



PREACHING ABOUT STEWARDSHIP AND THE EFFECT ON GIVING

A national study of U.S. pastors

Research conducted by:
The Barna Group
Ventura, California

Research commissioned by:



Over the years, research conducted by the Barna Group has provided pastors with real-world data that helped to refocus and, in many cases, re-energize ministries. So, in the midst of our nation's economic instability, AG Financial Solutions has commissioned the team at Barna to perform a national study of pastors and their views, activities, and convictions about giving and preaching on giving. AG Financial Solutions is honored to place the results of this survey into your hands.

Before you dive into this timely and, at times, startling data, let me highlight a couple of key statistics. First, nearly a quarter of the pastors surveyed had not preached on giving in the previous year. Of those who had not preached on giving, 60% didn't feel it was necessary or didn't want to preach on it. Second, of those who did preach on giving, only 6% saw a significant boost to the church's income. That information definitely concerned me.

I recently had conversations with several pastors around the country who have been focusing on the topic of stewardship. They have seen an increase of giving by as much as 34%! In talking with these pastors, there were two key elements that were always present: positive leadership and compelling vision. As a leader you have to be strong in both.

What are your insights and experiences on this topic? Please send your comments—pro or con—to me at kregghood@agfinancial.org. We welcome the discussion and hope the Lord uses it to motivate us all to find positive, proactive ways to encourage God's people to “excel in the grace of giving” (2 Cor. 8:7).

Thanks for reading—and let the dialog begin!



Dr. Kregg Hood
Senior Vice President,
Stewardship Consulting

1. Preaching About Stewardship or Giving

More than three out of every four senior pastors of U.S. churches (77%) preached specifically on the topic of stewardship or giving during the past year, while 19% did not address the subject, and 4% are not sure.

Among all pastors, 31% addressed giving or stewardship one or two times, 21% spoke on the subject three or four times, 12% included stewardship in their sermons five or six times, 4% mentioned it seven to ten times, and 9% talked about some aspect of giving eleven or more times.

Preaching on Stewardship or Giving in Past Year

(among senior pastors in U.S. Protestant churches, n=600)

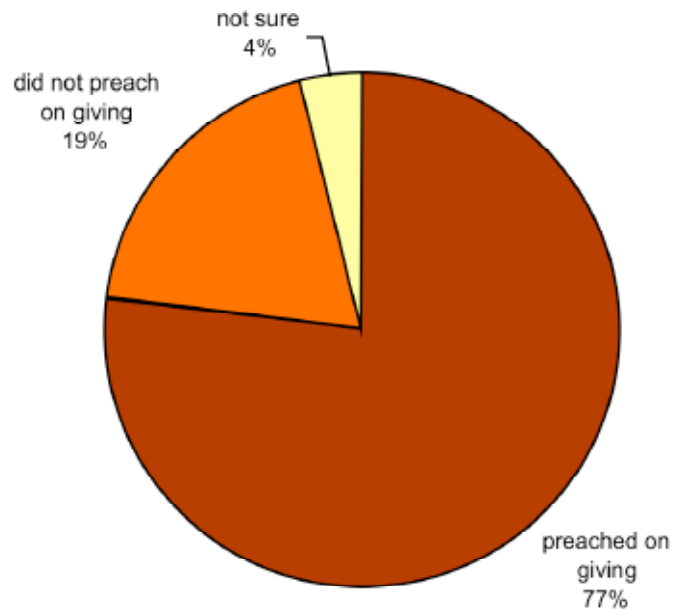


TABLE 1**NUMBER OF TIMES CHURCHES PREACHED ON STEWARDSHIP**

In the last year, how many times did you preach specifically about stewardship or giving, if at all?

	all	----- region -----				----- church size -----		
		North-east	South	Midwest	West	<100	100-250	251+
none	19%	16%	21%	14%	26%	21%	14%	24%
1-2	31	29	31	34	29	33	32	26
3-4	21	23	18	23	23	18	22	31
5-6	12	12	13	11	10	11	14	5
7-10	4	10	4	2	2	3	5	5
11 or more	9	8	9	11	8	10	9	9
not sure	4	2	4	4	2	4	4	2

Note: A (+) or (-) sign indicates that data for that segment is statistically significantly higher or lower than the total response for U.S. churches. Differences are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level or higher.

2. Impact on Giving

Those pastors who spoke on giving or stewardship in the past year were asked about the effect on giving to their church. Among pastors and churches in which stewardship was addressed, four in ten believe that giving increased (6% increased a lot, 34% increased a little), while 31% say giving stayed the same, and 29% are not sure of the impact.

