

ENOUGH

Stewardship Program Guide

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ABINGDON PRESS
Nashville

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STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM GUIDE

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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

ISBN 978-1-426-70287-7

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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SIMPLE GIFTS

by Elder Joseph Brackett, 1848

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.

When true simplicity is gain'd,
To bow and to bend we shan't be asham'd,
To turn, turn will be our delight,
Till by turning, turning we come out right.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the *Enough* churchwide stewardship campaign. Our hope is that this will be a useful and effective resource for you and your church as you plan your next stewardship emphasis.

In 2007, we were preparing our standard stewardship campaign at The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas. This campaign is a time when we celebrate what God has done in the past year, cast a vision for where God is leading our congregation in the future, and seek to inspire people about the biblical concepts of tithing and stewardship. As we were planning that campaign, one thing became painfully obvious. There were many people in our congregation who were struggling financially. They were struggling not because they were not making enough money. They were struggling because they were living beyond their means and were saving nothing.

My team and I began to feel that instead of launching a standard stewardship campaign, we needed to help people redefine their relationship with money and begin to think carefully and biblically about where we find real joy and what our lives are really about. We redesigned that standard stewardship campaign and launched a sermon series we called *Simplicity, Generosity, and Joy*. The messages from that sermon series, along with some additional material, later became the book and accompanying video study *Enough: Discovering Joy Through Simplicity and Generosity*.

As we began to plan for the sermon series, we first needed to define the problem and ask, “What are people struggling with? What are the missteps we have made?” I interviewed consumer credit counselors who regularly work with people in our community. They talked with us about the problems they see every week and the solutions they offer to their clients. Then we began to write the sermon series based on what we learned.

I sent out an invitation letter to our entire congregation that simply said, “We have a problem: Most of us are struggling in the area of finances, and we are going to try to find wisdom and help you discover joy through simplicity and generosity.” The response was very interesting. In a normal stewardship campaign in our congregation, attendance drops by about 15 percent. Often, our less committed people stay away during this time. However, we saw something very different during this series. Attendance swelled! It clearly had struck a chord with the people. Those who attended

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wanted to find help. They wanted a simpler, financially healthy life that would bring them more joy. As attendance grew, we realized we were on the right track.

We began to teach and to inspire with stories of what a simpler life leading to financial health looks like. Each week, we gave the people tools. One week, we handed out a mirror or window cling listing six key financial principles. Another week, we gave out key tags that had a prayer of contentment printed on them; we encouraged everyone to keep the tag on his or her key chain as a reminder of what we learned. We also used some bulletin inserts that offered basic tools for making good and prudent financial decisions, including a basic budget worksheet and a life and financial goals questionnaire. To make even more help available, we began a new series of financial management workshops that were open to the congregation and the community.

Our results at Church of the Resurrection were, in the end, pretty dramatic. We had a larger number of people turning in commitment cards than ever before in the history of our church. Individuals increased their giving significantly. People shared how the series was life changing for them as it redefined their goals and their finances. The following year, 2008, was a year in which our membership gave more than they ever had before; and it was exciting.

As exciting as that was, the emphasis was not about increasing our budget. It was about helping people to experience the life God wanted them to live and to have the kind of relationship with their money that God wanted them to have. And as they did, they simplified their lives and found greater joy.

Our hope and prayer is that our experience will inspire and instruct your congregation toward similar results. Our desire is that as you use the book, the study DVD, and the resources provided in this guide in a churchwide stewardship program involving small-group study and congregational worship, your entire congregation will be blessed as individuals and families grow deeper in faith and discover true joy through simplicity and generosity.

— *Adam Hamilton*