



Stewardship Primer 7

Changing the Stewardship Culture

1 Corinthians 4:2

"Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy."

Every organization has a culture. Culture is defined simply as "the way we do things around here." Every congregation has a macro culture and any number of micro cultures. One of those micro cultures is the stewardship culture. Every congregation has a way of doing things when it comes to stewardship.

The vision of the *Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees* stewardship process is to impact the stewardship culture in every congregation so that all members would know that they are stewards by God's grace, live as disciples of Jesus, and manage all that God has entrusted to them with joy and generosity all so that God's purposes are accomplished.

The stewardship culture of the congregation can be difficult to describe. Beliefs and values about whole life stewardship circulate deep beneath the surface. It will take time to identify, discuss, and evaluate the customs, values, and artifacts that make up the stewardship culture. In *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*, Hans Finzel writes, "Christian leaders should act differently than those in the secular world. They should treat their workers differently, they should view their mission in a different light, and they should be driven by different motivations. Since the leader is the keeper of the culture, it falls on his shoulders to cultivate a culture that is distinctly Christian. The values and beliefs the leader holds usually become the assumptions of the followers. That puts a great deal of responsibility on the shoulders of leadership...One of the core jobs of a leader is to be the 'tender of the culture,' the person who nurtures and develops the group's understanding of itself. The more he knows about the group's existing culture, the easier it will be to lead and to promote needed change" (pages 148-149, 152).

The stewardship culture of a congregation involves the unique customs, values, and artifacts of the people who make up the congregation.

The questions that immediately come to mind are, "What is the stewardship culture in this congregation?" and "How do we go about changing aspects of the stewardship culture which need changing?"

There are a number of helps on the *Faith Aflame* website that can assist leaders in determining the stewardship culture of the congregation. They are located at faithaflame.lcms.org under the "Resources" tab.

Stewardship Primer: A Guide for the Christian Congregation

Identifying the stewardship culture is one thing, changing it is quite another. Changing the stewardship culture will require both technical and adaptive solutions. Ron Heifetz, in *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, defines technical changes as those fixes used to correct ordinary problems in a system as it is. Adaptive changes are those that address fundamental values and that demand innovation, learning, and changes in the system itself. To say it another way, technical changes apply a “quick fix” to a situation. Adaptive changes go deeper to changing attitudes and values.

In Christian stewardship, most churches have attempted, if anything, only technical change. They have “stewardship programs” that deal with financial issues or use some kind of inventory to discover gifts and talents, but do little to get at the deeper adaptive issues in stewardship such as values and attitudes. While technical changes are appropriate they do not go far enough in the area of Christian stewardship. Stewards need to know not only who they are in Christ, they need the opportunity to examine their values and attitudes toward the life they live as God’s children in the light of God’s Word so they can discern what the world is telling them and what God tells them. As Eugene Peterson cautions, “If I, even for a moment, accept my culture’s definition of me, I am rendered harmless.”

If the stewardship culture in the congregation is to be changed it will take adaptive solutions along with technical solutions. Adaptive solutions are not easy because they require continuous learning. There are no “quick fixes” when it comes to Christian stewardship.

Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees is an adaptive change process designed to impact the stewardship culture of the congregation. It focuses on the heart of the steward and not just the billfold, purse, or checkbook. More about the *Faith Aflame* process can be found at faithaflame.lcms.org.

Reflection:

Why is it important to understand the stewardship culture of the congregation? How would you describe the stewardship culture of your congregation?

Who is the “keeper of the culture” in your congregation?

Why is it so important to know the difference between technical solutions and adaptive solutions when it comes to Christian stewardship education in the congregation?

What is the role of repentance and forgiveness?

Digging Deeper:

Read the adaptive change stewardship resources found online at faithaflame.lcms.org.

