GENEROUS CONGREGATIONS

A long-term stewardship consultation program for congregations

The Pittsburgh Presbytery

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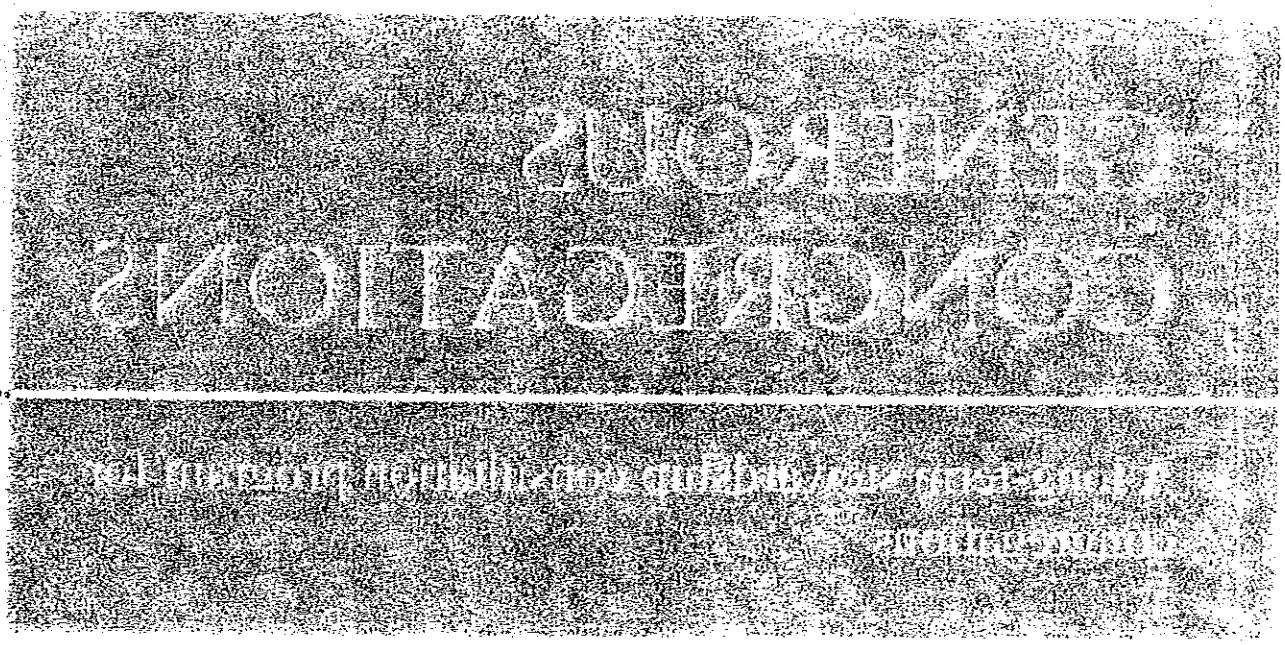

Notebook for Stewardship Consultation
Pittsburgh Presbytery
2001

Generous Congregations

This resource was written by Vera K. White, Director of New Church Development, Stewardship, and Mission Interpretation for the Pittsburgh Presbytery.

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Three-Year Covenant Between Stewardship Consultant and Congregation

The consultant will meet with the session, stewardship team, and pastor at least six times during the covenant period. At least one of the meetings will be a full-day or overnight retreat.

The session will provide the church giving profile to the consultant.

The consultant will not reveal giving information outside of the congregation.

The pastor will participate in all consultation sessions.

The goals of the consultation are:

- To invite congregation members to lead more generous lives
- To grow in discipleship through awareness of the role of money in our lives
- To gain a biblical understanding of the appropriate role of money
- To provide a powerful alternative to the theology of materialism preached in our culture
- To challenge congregation members to tithe or to move toward tithing
- To make conversations about money a regular and significant part of the church's ministry

Signed, _____
(Pastor)

Signed, _____
(Clerk of session)

Signed, _____
(Consultant)

Date _____

Benchmarks of the Stewardship Consultation

1. The session will agree to a three to five year commitment to an intentional stewardship ministry in the congregation.

2. The session will inform the congregation of this commitment in a variety of ways which may include:
   - Letter to the congregation
   - Newsletter article
   - Announcements in church
   - Congregational meeting
   - Adult education session
   - Testimonies
   - Home visits
   - Website

   The information will make clear that this is a session commitment and that the session plans to back the pastor fully in his/her efforts in this area and will take leadership in a congregational change.

