

## Stewardship and Generosity Part 4

**Thesis:** We have to do some things differently as a congregation. As a family, we come together in challenging times, we learn, and we change as needed.

**Text:** Joshua 1:5-9

Please remember our conversations from the last couple of months about [Our Current Reality and Preferred Future](#) as a congregation and about [Stewardship and Generosity Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), and [Part 3](#). We have to do some things differently. As a family, we come together in challenging times, we learn, and we change as needed.

- And, I want to celebrate how God is moving and speaking to us as a congregation. Recently, I had two people say that the Lord spoke to them about giving their whole tithe to the local storehouse, Calvary. Praise the Lord.
- And, I had a couple of other people share that the Lord has spoken to them about giving a generous offering over and above their tithes. Thank you, Lord.
- Many of you have shared that you are excited about what the Lord is saying to us in this season and that you are “all in.”
- And, there is more good news. The Lord has provided funds to help us get through the next several months, providing a current cash balance that will get us through the end of December 2025.

Back in August 2025, we set the stage by sharing an encouraging and challenging word the Lord is highlighting to me from Scripture.

*Joshua 1:5–9 (NIV84) 5 [God said to Joshua,] “As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. 6 “Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. 7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”*

God focuses on Joshua (the “you” in verses 3–4 is plural and refers to Israel, but the “you” in verses 5–9 is singular and refers to Joshua). Typically, God interweaves promises and exhortations. The promise “I will be with you” sounds routine but is not to be skipped over. It is the promise God made to Isaac (Genesis 26:3) and repeated to Moses when announcing his implausible commission (Exodus 3:12). It is a promise God will reiterate to Israel in exile and will repeat to Mary when giving her an implausible commission, and it is the promise Jesus reiterates when sending off his disciples to disciple the world. In modern English “I will be with you” is inclined to suggest that we will have a sense that God is with us, but in the Bible it suggests something objective, not merely subjective. It means God will make sure things work out. Here God spells out the promise’s implications. Joshua will succeed in the task set before him. This is what can enable him to be strong and stand firm. (Goldingay, John. *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth for Everyone: A Theological Commentary on the Bible. Old Testament for Everyone*. Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press; Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2011.)

When I hear the phrase, “I will be with you,” I rejoice. Praise the Lord that God is with us. God’s presence is everything to us. And, it means that I can become aware of the God who is with me through his abiding presence.

However, I had not thought of the phrase, “I will be with you,” as “God will make sure things work out.”

It has both of those meanings.

I am grateful that God is with me and that I can have awareness of his presence (present awareness).

And, I can be strong and courageous because I will succeed in the task set before me, because God will make sure things work out.

So, we can believe that God will make sure things work out for Calvary as we follow him.

1. **We are a people who want to have a clear sense of our present reality and our preferred future.**
  - a. One responsibility of leadership is creating a sense of urgency so that we can get into action toward a preferred future.
    - i. Illustration: When you go to the doctor and you get a diagnosis, it creates a sense of urgency that you need to do something in order to be whole and healthy physically.

- b. Currently, through the first six months of 2025, we are running 72% of our church budget.
  - c. Since 2020, we have needed three special offerings to make ends meet.
    - i. 2020 \$107,000 PPP Funds from COVID
    - ii. 2021 \$138,000 Forging Our Future
    - iii. 2024 \$121,000 Confirm the Work
    - iv. That is an average of \$73,500 per year over the previous 5 years.
  - d. By June 2025, we already used up our 2024 Confirm the Work offering of \$121,000.
  - e. At our current pace back in August 2025, we projected that we would run out of Contingency Funds (our savings account) at the end of October.
  - f. As of the end of September 25, there is good news. The Lord has provided funds to help us get through the next several months, providing a current cash balance that will get us through the end of December 2025.
    - i. Thank you for your giving and support.
  - g. So, that is our current reality.
2. **We are a people who understand that we have to do some things differently and take some action steps so that we will be whole and healthy financially as congregation.**
- a. **Remember:**
    - i. If we keep doing what we have been doing as a congregation, we will keep getting the same results.
    - ii. And, our current results are financially unsustainable and unworkable.
    - iii. And, we have wonderful teams-- Elders, Staff, Deacons, Missions Council, the Budget and Finance Committee, and the Personnel Committee-- who will work to help us flesh out what it means to do things differently.
      - 1. I want to invite you to pray for these groups for wisdom and revelation.
      - 2. We trust God will speak to us.
      - 3. And you help us by your prayers.
    - iv. **Teams:** Here are the committees and teams working on our new way of budgeting and doing missions.
      - 1. **Elders:** Russ Gressett, Martin Jordana, Doug Meriwether, Keith Ressler, Joshua Rushing, Steve Meeks, Jeff McGee.
      - 2. **Deacons:** Travis Duffey, Lynda Gilpin, Meshack Ilobi, Sandy Michael, Dana Montgomery, Al Nash, Evelyn Owens, Louis Posthauer, Tim Smithwick, Sharon Williams.