Churches in which giving is believed to have increased a lot as a result of preaching on the topic are *more* likely than average to be larger, black or non-white, have a black or non-white senior pastor, or have a pastor in ministry for two decades or longer. The churches *less* likely than average to have increased giving a lot have a white pastor, a white congregation, or a pastor in ministry for 10-19 years. *[Note: the differences noted here and listed in the table on the next page are statistically significant differences. However, the size of this segment of churches/pastors is relatively small (n=25); please exercise caution if making projections based on this data.]*

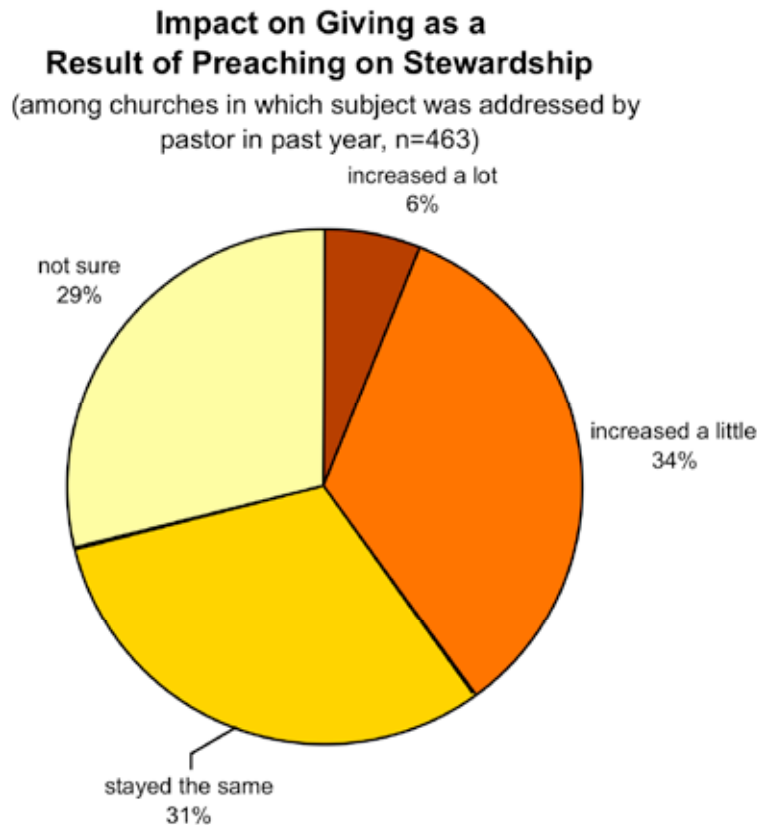


TABLE 2
IMPACT ON GIVING

Did preaching on the subject of stewardship increase, decrease or have no effect on giving to your church – or are you not sure?

% of churches who preached on stewardship, past year	all	----- region -----				----- church size -----		
		North-east	South	Midwest	West	<100	100-250	251+
increased – a lot	6%	8%	5%	3%	9%	4%	4%	13(+)%
increased – a little	34	31	34	37	28	24(-)	43(+)	45
stayed the same	31	27	33	34	22	39(+)	26	17(-)
decreased – some	*	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
other	1	0	1	1	4(+)	1	1	2
not sure	29	34	27	25	37	32	27	23
	<i>n</i> = 463	68	212	127	55	228	173	60