3. The pastor will agree to preach at least six times per year on the subject of money.

4. The congregation will agree to offer at least two adult education courses per year on the subject of money.

5. The session members will agree to tithe or make concrete, planned steps toward tithing.

6. The nominating committee will agree to consider a member's willingness to work toward tithing as a possible indication of readiness to serve as a church officer.

7. The congregation will commission a prayer team to pray regularly for the development of an attitude of generosity among members.

8. The congregation will engage in a season of prayer and fasting regarding its call to stewardship.

9. The session will engage in the discipline of regular Bible study, seeking out God's message regarding money.

10. Personal financial planning will be a subject of study and discernment for congregation members.

11. The session will evaluate the generosity of the congregation every three to six months.

12. Stewardship will be an integral part of all ministries of the congregation.

13. By the end of year one, two thirds of the session members will have signed the *Challenge to Commitment*.

14. By the end of year two, one quarter of the giving units will have signed the *Challenge to Commitment*.

15. By the end of year three, one half of the giving units will have signed the *Challenge to Commitment*.

16. Congregations will add their own goals and benchmarks as appropriate.

Church Giving Profile

Items to include:

1. Current year's budget
2. Church membership, average worship attendance, and average Sunday School attendance for past 10 years
3. Annual congregational giving figures for the past 10 years
4. Congregational giving for three years plotted on the chart on the next page

Congregational Giving

	2001	2000	1999
Total amount given by congregation			
Number of member households			

Amount Given	Number Of Giving Units 2001	Number Of Giving Units 2000	Number Of Giving Units 1999
$20,000+			
$15,000-20,000			
10,000-14,999			
7,500-9,999			
5,000-7,499			
2,500-4,999			
2,000-2,499			
1,500-1,999			
1,000-1,499			
750-999			
500-749			
250-499			
100-249			
1-99			
non-donors			

	2001	2000	1999
Amount given to Presbytery/Synod/GA Unified Budget			
Amount used for your congregation's operating budget (inc. salaries, facilities, programs, etc.)			
Amount given to mission (excluding unified budget)			

Analysis of Information

How many member households does your church have? _____

How many giving units does your church have? _____

The top 10% of donors consists of how many giving units? _____

The top 10% of donors gives $_____ (total amount)

This figure constitutes _____% of the total donations.

The largest category of donors gives between $_____ and $_____. (Refer to categories on p. 7.) How many giving units give in this category? _____

The second largest category of donors gives between $_____ and $_____. How many giving units give in this category? _____

The average donation of those who gave was $_____.

The average donation including non-donors was $_____.

Number of new member households in 2001: _____

The average annual household income in your ministry area or zip code is $_____. (This information is available through Percept First View report at www.link2lead.com.)

If the members of your church were at the average income level for your ministry area, the total congregational income would be:
_____(number of households) X $_____(average annual household income) = $_____ (total congregational income).

Ten percent (a tithe) of this total congregational income would be $_____.

Suggested Content for Consultation Sessions

Session #1

Theme: Getting the pastor on board
Participants: Consultant and pastor
Time: 1-1 1/2 hours
Materials: 1 copy of the Generous Congregations notebook for the pastor to review
Process:

This is an informal meeting, perhaps held over a meal in a restaurant. The consultant provides the pastor with an overview of the content and goals of the consultation process. The consultant outlines clearly the expectations that will be made of the pastor if the session decides to make a commitment to this consultation:

- The pastor will make a personal commitment to tithing
- The pastor will discuss his/her personal commitment to this consultation and to tithing
- The pastor will agree to preach on money at least six times per year
- The pastor will agree to lead the congregation through change in money attitudes

The pastor will have the opportunity of deciding whether he/she is willing to make the personal commitment involved before the session or stewardship ministry team gets on board. If the pastor agrees to the expectations, she/he will set a date for session #2, which involves a meeting of the consultant with the session and the stewardship ministry team.

