

1. What part of Money Matters has been most helpful and meaningful to Harbor UMC?

Money Matters offers a wholistic approach to stewardship in the church, dealing with head, heart, and body. It's not just about giving money, but about cultivating a heart of devotion. It's not just about getting people to pledge more, but to look at all of their money as a gift from God and to use all of it in a way that honors God. It also deals directly with the issue of debt and helping people understand the Biblical perspective of debt and how it is an obstacle to their full service to Christ. It also forces you to look at the ministry of the church as a whole - people don't care about giving money to supporting budgets - they want to know that they are making a difference in the world and that the church is part of that difference.

2. What did you as pastor like the most about this resource?

Easy to implement and practical - lots of tools, guides, videos, sermon starter ideas.

3. Why would you encourage others to use it?

In the first three years of using this resource, we have nearly tripled the pledged giving in this church - people have really responded to the challenge - and overall, unpledged giving is up as well.

4. What biblical principals were most meaningful?

Living in obedience to God, experiencing the blessing of God through giving, "where your treasure is..." moving toward financial freedom by giving to God first, investing in your future next, and then living on the remainder - living a life of sufficiency, not gluttony (I could go on and on.)

5. What part of the materials (videos, handouts, workbook) were most useful?

The videos have been very effective. We hope to move toward making our own - not yet there - but it hasn't mattered. The testimonies on the video that came with the book (Money Matters: financial freedom for all God's churches) has really been enough. I preach a 3 or 4 week series every fall, using study guides to support the sermons. Of course, we've moved to small groups, so the topic is applied in practical ways. We still finish the series with a Consecration Sunday (a la Herb Miller) and we still send out letters ahead of time letting people know about the day and the luncheon. It really has become a great time of year for us. The feedback I receive is also significant - people's perspective on money and giving has changed dramatically. More people give, and those who give, give more each year, moving toward a tithe (some are there!)

6. What should another congregation or pastor know about “Money Matters” before offering it in their congregation?

First, they must be investing personally in the life of the church with at least a tithe. You can't talk it if you aren't leading personally. Leaders lead from the front - and must be willing to share their personal testimony, including their struggles, and including their giving. I share openly what Lori and I give to God. I talk about the time in my life when I didn't give to God. I talk about my debt (seminary wasn't cheap) and giving even though I still carry debt. I talk about my successes and my failures in honoring God. It's important. Second, related to the first, using Money Matters means that pastors must talk about money - they must embrace that Jesus talked about issues around money more than anything else, even prayer. Pastors need to get over the taboo - and pastors need to know what their people are giving. Pastors not knowing makes about as much sense as a person going for a checkup but telling the doctor he/she can't listen to their heart. (Do you sense my passion around this? LOL!) Third, the other leaders must begin to "buy" in to this. I did a lot of teaching initially with my leaders - spent time explaining the program - and challenging them in terms of their own giving. At the start, I used Herb Miller's ideas of meeting with the leaders ahead of time and getting them involved and up to speed. Now, we only put people in leadership positions who are financially committed to the ministry of the church. Again, leaders lead. Teaching takes time - and a side note on that - I preach 30 - 35 minutes every week, at least - and using Money Matters requires taking the time you have with folks during worship to do some real, deep, Biblical teaching. Finally, this is not a magic bullet than can be offered in isolation but a change of paradigm - and requires a commitment for the long haul if the church is going to experience transformation - we didn't see a tripling the first year - it took three years. The first year we did see the biggest jump, but again, it was part of the whole.

Peace,

Rick