

**From Ask, Thank, Tell by Charles Lane copyright © 2006 Augsburg Fortress Publishers. Used by permission.**

The Kent Lutheran Church council has set aside time in meetings over the coming months, beginning February 2008, to review Ask, Thank, Tell (ATT). It has been recommended as the best concise discussion of Christian stewardship currently available. This space will provide an on-going summary of the review with monthly entries. If you would like to comment, or if you would like to have a copy of the book, please contact the church by phone or email.

February 2008 – Preface, Introduction, Chapter 1

Author's preface states

"My hope in writing this book is to provide a way for all congregations to move to a healthier place, a place where stewardship is grounded in God's Word, not simply in the needs of the congregation; a place where giving is an act of discipleship, not a duty of membership; a place where money is talked about openly and honestly; a place where faithful giving is an important part of faithful lives."

The introduction begins saying "Stewardship has been kidnapped and is being held hostage by a sinister villain named Paying the Bills." There are three goals offered to perform the dramatic rescue, and the thought that "You will be doing a huge spiritual favor for God's people who gather in your congregation if you not only accomplish the rescue, but diligently stand guard to keep "Paying the Bills" far, far away, and keep biblical stewardship at the heart of your congregation's ministry."

Chapter 1 – Discipleship, Not Membership

Two mission statements for our congregation's stewardship ministry are offered. Which seems to you to be the goal KLC should aim for?

The goal of our stewardship ministry is to help God's people grow in their relationship with Jesus through the use of the time, talents, and finances God had entrusted them.

-or-

The goal of our stewardship ministry is to raise enough money to pay the bills next year.

"Stewardship ministry deserves to have its place alongside all the other ministries of your congregation – and all of them need to focus on making new disciples and helping those actively following Jesus to grow in the relationship that already exists. For too long most of the congregation's ministry has been considered "spiritual," while stewardship ministry has been considered "business." Jesus didn't see it this way, and neither should we."

The book offers a great discussion concerning "Discipleship versus Membership" focusing on the individual's relationship with Jesus rather than on the congregation and thinking about the difference between discipleship and membership. The author concludes this discussion saying

"I'm a Lutheran. As such I have a lifetime of conditioning to be nervous about any statement of what God wants us to do. We Lutherans are so nervous about slipping into works of righteousness that we are way too quiet about discipleship. The New Testament

makes it perfectly clear that Jesus didn't die on the cross just so we might assent to faith statements and join a congregation, as important as those things are. Jesus died on the cross so that we might be disciples and make disciples. If you have any doubt about the truth of this, look at the end of Matthew's Gospel or at the beginning of Acts.

The conviction of this book is that we are called to be disciples. Furthermore, I am convinced that how we steward the time, talent, and finances that God has entrusted to us will have a huge impact on our discipleship. In a unique way, financial stewardship has the potential to either be a roadblock to discipleship or a catalyst to a growing discipleship."

Not from the book is a memorable thought:

Stewardship is everything I do after I say "I believe."