3. **Missions Council:** Jeanne Hughes, Lynda Gipin, Evelyn Owens, Magan Yarbrough, Jeff McGee.
  4. **Budget and Finance:** Shannon Birdwell, Evelyn Owens, Louis Posthauer, Sandy Michael, Magan Yarbrough, Jeff McGee.
  5. **Personnel Committee:** Steve Buckles, Lynda Gilpin, Tom Josefy, Janie Meriwether, Magan Yarbrough, Jeff McGee.
- b. **We need to do things differently in funding missions as a congregation.**
- i. All the things that we do as a congregation are kingdom efforts. It is all part of one big picture.
  - ii. We will continue to make sure that we give to missions through our regular tithes and offerings as a congregation.
  - iii. We will continue to serve as a sending agent and as a giving hub for missions, ministries, and missionaries.
  - iv. We will continue to sow into what God is doing locally and globally.
  - v. **And, we have to do missions differently.**
  - vi. **Specifically, we want to cast vision for giving to missions by supporting our home base at Calvary.**
    1. As a congregation, we are already giving over and above to missions. We celebrate that giving.
    2. And we need to grow in our capacity to give over and above to Calvary in order to support our home base, which is also missional.
    3. **It is not an *either/or* proposition. Rather, it is *both/and*.**
- c. **We need to do things differently regarding our stewardship of funds individually with our tithes and offerings.**
- i. **We have room to grow in our stewardship as a church.**
    1. Nationally, only 5% of professing Christians tithe.
    2. At Calvary, we have 38% tithers compared with 5% nationally. This reality is exciting and challenging.
    3. Let me ask two questions:
      - a. How many of our people do we want to be like Jesus? Answer: 100%.
      - b. How many of our people do we want to tithe, to give generously, and to be good stewards with their time, talents, and treasure? **Answer: 100% in accordance with what the Scripture teaches us.**
    4. So, we have room to grow as a church family.

- ii. **Starting today, we will cast vision for tithing and giving for the health of the body of Christ at Calvary by engaging a sermon series on generosity and stewardship of our time, talents, treasure.**
  - 1. The conversation about stewardship involves different topics and principles: tithing, giving systematically, giving generously, giving extravagantly, sowing and reaping, etc.
  - 2. Stewardship involves how we use the time, talents, and treasure which the Lord has entrusted to us for his kingdom purposes and according to his kingdom values.
  - 3. Generosity involves how we show up in this world like God does.
- iii. **Talking about money, stewardship, and generosity is a challenge in the body of Christ and in our culture.**
  - 1. There have been abusive and/or erroneous teachings about money in the church and in culture.
    - a. Some teaching about money falls into the ditches of the prosperity gospel or of the gospel of health and wealth.
    - b. Some teaching on money is transactional: if I do this, then, God will do that because he owes me.
    - c. **We need to teach what God says about money, generosity, and stewardship, and not shrink back because of abuse or error.**
  - 2. Instead of avoiding the conversation about money, stewardship, generosity, **I believe God wants us to understand his economy and the values of the kingdom of God.**
    - a. God wants us to come to the place of generous and extravagant giving.
    - b. God wants us to understand that there is a link between our generous giving and God's supply.
    - c. God has promised to provide. As we learn to engage in giving obediently and generously, God provides, blesses, and grows us up.
    - d. God's Word links our giving to joy. Some of the happiest people I know are generous with their time, talents, and treasure.
- d. **We need to do things differently in our church finances through the end of 2026.**

