

# (dot) STEWARDSHIP – December 2008 Printable Version

**ONLY ONLINE!!!**

## **Do's and Don'ts for Year-End Church Contributions**

Psalm 96:8 says, "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts." Offerings, the product of the joyful, can be complicated. Please consider the following tips for year-end church contributions as tools, but don't allow them to overshadow the joy of giving.

1. Do provide donors with quality charitable contribution receipts early in January. Your donor needs a receipt from your church prior to submitting his/her tax return. And, individual donations of \$250 require acknowledgement from the church in order to be deductible.
2. Do not allow contributions received in 2009 to be recorded as 2008 contributions, even if it's really early on Thursday morning, January 1. Checks received in 2008 but postdated to 2009 are 2009 contributions.
3. Do encourage 70.5-year-olds to make contributions directly from IRAs. This special tax provision has been extended for 2008 and 2009 and benefits donors who might not otherwise itemize or who have exceeded their charitable deduction limitations for the year.
4. Do ask! The Bible makes it clear that bringing offerings to the Lord is appropriate. If there is a need, take it to the body of Christ and watch the miracle of generosity.
5. Do pray... and have faith and trust that the Lord will lead through economic uncertainty.
6. Do not include the value of donated labor on charitable contribution receipts.
7. Do say "Thank You!" A receipt is a receipt, but a personal word of thanks to faithful contributors speaks volumes.
8. Do seek professional help when receipting large gifts of stock, real estate, or property.
9. Do use and carefully follow instructions for IRS form 1098-C for donations of vehicles.
10. Do obtain and study IRS form 526 Charitable Contributions

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## **IT'S THE ECONOMY**

The root of our English word "economy" is the greek *Oikonomia*. It literally means "household-management" or "house-laws". Hmm... household rules... for me that means getting my dirty socks close to the clothes hamper. My wife interprets that law a bit more stringently. Dollars, in our homes and in our society, are more difficult to manage than dirty socks. The economy – the media topic of 2008 – is all about good management or stewardship.

Management, combined with faith for the Lord's provision, is especially essential during times of economic uncertainty. The Lord will lead through difficult times and he will do so by utilizing his faithful pastors and laypersons.

The church is basically recession-proof. Churches will survive recessions and depressions by effectively communicating their vision and focusing their attention on the accomplishment of their mission. Economic difficulty is an opportunity to fine tune the church's operations, streamline spending and increase efficiency.

The likelihood is that laymen in every church are faced with financial challenges at work and at home. Budget cuts are common, but always painful. Accept the challenge to do more with less and allow the church the privilege of sharing in the effort.

So, it's not really the economy because the Lord isn't out of resources. It's faith. It's management. And it's stewardship.

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## **ONE FAMILY • THE SACRED BLEND**

While most people automatically associate stewardship with money, it also involves the way we manage our relationships with other people and the gifts that God gives us. **ONE FAMILY • THE SACRED BLEND**, the latest release in the Stewardship Month Resource Kit series, uses the inspiration of the epistles to highlight the place of family and community within the church. Dr. Stan Toler, creator of the kit, says it best with his acrostic of the word BLEND:

- **Bringing** hearts together to celebrate, encounter, and adore our God (Worship).
- **Lending** our lives to the faith community (Partnership).
- **Engaging** in practices for spiritual growth (Discipleship).
- **Never giving less** than our best to God's kingdom (Stewardship).
- **Devoting** ourselves to sharing God's good news with others (Friendship).

It's amazing what the right blend can create. It is amazing how the right blend of personalities, gifts, resources, and passions can affect the entire world. When we look at the family of God that He placed us in, we can see that same exciting blend. If we come together to mix our ideas and gather our resources, we can impact our community and spread God's hope and love across the globe. This task is too much for one person to accomplish. But together, we can achieve it. That is the beauty of the family of God. He has brought together His own special blend of talents, intellect, and ability to accomplish His goals. **ONE FAMILY • THE SACRED BLEND** provides the inspiration and teaching necessary to create this kind of blend in your local church.

**ONE FAMILY • THE SACRED BLEND** includes four complete sermons and related helps PLUS a special VISION SUNDAY sermon to kick off a month-long stewardship emphasis. That is five complete sermons, letters, bulletin inserts, handouts, PowerPoint lessons, video clips, and age-specific lessons in one package.

This kit, along with the four previous versions, are available through our [online store](#). Stewardship Network members should be receiving their complimentary copy of **ONE FAMILY • THE SACRED BLEND** in the mail in the next few weeks.

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## **PERSONAL FINANCE TRAINING PERFECT FOR A TIME SUCH AS THIS**

The current economic crisis, impending credit card debt from excessive Christmas spending, and normal New Year's resolutions to get out of debt make the beginning of 2009 an excellent time to consider personal finance training. Abundant Living is a personal finance training ministry based on solid biblical principles. The sessions are led by a live presenter – not a talking head on video – and the seminar is very cost effective.

Visit [www.abundantlivingministry.org](http://www.abundantlivingministry.org) for more information about this helpful personal finance ministry. Help your people find biblical principles for managing their money.