Session #2

Theme: Engaging key leaders
Participants: Consultant, pastor, session, stewardship ministry team
Time: 2 hours
Materials: Copies of covenant (p. 3), benchmarks (pp. 4-5), and time line (p.20) for each participant
Process:

1. Consultant introduces him/herself and asks all participants to introduce themselves by telling their names and by telling about someone in their lives who has had an influence on their money attitudes.
2. Consultant leads Bible study on pp. 35-36.
3. Consultant explains that he/she is available to congregations in Pittsburgh Presbytery to work on changing attitudes toward money within congregations. Explain that every congregation has its own culture of money that may include how money is spent, talked about, collected, reported, and saved. The consultation will help a congregation's leaders begin to understand the attitudes about money that exist within that congregation and to begin to make some changes in the money culture. The goal will be to encourage a spirit of generosity within the congregation.
4. The consultant will explain that the culture of money in a congregation reflects and is influenced by the attitudes of its leaders. Therefore, some very high expectations will be made of its leaders (all the people gathered for this session) if the consultation is to go forward:
   - The session will inform the congregation that this commitment to stewardship is a session commitment, and that the session stands firmly behind the decision.
   - The session will work with the pastor in leading the congregation through change.
   - Session members will agree to tithe or to make planned steps toward tithing.
   - The session and stewardship ministry team will faithfully and enthusiastically participate in the **Generous Congregations** project.
5. The consultant will distribute the covenant, benchmarks, challenge to commitment, and time line. Each of the documents will be discussed. The participants will have the opportunity of evaluating each document and making changes that reflect the particular congregational situation. Changes that are accepted by a majority of the participants will be incorporated into the documents. The session will take the responsibility of making any changes and communicating the agreements to the congregation.
6. After this meeting, the session will make the commitment to the stewardship consultation. The congregation will be informed of

the commitment. The participants will be given the **Church Giving Profile** (pp. 6-7) and the **Analysis of Information** (p.8) forms to complete before the next session. Consultant will receive copies of the completed forms at least 10 days before the next consultation session. A date for the next consultation session will be set.

Session #3

Theme: Establishing a congregational profile
Participants: Consultant, pastor, session, and stewardship ministry team
Time: 2 hours
Materials: Copy of Congregational Giving Profile results for each participant, index cards, copy of Information Gathering forms (p.17) for each participant
Process:

1. Consultant will lead a Bible study such as the one on page 22.
2. Session member will distribute copies of the Congregational Giving Profile results. Consultant will lead a conversation concerning the Profile using the following questions:
   - What surprised you concerning the financial information that you received?
   - What changes would you like to see in your Congregational Giving Profile?
   - What additional information would you like to have about giving in your congregation? How will you obtain this information?
   - What did you learn about your congregation?
   - Do you believe that your congregation members give what they can to the church? Why or why not?

   The consultant will ask each person to complete the following sentences:
   - If the members of our congregation were more trusting in God, they would_____
     _____.
   - If the giving of our congregation were to double in the next three to five years, I believe the money should be spent on
     _____.

   After each person has written a response to the two questions on an index card, people may be invited to share their answers in small groups. When the whole group reconvenes, small groups may be invited to tell about some of their shared understandings or visions.
3. The consultant will pass out the **Information Gathering** forms (p. 17), explaining that the questions will help the participants to begin to understand the money culture that exists within the congregation. The consultant will make assignments for gathering the information: assign each person or small group one or more of the questions to research and prepare a report on before the next consultation session. You do not need to use all of the questions. Choose ones that make sense for your own congregation. The pastor or a key leader will lead the next session.

Session #4

Participants: Pastor, session, stewardship ministry team
Time: 2 hours or more (more than one planning session may be needed)
Process:

1. Leader will begin the session with prayer and Bible Study #2 (see p. 25)
2. Each individual or group will make a report on their findings concerning the **Information Gathering**. After each report, encourage questions, conversation, or disagreement about the conclusions. At the conclusion of all the reports, lead a group discussion using the following questions:
   - What did you learn about the giving history or patterns of your congregation?
   - What conclusions can you draw about what is most/least helpful?
   - What goals would you like to propose for your church's stewardship?
   - How generous is your congregation? Upon what evidence are you making this decision?
3. The session and stewardship ministry team will formulate plans for informing the congregation of the decision to be engaged in the consultation.
4. A prayer team will be recruited to pray regularly for the congregation's faithfulness to God through stewardship (see appendix A (pp. 33-34 for suggestions on organizing a prayer team)
5. The following programs/activities will be planned:
   - A course on personal financial planning (see p. 32 for suggested resources for the course)
   - A schedule of adult/youth/children's education opportunities dealing with stewardship
   - A season of prayer and fasting
   - A schedule of sermons on money
   - Several opportunities for testimonies by congregational leaders who have made a commitment to tithe
   - An annual financial stewardship campaign
6. Congregation members will be invited to sign a Challenge to Commitment (see p. 31)
7. A time will be set for the next visit of the consultant.

Session #5

Theme: Examining our personal and congregational commitments to stewardship

Participants: Consultant, pastor, session, stewardship ministry team

Time: Several hours. This is best addressed in an all-day or overnight retreat format.