- i. Over the next several weeks, we will look at what God's word says about stewardship and generosity in the kingdom of God.
- ii. Starting on November 2, we will engage in a **pledge campaign** to invite us to grow in our giving as the Lord gives us grace.
  - 1. We have never done a pledge campaign as a church.
  - 2. We will give this action a try to help us know what God is saying to each of us so that we can budget and plan for 2026.
- iii. And, we need to finish this year strong so that we have the cash flow needed for the end of 2025 and for the beginning of 2026.
- iv. Our current plan as of 9'28'25:
  - 1. From November 2 – December 14, we plan to engage in a pledge campaign to raise funds for 2026.
  - 2. The pledge campaign will go from January through December 2026.
- e. **We need to plan differently so that we don't live off special or designated offerings.**
  - i. For example, we want to budget in our operating budget for Youth Camp rather than doing a special offering.
  - ii. We want to budget for the cost of retreats for ladies and men, rather doing special offerings.
- f. **We need to get equipped to give differently so that everyone is doing their part.**
  - i. Not equal giving but equal stewardship.
  - ii. And, this is a growth area for us. No condemnation. Just an invitation to make a journey in giving.
  - iii. And, thanks to those of you who are already giving generously and extravagantly.
- g. **We are refinancing our bank loan** so that we can save money on our monthly payments. We will save about \$9,000/month through refinancing.
- h. We have to do things differently.
- 3. **We are a people who want to catch of vision of supporting the home base (Calvary) generously as a way of being missional.**
  - a. We have emphasized giving missionally locally and globally, but we have failed to cast vision for what we are doing as a church family.
    - i. Most churches only seek to promote their own church.
    - ii. Most churches only seek to use people to build their own ministries.
    - iii. I wonder if we have swung the pendulum too far, if that is possible.
  - b. I want to communicate a whole and healthy balance, not either/or.

- i. To have a healthy and whole balance, we need to increase our support of the local base.
- ii. To be whole and healthy we need to bring the whole tithe and offerings in the storehouse, while not abandoning our other missional emphases.
  1. How do we do this balancing act?
  2. **Polarity management** is moving one emphasis from the back burner to the front burner for a while.

### Stewardship:

We are a people who want to live with a sense of stewardship as unto the Lord regarding our time, talents, and treasure.

1. **Stewardship begins with the reality that everything belongs to the Lord because he is Creator and Sustainer.**
  - a. *Psalm 24:1-2 (NIV84) The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; 2 for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.*
  - b. My life, my possessions, my family, my capacities—they all belong to the Lord. They do not belong to me.
2. **Stewardship involves partnering with God in his plan, purposes, and mission in this world.**
  - a. *Genesis 1:26–28 (NIV84) 26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*
    - i. By the way, the phrase "rule over" does not mean to Lord over, dominate, and use for our own selfish gain. All authority comes from God, is accountable to God, and is delegated to us by God according to his will and ways (Matthew 28:18-20).
    - ii. *Matthew 20:25–28 (NIV84) 25 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be*

*your slave— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

- b. All through the Scripture, stewardship acknowledges our responsibility to work and to care for what God entrusts to us according to what he defines as right and wrong and according to his kingdom will.**
    - i. Genesis 2:15-17 (NIV84) The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”*
    - ii. In Genesis 3, humankind chooses to define right and wrong on our terms rather than according to God. And, we chose to build our own kingdoms and do our own will.*
- 3. Stewardship acknowledges that God gives us time, talents, and treasure, and that we are ultimately accountable to God for our stewardship of what God entrusts to us.**
  - a. Matthew 25:14–21 (NIV84) 14 “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. 15 To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. 17 So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. 18 But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. 19 “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20 The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ 21 “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’”*
  - b. 2 Corinthians 5:9–10 (NIV84) 9 So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*
- 4. Stewardship starts with our relationship to the Lord: that we serve Christ, that we have a trust from God, and that faithfulness to God is the measurement of our stewardship.**
  - a. 1 Corinthians 4:1–2 (NIV84) 1 So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. 2*



Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

- b. We serve Jesus, not ourselves and not our money.
  - c. God has entrusted us with his fame and his name, and we represent him in this world by making God and his ways known ("secret things of God").
  - d. Faithfulness is the measurement of our stewardship before God.  
Success is being faithful to God with what he has entrusted to us.
5. **We are a people who want to live with a sense of stewardship as unto the Lord regarding our time, talents, and treasure.**

### Generosity:

We are a people who want to live generously like our Father in heaven is generous, like Jesus teaches us in the Sermon on the Mount, and like the Scriptures teach.

1. **In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us about our God who is generous and Jesus calls us to live a generous life.**
  - a. **Section 3 of the Middle Section.** Matthew 6:19 – 7:12. In this section, Jesus tells us how **this righteousness is expressed in right relationships with God and with neighbor.** Doing righteousness affects our relationship with God and neighbor.
    - i. **Matthew 6:19 – 34. God and money.**
      1. Our stuff tends to claim our allegiance and causes us to worry.
      2. Our relationship to our stuff can be one of the biggest obstacles to healthy relationships with God and others.
      3. **Store up treasure in heaven.** We live in view of eternity, understanding that what we do now matters.
      4. **Parable 1: Two eyes.** You can have a healthy, generous eye, or an evil, stingy eye.
      5. **Parable 2: Two masters.** You can serve God or money, but not both.
      6. **Teaching on worry.** We are invited to trust the generous God of creation who cares about us.
  - b. [In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus emphasizes several themes, including the theme of generosity.] Emphasizing humility, forgiveness, and generous care for our neighbors, Jesus encourages people to choose God's way of love, which will eventually renew all of creation. He calls this restored world God's Kingdom. This is a realm in which Heaven and Earth are inseparably combined, a place where life

flourishes that's free from injustice, suffering, and death. ([Read - What Is the Sermon on the Mount?](#) [The Bible Project](#).)

2. **Matthew 5:7 How good is life for those who show mercy, because they will be shown mercy.**

- a. *For those who show mercy.*
  - i. We know we are broken and in need of mercy. We need forgiveness and a fresh start.
  - ii. So, we give mercy away to others. We forgive others. We don't hold the shortcomings and sins against others.
  - iii. Relationships are a mess, and mercy helps to heal broken relationships.
  - iv. We don't want to live by vengeance, by getting even, or by making people pay; rather, we want to live by giving and receiving mercy.
  - v. We want to break the cycle of judgment and unforgiveness.
- b. *Those who show mercy are living the good life, because they will receive mercy.*
  - i. We don't want to be treated as our sins deserve.
  - ii. We can never repay the debt of love we owe.
  - iii. Because we need mercy, we choose to give mercy and to be merciful, patient, and kind.
  - iv. We have been forgiven much. We have been shown much mercy. So, we forgive much and show much mercy to others.
  - v. Mercy is a step beyond being right and fair. **Mercy is generosity.** Mercy is extravagant kindness that goes beyond what is required.
  - vi. The degree to which we receive mercy is connected to how much mercy we give and show to others.

3. **Matthew 5:9 How good is life for the peacemakers, because they will be called children of God.**

- a. *For the peacemakers.*
  - i. When God's kingdom comes in its fulness one day, it will bring peace to all people. So, anyone who is entering God's kingdom now is to work as a peacemaker.
  - ii. To be a peacemaker is to enter into conflicts and to work creatively to open up a just and generous path forward for people.
  - iii. The work of a peacemaker can be rewarding, but it can be dangerous (see Matthew 5:10, the persecuted). There is a price to pay in following Jesus and his ways.
  - iv. Jesus created peace (wholeness, wellbeing, human flourishing) through generous, self-sacrificial love.

