



# Make It Simple

*A Resource for Stewardship Education and Annual Response*

## **The Curiosity of Response**

A “response method” can seem curious, odd or even ineffectual in a world in which marketing philosophy and practice have honed asking and persuading to fine arts. We might wonder if it would better simply to take the easiest paths to philanthropy, the quickest distance between budgets and contributors. Why overload a simple transaction—value given for value received—with excess theological baggage? Why not just do what public television does, only for a shorter period of time? After all, in Jesus’ time the Temple was funded by a simple yearly tax!

The emphases behind a “response method” are not rooted in its guaranteed capability to engender generosity—although that fact is well-established. The truth is that the people you serve can benefit from a period of time in which they remind each other about what is truly important in their lives. Absent at least an annual time of reflection and learning about this matter, people can slowly drift back to the default positions of self-idolatry and self-justification. Without an annual response, congregations can eventually fall back on a way of thinking of “stewardship” as nothing more than giving, and giving nothing more than “paying for the pastor and the bills down at church.” The danger is that the richest privilege of the Christian life—to serve God’s will wherever we find our callings—deteriorates into patterns of persuasion and the maturity of the New Testament “steward” gets distorted into mere obedience or urgency.

A response method, then, is valuable to your congregation’s maturity in faith, your members’ total dedication of their lives to God, and your broad leadership toward mission. Use these days and weeks of careful, guided activities—such as Bible conversations, themed sermons, learning events and personal testimony to grow past small views of yourself or your congregation. The children, youth, and adults whom you serve will learn about giving and about living. Members of all ages will grow past small views and will recapture a vision of the reasons for their lives. They will see Jesus again; they will learn to worship God. They will come to know each other better.

All these good and godly matters are made possible by a response method. Curious, indeed!