Resource: Barnett, Elaine W., Gordon, Laura S., and Hendrix, Margaret A. *The Big Book of Presbyterian Stewardship.* Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001.

Preparation: Participants should read chapters 1-4 of *The Big Book of Presbyterian Stewardship*

Process:

1. Begin with Bible Study #3 such as the one on page 25.
2. Ask each participant to fill out Tool #7, "Money Attitudes Inventory" from *The Big Book of Presbyterian Stewardship* individually.
3. Divide participants into groups of three or four to discuss their responses to the questions on Tool #7. Allow at least 1 hour for the small group discussions. Provide some guidelines for the small groups such as giving each person an opportunity to speak, listening and reflecting what you have heard, providing support not criticism, and respecting confidentiality.
4. Reconvene the whole group, and address the discussion questions on page 24 of *The Big Book of Presbyterian Stewardship.*
5. Ask each participant to respond to Tool #10. Then use the discussion question at the bottom of the page to lead a group discussion on factors that determine giving in your church.
6. By this time it may have been 3 to 6 months since you have begun your commitment to *Generous Congregations.* Ask participants to evaluate how the congregation has grown in its understanding of stewardship. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:
   - What have you learned about your congregation's attitudes about money since becoming involved in *Generous Congregations?*
   - What scripture passages have had an impact on your thinking about money?
   - How have you grown in your spiritual life since you have been involved in *Generous Congregations?*
   - What are your hopes for the next 3-6 months of participation in this program?
7. Pass out copies of the benchmarks the session developed during session #2. Ask participants to look over the list and to identify benchmarks that have been reached. Ask whether there are any benchmarks that the participants no longer feel are relevant. If the majority agrees to abandon one of more of the benchmarks, remove them from the list. Ask whether there are any additional benchmarks the group would agree to add to the list. Make any appropriate changes.

Session #6

Theme: Planning a financial Stewardship campaign
Participants: Pastor, stewardship ministry team
Time: Several meetings
Resources: Barnett, Elaine W., Gordon, Laura S., and Hendrix, Margaret A. *The Big Book of Presbyterian Stewardship.* Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001.
A Stewardship Manual: A Guide for Year-Round Financial Stewardship Planning. PC (USA), 1994
Preparation: Participants will read *The Stewardship Manual* and chapter 5 of *The Big Book of Presbyterian Stewardship.*
Process: Use *The Stewardship Manual* and chapter 5 of *The Big Book of Presbyterian Stewardship* to plan and coordinate a year-round plan for stewardship that includes an annual financial stewardship campaign for the congregation.

Session #7

Theme: Evaluation
Participants: Consultant, pastor, session, stewardship committee
Procedure:

1. Ask participants to evaluate how the congregation has grown in its understanding of stewardship. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:
   - What have you learned about your congregation's attitudes about money since becoming involved in *Generous Congregations?*
   - What scripture passages have had an impact on your thinking about money?
   - How have you grown in your spiritual life since you have been involved in *Generous Congregations?*
   - What are your hopes for the next 3-6 months of participation in this program?
2. Pass out copies of the benchmarks the session developed during session #2. Ask participants to look over the list and to identify benchmarks that have been reached. Ask whether there are any benchmarks that the participants no longer feel are relevant. If the majority agrees to abandon one of more of the benchmarks, remove them from the list. Ask whether there are any additional benchmarks the group would agree to add to the list. Make any appropriate changes.
3. Ask the stewardship committee to evaluate the financial stewardship campaign.
4. Set goals for the future.

Information Gathering

1. Does your church have any financial heroes/heroines? If so, who are they? Why are they admired?
2. What was the "golden age" of your congregation? Why?
3. Why did your church come into being in the first place? Has it accomplished the purpose for which it was formed?
4. Who handles stewardship in your congregation? What are the consequences of this arrangement?
5. What is the minister's role in stewardship in your congregation? What are his/her attitudes about stewardship? How are they expressed?
6. What are the giving expectations for church members? How are they communicated?
7. What are the giving expectations of new members? How are they communicated?
8. Who in your congregation knows what members give? How and when was the decision made as to who should/should not know this information? What are the consequences of this decision?
9. How does stewardship education occur in your congregation? What is the role of:
   - Sermons
   - Adult education classes
   - Personal stories or testimonies
   - Letters or articles
   - Small study or support groups
   - Other _____

   _____

   How would you evaluate the effectiveness of each of these components?

