



# horizons

S E E I N G B E Y O N D

**Changes Coming On**  
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This is the time of the year when many pastors move and many churches receive a new pastor. Most experienced pastors have a routine they like to follow when arriving at a new church and a lot of churches have traditions they like to follow. I frequently see articles come out in May and June on some best practices regarding assimilating. Seldom do I see anyone address financial stewardship and what one should do as soon as possible. **Let me share what I would be doing if this month I was taking on a new assignment.**

First, understand that financial stewardship does not need to be the absolute FIRST thing you deal with. You need to focus on just getting acquainted, learning where any urgent pastoral needs may be, and preparing for those first couple of Sundays when you need to be a combination of Billy Graham, Billy Sunday and Pope John Paul II all at the same time. However, your to-do list needs to include learning all you can about the financial condition and practices of your church.

Within the first couple of weeks I would schedule a visit with the church treasurer or business administrator and go over a series of questions: What is the current status of the church's finances? What are the trends that you have been seeing for the last couple of years? What has been customary here regarding the annual campaign, planned giving and capital giving? What studies, if any, have been conducted regarding financial stewardship? What is shared with new members? Does the church have a unified budget or is there a capital budget, as well? Exactly what happens after the offering is received with counting, recording, and reporting? When could I expect to get an updated report for the week? How often does the finance committee meet and what do they understand is their job?

Finally, how quickly can I get a list from you of our donors from 2009 and a current list for 2010 that is in order of highest to lowest? You will want to spend time with this list on your own deciphering what information you can. After looking it over you may want to go back to your finance person and get an understanding of exactly who some of those persons are and what their giving history has been like. Are your elected leaders also your best stewards? What can you discover about where their resources come from?

Then, I would schedule some informal visits with the top ten or so giving families to the church. These are persons who have shown a willingness to make the church a high priority and they have been blessed with resources to make a real difference. You simply need to know them and know their hopes and dreams for the church. Are they tithers or just giving you a small portion of great wealth? Do they love Jesus or love control? Are they servants or want to be served? Can they be leaders or not? You need answers to all of these questions as you plan how best to accomplish your ministry strategy with your new church.

Too often pastors shy away from wanting to be seen as caring about the money in the church. This is a big mistake. Money is a powerful tool for ministry and absolutely necessary for the spiritual leader to have a solid understanding of. Make it a priority in your new assignment and maybe it won't become your biggest problem later on.