

Centerpoint is a community of congregations comprised of Christ-followers who earnestly seek to live out our bold vision of **“A renewed city, through a renewed people, to restore a lost and broken world for God’s glory.”**

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Empowered by the Spirit, we believe God accomplishes His purposes through ordinary people like us. It is our collective desire to advance the vision God has entrusted to us by joyfully using our talents and financial resources.

God has given to us freely and lavishly. God is extravagantly generous in all that He does, because God is generous in who He is. We endeavor to become increasingly more like Christ, with minds, hearts, and wills submitted to the Spirit’s desire to make us be more like Jesus. It is in response to God’s costly generosity toward us, our desire to live a Jesus-shaped life, and our validation that a vision of such magnitude requires us to give joyfully and sacrificially in order to accomplish God’s purposes.

God’s grander vision for His people is that we would become His radiant bride! A bride where every Jesus-follower recognizes they have a unique and vital role to play in stewarding all that Christ has loaned us to live with power and purpose on mission.

For God’s transformational work to be realized in us and in our city we recognize that fostering a culture of joyful generosity and stewardship does not happen by accident, but be a Scripture informed design. The following three core biblical truths create the framework and the fuel to propel us into God’s preferred future for Centerpoint Church.

### **BIBLICAL TRUTH #1**

#### **God owns it all – we are His managers.**

The late Rush Limbaugh, was fond of saying, “Talent on loan from God.” I would expand Rush’s motto: “All that we have and all that we are is on loan from God.”

Biblical stewardship then is the act of wisely managing the resources that belong to another. Stewardship is about ownership and lordship. Wise stewardship is driven by a vision of desiring above all else, to please our Master King Jesus. Stewardship is cultivated in a mindset of contentment, and a heart continuously gladdened by gratitude.

Further, God’s Kingdom is never in want. It may have unfunded opportunities, but God’s Kingdom operates in a positive-sum game, where there is no limit to the resources God enjoys.

Stewardship however, is more than money. Informed by the Scriptures, it is the conviction that one’s time, talent, relationships, jobs, material possessions, income streams, and retirement savings are all on loan from God.

#### **For further reflection:**

- John Wesley was once approached by an alarmed messenger reporting: “Mr. Wesley, I have terrible news—your house caught fire and burned to the ground.” Wesley reportedly kept riding and responded: “No, God’s house burned to the ground, and now I have one less asset to be accountable for.”
  - Would your response to Wesley’s news be similar or dissimilar? Why?
- Name a handful of blessings which you believe would accompany anyone who fully adopts a stewardship mindset.
- It’s normal to talk about my job, my house, my money, my car. Is this how you typically think of assets entrusted to you? Why? Language shapes culture. Consider challenging yourself to try using a different set of personal pronouns such as:
  - Rather than “my job” – the company where I serve

- Rather than “my money” – the finances I steward

**Scriptures for reference:**

“The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it!” Psalm 24:1

“Remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth.” Deuteronomy 8:18

“O Lord our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building You a temple for Your Holy Name, it comes from Your hand, and all of it belongs to You.” 1 Chronicles 29:16

“The silver is mine and the gold is mine, declares the Lord Almighty.” Haggai 2:8

“You are not your own; you were bought with a price.” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

**BIBLICAL TRUTH #2**

**Joyful giving is our reasonable response to Jesus joyfully giving everything.**

The writer of Hebrews summarizes the giving posture of Jesus. “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2-3)

As image bearers of God, we have the capacity to imitate the life of Jesus. When we joyfully give, through the Spirit’s power, we mimic the life of our leader, and give evidence that our lives are surrendered to Him. When we give, we affirm our belief in God’s goodness and generosity, and validate our utter dependence on Him. Through our giving we are enabled in a concrete way to express our love, devotion, and allegiance to King Jesus. Our giving reveals our value system. When we give, we are not giving away **our** money, rather we simply and joyfully are investing in eternal securities, which cannot be lost or diminished.

**For further reflection:**

- Would you label yourself as joyfully generous? Why or why not?
- Is your giving to kingdom causes motivated primarily out of love ... obedience ... obligation? How can you tell?

**Scriptures for reference:**

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:1-2

“And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:19

“To this John replied, ‘A person can receive only what is given them from heaven.’” John 3:27

**BIBLICAL TRUTH #3**

**Joyful generosity curbs money and possessions potential to undermine faith development.**

When Jesus warns in the Sermon on the Mount – “No one can serve two masters, wither he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You **cannot** serve both God and money.” (Matthew 6:24)

Jesus is providing us with blinding clarity, the risks associated with wealth. Experts in the Scriptures have estimated that over 2,000 Bible verses are dedicated to money and possessions. This sheer volume of verses should alert the wise Jesus-follower to validate that money and possessions are not spiritually neutral. Jesus speaks about money

more than heaven or hell, or any other subject except the Kingdom of God. Again, this all for our benefit, to shine light on the risks associated with money and possessions.

**For further reflection:**

- Name a time when you believed that by purchasing a particular item it would make you feel a certain way, only to be greatly disappointed that it didn't.
- Describe how you have experienced the truth that giving curbs the unhealthy pull of money and possessions toward selfishness.

**Scriptures for reference:**

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." Matthew 6:19-24

"Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life." 1 Timothy 6:17-19

"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." 1 Timothy 6:10

"I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." Philippians 4:12

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## **PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF HOW WE DO DEVELOPMENT IF WE ACCEPT THE THREE BIBLICAL TRUTHS ... WHAT THEN?**

### **APPLICATION #1**

Our primary objective is to cultivate what God wants for His people, not what we want from them:

Therefore we endeavor:

- a) To faithfully serve our ministry partners with clear and compelling communication in order that they can make wise and accurate decisions.
- b) To patiently coach our ministry partners, seeking their spiritual transformation, not merely a financial transaction.
- c) To seek long-term sowers, not "short-term harvesters."
- d) To help facilitate the abundant joy Christ desires to award His stewards.

## **APPLICATION #2**

We believe the Holy Spirit to be our chief advancement officer.

Therefore we endeavor:

- a) To pray and trust that God will speak to His people. We have no reason to coerce or manipulate.
- b) To equip our ministry partners to become increasingly confident in their ability to hear the Spirit's voice.
- c) To help expand our ministry partners vision for themselves and the Kingdom.
- d) To direct the "ask" toward our ministry partners hearing from God what He desires for and from them.

## **APPLICATION #3**

We will openly share our vision with our congregations.

- a) Believing the Holy Spirit will move in the hearts of those He is calling us to engage with.
- b) We will never use techniques in our development efforts designed to pressure the people of God. The end will never justify the means.
- c) We will conduct our work openly and transparently, but never betraying the confidentiality we covenant to keep.
- d) We recognize that not all stewards with whom we share our vision will be called by God to deploy the resources they manage for this particular endeavor. We are more than comfortable accepting a "no" or "not at this time" as an answer.

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## **SUMMARY**

A biblical understanding of financial discipleship fuels contentment in the face of our consumer-driven culture and results in the joy of giving to God. It helps us to not look at ourselves but look for those who need Him. As we grow through discipleship, biblical teaching, and spiritual growth, we let God's love inspire our actions and the way we steward and plan everything He puts in our hand. We do this to reflect God's image and care toward all of creation, thus fulfilling our roles as stewards.

Centerpoint is committed to growing generous people who live and give generously as an expression of thanks and love for all that God has done for us. This helps Centerpoint to fulfill the God-given mission we have been called to.

Written on behalf of the Board of Generosity Team of Centerpoint Church of Kalamazoo.

~ Jeff Porte