" devotional series developed by Barnabas Foundation and available at www.barnabasfoundation.com; adapted from the HomeLink series written by Pastor Bob Heerspink and released by Faith Alive Christian Resources (www.faithaliveresources.com).

ESTATE TAXES

The new federal estate tax exemptions for 2011 and 2012 are \$5 million per individual and \$10 million per couple. At this level, many of you may think you have nothing to worry about. However, that's not necessarily the case. What state do you live in? Seven states have an inheritance tax and almost half have state estate taxes with various exemption amounts. Your financial advisors can provide details about the laws in your state. Our advice is to not automatically modify your original Estate Plan but to carefully review it. If you would like us to help you with this, please contact us toll-free 1.888.448.3040 or www.barnabasfoundation.com

Recommended Resource

NOT YOUR PARENTS' OFFERING PLATE: A NEW VISION FOR FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP by J. Clif Christopher



Do you have an interest in helping to grow generosity in your church? Would you like to see future generations develop a passion for biblical stewardship?

Today, it is not uncommon for Christians to expect their church to “earn” their gift. *Not Your Parents' Offering Plate* responds to this underlying belief so prevalent in the rapidly changing giving environment. While previous generations may have given most or all of their tithe to local churches, there are now thousands of compelling causes vying for the attention of givers. Christopher contends that congregations have much to learn from nonprofit organizations, which have been much more successful in raising funds because they effectively demonstrate the impact and significance of a gift (rather than simply appeal to budget deficits).

Not Your Parents' Offering Plate helps readers understand the reasons people give today, and offers practical guidance to anyone interested in cultivating a stewardship mindset in their churches, such as:

- Church leaders and lay leaders with a passion for stewardship must honestly examine their own lives first.
- Building a “high expectation” culture increases the likelihood that all members will rise to a new level.
- One of the keys to promoting effective stewardship in the 21st century is telling personal stories of how God is using the church to change lives.
- Tailor your communications to speak to the different motivations of young adults, parents, empty nesters, and seniors.
- Never send out a line-item budget again. Instead, talk about the impact and significance of contributions, and explain what more dollars can do.

This recommended stewardship resource can be ordered at www.amazon.com or www.christianbook.com

SECOND STEWARDSHIP WEBINAR A SUCCESS!

Over 90 ministry sites registered for our February 3 webinar entitled “Stories From Churches Like Yours.” Church leaders dialed in from all over the US and Canada to participate in the second of a three-part webinar series on Stewardship Basics.

Mike Koetje (Pastor of Second Christian Reformed Church in Grand Haven, MI) and Lyle Ahrenholz (Stewardship Chair at Third Christian Reformed Church in Zeeland, MI) discussed their stewardship stories and the lessons God is teaching their churches about the power of prayer, leadership, engaging their congregations, and more.

If you missed this opportunity, visit www.barnabasfoundation.com, go to the “Churches” tab and click on “Video & Audio Archives” in the left navigation bar.

Mark your calendars for May 5, (part 3) of the Stewardship Basics webinar series, or email ldivr@barnabasfoundation.com for more information.

ASK BARNABAS FOUNDATION

Q. How can I use my retirement years to honor God and impact the next generation?

As Pastor Rick Warren pointed out in his best-selling book *Purpose Driven Life*, God wants to use your unique S.H.A.P.E to make a lasting difference in the world for the cause of Christ: your Spiritual gifts, your Heart, your Abilities, your Personality, and your life Experiences.

It's never too late to get started! Consider Moses, who followed God's call at age 80—and continued serving as a judge and leader until he was 120. Or look at more recent examples such as Mother Teresa who served the poor until her death at age 87, or Campus Crusade founder Bill Bright, preparing evangelistic materials while hooked up to an oxygen machine until he died at age 81.

Besides your time, you can also honor God with your retirement money, both during and after your lifetime. For example, did you know that the government can take up to 60 percent of your retirement savings upon your death because of double taxation (income tax plus estate tax)? In other words, your heirs may only receive approximately 40 cents on the dollar from your IRA funds.

By using other assets to benefit your children, and designating a ministry as the beneficiary of your IRA, you can avoid the double tax. You also free up those funds to extend your impact with a ministry close to your heart at minimal cost to your family.



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