- v. This love isn't just for our friends; the love of God is also for our enemies. We are to be generous in our love even to our enemies. And, we will get misunderstood as we seek to serve as peacemakers.
- 4. **Matthew 5:38–42 (NIV84)** *"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' 39 But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."*
  - a. Jesus says that real righteousness points back to the first garden and describes the ethic of God's Kingdom. This way of life is inspired not by an appetite for personal gain but by a hunger for love that compels a person to be fair and just toward others, to seek peace with all, and to **generously** give without restraint (see Matt. 5:38-42). Jesus lives like this without fail, and he invites everyone to join him in hungering for righteousness in our own lives and in our world. ([Read - What Is the Sermon on the Mount?](#) [The Bible Project](#).)
  - b. In Matthew 5:38-42, Jesus is dealing with the case study of revenge. Jesus says that if you understand the wisdom of the Torah (teaching), then, it changes how you show up in this world. (*Sermon on the Mount*, Episode 15, April 8, 2024. [What Jesus Means by "Turn the Other Cheek."](#) [The Bible Project](#).)
- 5. **Matthew 5:42** *"Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."*
  - a. **Jesus calls us to live a life of generosity and unselfishness that extends to our property and money.**
  - b. Literal application of this verse as a rule of life would be self-defeating: 'there would soon be a class of saintly paupers, owning nothing, and another of prosperous idlers and thieves.' **But the principle is that the need of others comes before my convenience** (cf. Deut. 15:7–11). (France, R. T. *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 1. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985.)
- 6. **Matthew 5:43–48 (NIV84)** *43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you: **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,** 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. **He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.** 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you*

***greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."***

- a. We are called to be generous and extravagant in our love, because that is who God is, and it is the way God relates to us.
  - b. To be whole or perfect as our Father in heaven includes giving love generously even to our enemies, even to those who don't deserve it.  
([Why Does Jesus Want Us to Love Our Enemies?](#) [The Bible Project.](#))
7. ***Matthew 6:9–15 (NIV84) 9 This, then, is how you should pray: " 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.' 14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."***
- a. Jesus calls us to be generous in our forgiveness, even as he lavishly forgives us.
  - b. Unforgiveness opens the door to our destruction and that of our families (Matthew 18:21-35). Jesus describes how serious unforgiveness is and how a lack of mercy destroys our lives.

**The Generosity Ladder:**



**Invitation:** You and I are invited on a journey to live into and to practice being generous with our time, talents, and treasure in a way that reflects God and his kingdom.

**The Generosity Ladder** is a way to challenge each of us to become more like Jesus, especially in regard to the way we handle money.

Let's make this journey of generosity together.

**Remember:** We need to do things differently regarding our stewardship of funds individually with our tithes and offerings.

1. **We have room to grow in our stewardship as a church.**
  - a. Nationally, only 5% of professing Christians tithe.
  - b. At Calvary, we have 38% tithers compared with 5% nationally. This reality is exciting and challenging.
  - c. Let me ask two questions:
    - i. How many of our people do we want to be like Jesus? Answer: 100%.
    - ii. How many of our people do we want to tithe, to give generously, and to be good stewards with their time, talents, and treasure? Answer: 100% in accordance with what the Scripture teaches us.
  - d. So, we have room to grow as a church family.
2. **We are seeking to cast vision for tithing and giving for the health of the body of Christ at Calvary by engaging a sermon series on generosity and stewardship of our time, talents, treasure.**
  - a. The conversation about stewardship involves different topics and principles: tithing, giving systematically, giving generously, giving extravagantly, sowing and reaping, etc.
  - b. Stewardship involves how we use the time, talents, and treasure which the Lord has entrusted to us for his kingdom purposes and according to his kingdom values.
  - c. Generosity involves how we show up in this world like God does.
3. **We need to get equipped to give differently so that everyone is doing their part.**
  - a. Not equal giving but equal stewardship.
  - b. And, this is a growth area for us. No condemnation. Just an invitation to make a journey in giving.
  - c. And, thanks to those of you who are already giving generously and extravagantly.

## **Spiritual Giving: taking the next step.**

Like every other area of spiritual maturity, giving is a growth process. We have to take the first step at some point. But then, God continues to grow us over time.

