

SHOULD YOUR CHURCH HAVE A PLANNED GIVING MINISTRY?

Planned giving is not for the faint at heart. Nevertheless, an increasing number of churches across America are hosting estate planning (wills and trusts) educational seminars. These churches are serving their members with essential end-of-life decisions while at the same time adding hundreds of thousands of dollars, even millions of dollars, of future gifts for ministry.

Understanding Estate Planning Ministry

It's not fund-raising.

Estate planning is not the same as fund-raising. Although fund-raising has its place and purpose for right-now ministry projects, estate planning is different. A planned giving ministry is kind of like a 25-year-old investing in their retirement funds while they barely have enough money to pay their bills today. Logic and reality tell us that most 25-year-olds do not have the fortitude to think strategically and long-term. Nevertheless, those few savvy 25-year-olds who do think long-term will undoubtedly reap the reward of a disciplined life.

Church leaders need to fund ministry today while considering the investment they can make to secure the future for the next generation of leaders that will follow. You can be like that savvy 25-year-old who thinks long-term and invests a little today to ensure the next generation's future.

It's about giving first, not receiving first.

An educational ministry in wills and trusts is about serving your members. **Did you know that over 60% of the families you minister to have no end-of-life documents?** No wills. No trusts. No health care directives. No guardianship directives. Loved ones left behind will most certainly face the frustration of not knowing for sure what the deceased would have wanted to happen to the estate left behind.

When there's no estate plan, families face the bureaucratic oversight of the deceased's estate known as Probate, which costs them time, money, control, and privacy, just to name a few. **Providing an estate planning ministry to your members is an act of generosity!**

What about "planned giving?"

Planned giving is an essential part of estate planning. Why? Because *"we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world."* (1 Timothy 6:7) Is this not what we believe and teach our church members? **Yet, most of our people will leave this earth having never been asked or challenged to consider what God would want them to do with the wealth they leave behind.** They will make their last gift, most likely the largest one-time gift of their life, and little to no portion of it will be given to fund God's work. Through an estate planning ministry, you can serve your people not only practically and financially but spiritually. You can educate them and provide them a way to store up their treasure in heaven, supporting the work of God by giving from their estate.

Planned giving is about stewardship.

As I have already mentioned, most of the families in your church will face Probate, either voluntarily or unbeknown. As their loved ones walk through this process, which could take nine

months to two years, they will lose an average of 6-8% of the estate to probate fees. Even on a modest estate of \$250,000, that's \$17,500 in lost wealth. ***"A sensible person sees danger and takes cover, but the inexperienced keep going and are punished."*** (Proverbs 22:3) The cost of Probate is optional and unnecessary. Church leaders have the responsibility to equip God's people to steward all that's been entrusted to them faithfully. Would it not be better for each individual, and would the Lord not approve, if the wealth is used wisely and for the benefit of God's kingdom instead of being wasted?

Planned giving is preparing for the future.

More wealth will transfer in the next couple of decades than ever before in human history. Research tells us nine trillion dollars will transfer from one generation to the next in the next ten years. It's no wonder leaders of zoological societies, hospitals, research universities, etc., are active in educating their donors. Although I believe these are important institutions, I think The Church is more so, and its ability to accomplish its mission is in large part dependent on having the resources to do so.

Estate planning and planned giving are necessary parts of financial discipleship. When done right and for the right reason, God's people are served, and God's work is funded.

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If you'd like to learn how to provide this ministry to your people, talk to us! We are your planned giving, legacy planning experts and we exist to champion stewardship by educating families and facilitating generosity through planned giving. Working together we can inspire biblical stewardship and generosity.

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