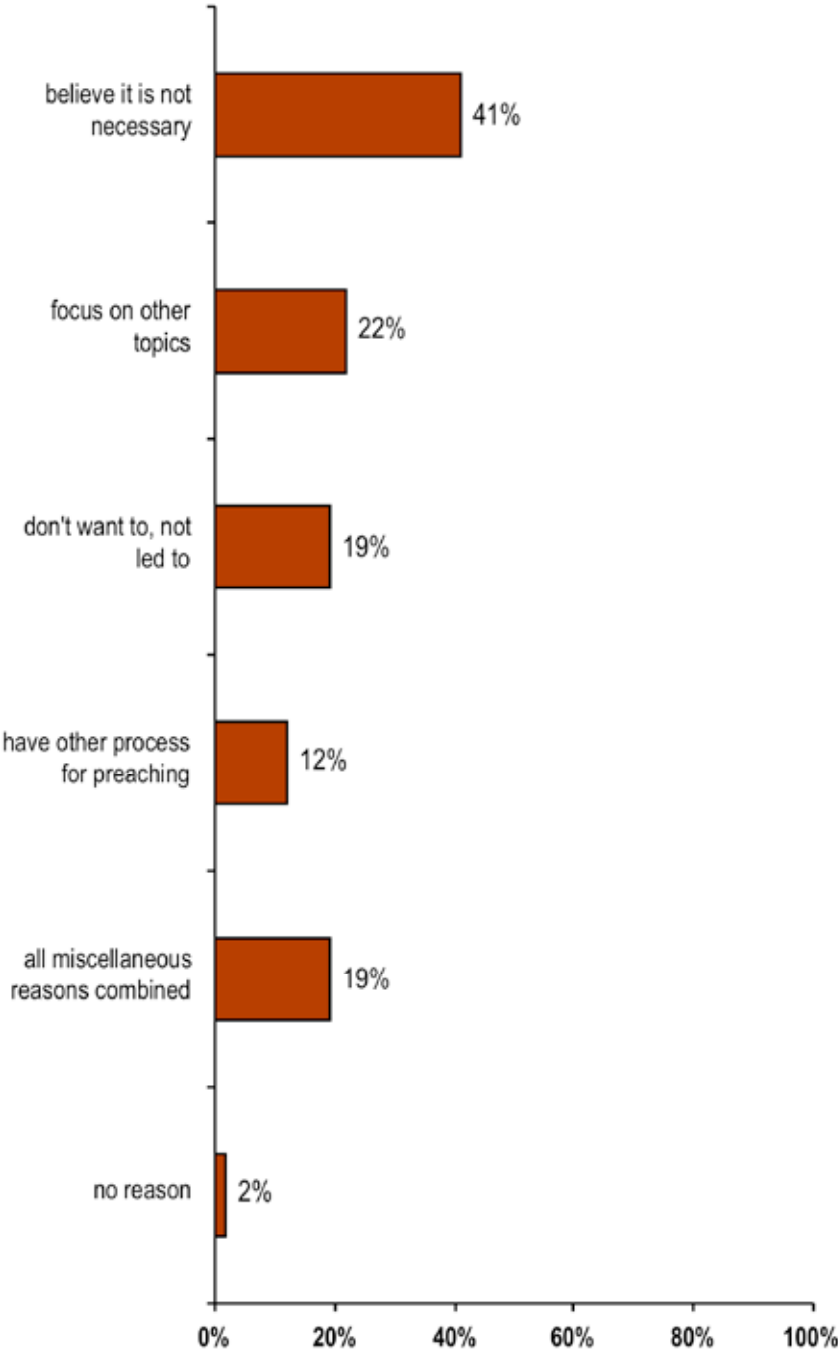
Note: A (+) or (-) sign indicates that data for that segment is statistically significantly higher or lower than the total response for U.S. churches. Differences are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level or higher.

Effect of Preaching on Stewardship: Giving Increased a Lot* (among U.S. churches in which pastor preached on subject in past year) (average 6%)	
<i>more likely than average...</i>	<i>less likely than average...</i>
average weekly worship attendance 251+ (13%) black pastor (13%) non-white pastor (12%) black congregation (11%) non-white congregation (11%) pastor in full-time ministry 20+ years (8%)	white congregation (4%) white senior pastor (4%) pastor in full-time ministry 10-19 years (1%)

* sample size for this segment is small, n=25

Reasons for not Preaching about Giving or Stewardship

(among pastors who did not preach on topic in past year, n=114, multiple responses allowed)



3. Reasons for Not Preaching about Stewardship or Giving

Pastors who did not address stewardship or giving during their sermons over the past year were asked why they did not preach on the topic. Four out of every ten of these pastors (41%) say it is because it is just not necessary. While many said precisely that reason, others explained that congregants already gave what they could, that giving comes naturally to mature believers, or that it is actually God who provides the money or directs people to give.

The second most prevalent reason for not preaching on giving, mentioned by 22% of these pastors, is that they focus on other topics. More specifically, they said that stewardship was not as important as other topics, it's mentioned but is not the focus, they preach from the Bible or about Jesus, or are dealing with other priorities.

One in five of the pastors who do not address giving during sermons (19%) say they simply don't want to or do not feel led to do so. Some don't like to talk about money, don't feel God wants them to preach about it, or are not comfortable "hitting people up" for money – especially in a bad economy.

A total of 12% have another teaching process or curriculum they follow, while 19% mentioned a wide variety of miscellaneous reasons for not preaching on stewardship, and 2% aren't able to articulate a reason for that choice. (See data table that follows for complete list of reasons.)

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