

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

## Re-Engage Your People in GIVING - Episode 197

### *Reopening and Re-Engaging Our Churches in the Mission (Part 4)*

If you read the latest edition of our [Unstuck Church Report](#), you would know that giving actually increased in most churches during the pandemic—it was up nearly 2% over the previous year. Cash reserves also increased from 15 weeks of reserves to 22 weeks. Churches have continued to reduce debt. At the surface, it looks like many churches are financially healthy coming out of this season. Regardless of whether your church's giving is up or in decline, stewardship and finances are always tricky topics to navigate, so we think this conversation will have some wisdom for you.

### *Five Strategies from Athens Church*

In the final part of our re-engagement series, Tony sat down with Bronson Crawford, the Stewardship Director at [Athens Church](#) in Athens, Georgia. Because of their location near the University of Georgia, Athens Church ministers to a unique population when it comes to giving and finances: college students. So even before Covid, they were thinking intentionally and getting creative when it comes to engaging their congregation with the topic of stewardship.

Here are the five strategies Bronson shared that he believes set their church up for sustained financial health before, during, and after the pandemic:

1. **Hiring a stewardship director.** They have a designated person who owns this area of ministry.

*Tip:* not all churches have the capacity to hire a full or part-time staff person in this role. In many cases, a lay leader could step in to champion this effort.

2. **Leading with generosity.** Early in the pandemic, Athens decided to give away 10% of their offerings to community partners and non-profits.
3. **Starting with prayer.** Their staff sets giving goals each month then unites in prayer over them.
4. **Prioritizing online giving.** Even before the pandemic, Athens pushed online giving as their main source of gifts.
5. **Incentivizing recurring giving.** Athens hosts challenges and provides incentives to motivate their congregation to automate their giving.

**Tip:** Athens found that when they made big asks, they got big responses. One of their tithe challenges looked like this: “If you feel like you want to tithe but you’re afraid to take that step, we’ll guarantee to give you all that money back at the end if you feel God hasn’t provided for you.”

## *Two Action Steps and One Key Takeaway*

1. **Pray.** Get specific with your prayers and invite your team to join you. Pray for the financial resources and people that are needed to accomplish the mission God has for your church. Inviting others to pray will also help you cast the vision for where you sense God is taking your ministry in the future.
2. **Talk about it.** People are looking for direction and wisdom when it comes to their finances, so don’t shy away from teaching your church Biblical stewardship principles. Tell stories about the lives in your community that have been changed through the giving of generous people. Generosity is a spiritual discipline that we’re all called to—encouraging people to prioritize and trust Jesus with this area of their lives is an act of discipleship.

Bronson shared that “if you lead in such a way that teaches people that their lives are actually blessed because of generosity, and lead them in a way that disciples them and benefits their life, then they’re more likely to engage with you.”

**Key Takeaway:** Remind people what you want **for** them rather than what you want **from** them.

## *Next Steps*

**RE-ENGAGE: An Unstuck Roundtable on Carrying the Mission Forward in the New Normal**

Sign up to join us on July 20 for a [FREE Webinar](#) to share more best practices and learnings from churches who are leading the way in reopening and re-engaging their people. We can't promise you all the answers for navigating these uncharted waters, but it's our hope that you will leave this event re-energized and empowered to lead well in the Fall 2021 season.

[Register Now](#)

Listen to the episode on iTunes or at [theunstuckgroup.com/episode197](https://theunstuckgroup.com/episode197).