

"Beach Reads" on Faithful Generosity

It's June and time for the annual publication of "beach read" lists. For those who enjoy a good book during summer vacation, these lists can lead to discovering literary novels, biographies, thrillers, mysteries or light-hearted "chick lit". I look forward to reviewing these suggested reading lists and making my summer reading plans.

For those in church leadership, there is another reading list. I call mine "The Books I Should Read". These are the unread books I possess or those I keep on my "to purchase" list. Perhaps, like me, you've downloaded one of those "should read" books to your e-reader, with the best of intentions. In the end, you can't find the time or inclination to read it.

Keeping that in mind, I offer the "generosity beach read" list. Yes, these books are not your typical summer reading, but for those interested in understanding faithful generosity or leading in stewardship, a quick read by a gifted writer can inspire.

For the Theologically Minded. Read the first 50 pages of [*Ministry and Money: A Practical Guide for Pastors*](#). Authors Janet and Philip Jamieson offer a deep dive into the place of money in the church. Readers are challenged to reflect on and articulate their own theology of money. The bonus is that Part Two of the book offers practical tips for church finance and funding ministry.

For the Change Agent. Scott McKenzie offers [*Generosity Rising: Lead a Stewardship Revolution in Your Church*](#). Consider becoming a revolutionary leader with a revolutionary team (Chapter 2). What better time than summer to attend "Generosity Boot Camp" (Chapter 3)? Try it out for yourself or bring along church members. For the more contemplative at heart, McKenzie offers a 21-day devotional challenge at the end of the book. Clif Christopher, in [*Rich Church Poor Church: Keys to Effective Financial Ministry*](#), shares the differences between a "rich church" and a "poor church". Christopher offers steps to begin behaving like a "rich church". The chapters are short with clear points and good follow-up questions.

For the Planner. Read [*Ask, Thank, Tell: Improving Stewardship Ministry in Your Congregation*](#) by Charles Lane. While this book may be a bit dated (2006), it offers practical advice for cultivating generosity and an annual stewardship campaign. The chapter "Portrait of a Biblical Giver" could be the foundation for your next sermon series. Don't skip the chapter "Improving How You Ask".

For the Grateful Reader. Author Kent Millard is a "gratitude coach". In his book [*The Gratitude Path: Leading Your Church to Generosity*](#), he shares how an "attitude of gratitude" can increase congregational generosity. I recommend chapters 2 – 4. You'll be inspired by the idea for increasing gratitude practices in the church.

For the List Lover. If you enjoy a book that offers practical information succinctly, try one of these. Donald Smith recently released [*A Better Offering: Five Unmistakable Habits for a Generous Church*](#). It's a quick read and describes effective habits for the in-person and digital church. In [*Bounty: Ten Ways to Increase Giving at Your Church*](#), Kristine Miller and Scott McKenzie list practical steps to increase generosity. I appreciate that the authors also offer a list of things for churches to *stop* doing (Chapter 5).

For A Better You. Tom Berlin has written several books on stewardship, including *Defying Gravity*. In [*The Generous Church: A Guide for Pastors*](#), Berlin offers practical advice and includes stories from his own experience. This is a quick, helpful read, especially if you are one of those who skips the personal stories!

For the Resource Collector. [*Giving to God: The Bible's Good News about Living a Generous Life*](#) by Mark Powell offers a biblically-based discussion of stewardship and generosity, covering the "why" and "how". Every chapter contains ideas for preaching/teaching on stewardship. The author provides good discussion questions. Who can resist a writer that calls a life of generosity "Our Duty and Delight"?

For Young Disciples. Delia Halverson's book [*Let the Children Give: Time, Talents, Love and Money*](#) offers delightful ideas for helping young disciples discover Christian stewardship. Many of the ideas can be modified for online ministry or take-home discipleship kits. This summer read could lead to an intentional annual stewardship education plan for all ages. Or you may just find yourself making a nature box (page 31) or doing some litter research (page 61).

Haven't found the right book, yet? What if reading a stewardship book doesn't fit into your plans this summer? Check out the free videos and other resources offered by Horizons Stewardship at [Giving360](#). Sign up and enjoy a whole library. If you prefer podcasts, check out the United Methodist Foundation's curated list of [podcasts on personal finance](#).

Have I missed your favorite stewardship read? If so, let me know at sherry@umfmichigan.org. I'm preparing my "beach read" list!