After a while, a generous heart becomes part of a believer's identity.

- When you consider the stages of generosity, where are you on your journey?
- With the Lord helping you, where would you like to be?
- What is the next step to get there?

**The Generosity Ladder:** an invitation to make a journey in giving by moving up the ladder of generosity.

### **1. Give.**

- a. The initial giver is at the dawn of their giving journey. You have felt the desire to give and contribute for the first time. This phase is characterized by an exploration of trust, spiritual growth, and the beginning of a deeper bond with God through generosity.
- b. If you have never given to what the Lord is doing here at Calvary Community Church, start by giving today.
- c. Start where you.

### **2. Regular.**

- a. The next stage of giving is to give consistently, regularly, and purposefully.
- b. The purposeful giver deliberately re-evaluates their finances and priorities to ensure giving holds a significant place in life. You are on a transformative journey from perceiving blessings as solely your own to understanding that everything belongs to God. In turn, you are dedicating more of yourself to the Lord.
- c. The invitation at this stage is to start giving regularly where you are and to ask God help you grow in your spiritual practice of giving.

### **3. Tithe.**

- a. The next stage of giving is to bring the whole tithe into the local storehouse.

- b. You are responding to the Lord's invitation to go further in your spiritual practice of giving.
- c. *Malachi 3:6–12 (NIV84) 6 "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. 7 Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?' 8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. 10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. 11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty. 12 "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty.*
- d. The tithe or first 10% of our income and increase **belongs to the Lord.** **We bring our tithe to the Lord; we don't give it.**
- e. Offerings are something we give over and above the tithe.
- f. **Through bringing the tithe to the Lord and giving offerings over and above the Lord as God leads, we start living according to the economy of the kingdom of God.** The other option means trusting ourselves, doing what we think is right in our own eyes, and living according to the economy of this world system.

#### 4. Generous.

- a. The next stage of giving is to give generously.
- b. By the grace of God, you recognize that everything you have belongs to the Lord.
  - i. You understand that the tithe is just the floor or launching pad.
  - ii. You desire to live generously like the Lord is generous. So, you give generous offerings both spontaneously and systematically.
  - iii. Sometimes you give as the Lord leads.
  - iv. Sometimes, you give as you have determined in your heart to do (2 Corinthians 9:7).
- c. *Acts 2:42–47 (NIV84) 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate*

together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

- d. 2 Corinthians 9:6–15 (NIV84) 6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9 As it is written: “He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” 10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. 12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. 13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. 14 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. 15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

##### 5. Extravagant.

- a. The next stage of giving is to give extravagantly.
- b. You have reached the stage of living in the revelation that everything you have belongs to the Lord.
  - i. So, you have a “yes” in your spirit to give extravagantly as the Lord leads or as you have opportunity.
  - ii. The goal is to set a budget to live on and to sow as much as you the Lord enables you to give into the kingdom of God.
  - iii. And for some of you, the Lord has given you a vision of leveraging your job, funds, and resources strategically to advance the kingdom of God through extravagant giving.
- c. Luke 21:1–4 (NIV84) 1 As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. 2 He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 3 “I tell you the truth,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others. 4 All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”



- d. *2 Corinthians 8:1–7 (NIV84) 1 And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. 6 So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. 7 But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.*

**Remember:** Like every other area of spiritual maturity, giving is a growth process.

- When you consider the stages of generosity, where are you on your journey?
- With the Lord helping you, where would you like to be?
- What is the next step to get there?

**Action:**

We have to do some things differently as a congregation. As a family, we come together in challenging times, we learn, and we change as needed.

**We are a people who to get in action through prayer**, asking what the Lord would have us do financially to sow into what we are doing as a congregation, that our base might be whole and healthy. And, we **want to get in action through our financial gifts**.

**The Lord is speaking to us.** What is the Lord saying to you? What is getting stirred up in you? What questions do you have? Where are you feeling resistance? Where are you cynical or resigned to ever changing?

You and I are invited to try on this new way of being... this new way of giving. It is challenging, but you and I were created by the Lord to rise up to the occasion.