Assign each person or small group one or more of the questions listed above to research and prepare to report on before the next consultation session. You do not need to use all of the questions. Choose ones that make sense for your own congregation. During the session, have each individual or group make a report. After each report, encourage questions, conversation, or disagreement about the conclusions. At the conclusion of all the reports, lead a group discussion using the following questions:

- What did you learn about the giving history or patterns of your congregation?
- What conclusions can you draw about what is most/least helpful?
- What goals would you like to propose for your church's stewardship?
- How generous is your congregation? Upon what evidence are you making this decision?

Writing a Money Autobiography

Writing a money autobiography is a challenging step in understanding your own behavior and feelings about money. Even if you find it difficult to write, careful reflection on your life experiences with money will yield insights.

Jesus repeatedly spoke about money and challenged the disciples, the Pharisees, and the crowds to think about money and their relationship to it. Money issues have troubled faithful people throughout the ages. In our materialistic world it is especially important for today's Christians to examine our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in relation to money.

Writing a money autobiography is one way to begin to think about some tough questions and to grow in Christian discipleship in this significant area of life.

Set aside some quiet time, take up your pen, and discover for yourself the gifts of healing, insight, and freedom that come when in humility and trust you acknowledge your deepest feelings, attitudes and experiences evoked by your complex relationship with money.

Elizabeth O'Connor, in *Letters to Scattered Pilgrims,* gives some guidelines for writing a money autobiography. Write a three-page autobiography which deals only with the subject of money in your life. If you do not enjoy writing, try just jotting down phrases or making an outline of significant experiences. In any case, the emphasis should be on feelings and relationships.

Use any of the following questions that are helpful to you as you write:

- Childhood: What is your happiest childhood memory in connection with money? What is your unhappiest? What attitude did your mother have about money? What attitude did your father have? What was your attitude about money as a child? Did you feel poor or rich? Did you worry about money?
- Teens: What was your attitude about money as a teenager? What were your sources of money? What are your memories about money from this period? What was your first real job?
- Adulthood: What role did money play in your life as a young adult? As a parent? At age 30? 40? 50? 65? How did your attitude or feelings shift at the different transition stages in your life?
- Now: What is your present financial status? How do you feel about it?
- Future: What do you anticipate your income to be 10 or 20 years in the future? Will you inherit money? What are your thoughts or feelings about that?
- Attitudes: Are you generous or stingy with your money? Do you spend money on yourself? If so, what are your feelings about doing so? Do you feel guilty about the money you have? Do you count your money? Do you worry about money? Do you take risks with money? Do you gamble with money?
- Money and relationships: When you eat with friends and there is a group check, are you the one to pick it up? Do you make sure that you pay your share and that it includes tax and tip? Do you tend to be more on the giving end or receiving end? If you lacked money, how would you feel about others helping you pay your rent, or treating when you went out? If you have money,

how would you feel about subsidizing a friend's rent or paying more that your share of things? What would you want in return?

- Tithing: Do you tithe? Why? How do you feel about this decision?
- Legacy: Have you made a will? Why? Who is included in your will and why?

Additional questions to consider:

- Our culture has taught different roles and behaviors toward money for men and women. How has your approach to money and its use been shaped by being a woman or a man?
- How have your thoughts and behavior around money been shaped by your faith?
- How do you deal with the fact that 2/3s of the world's people are poor?
- How do you feel about asking others for money...for yourself? For a worthy cause? For the church?
- How does money affect your self-esteem?
- Have you ever used money to control events or persons?

Time Line for Stewardship Consultation

Year One

Step #1 — Getting the pastor on board
The consultant will meet privately with the pastor to ascertain the pastor's willingness to become involved in the consultation. The pastor's responsibilities will be clearly defined:

- The pastor will make a personal commitment to tithing
- The pastor will discuss his/her personal commitment to this consultation and to tithing
- The pastor will agree to preach on money at least six times per year
- The pastor will agree to lead the congregation through change in money attitudes

Step #2 — Getting the church leadership on board
The consultant will meet with the pastor, session, and stewardship ministry team. The covenant, benchmarks, time line, and *Challenge to Commitment* will be presented and discussed. The session will have the opportunity of creating its own set of benchmarks. The responsibilities of the session will be clearly defined:

- The session will inform the congregation that this commitment to stewardship is a session commitment, and that the session stands firmly behind the decision.
- The session will work with the pastor in leading the congregation through change.
- Session members will agree to tithe or to make planned steps toward tithing.

The session will make the commitment to the long-term stewardship consultation.

Step #3 — Gathering information
Church leaders will use the **Church Giving Profile** and the **Information Gathering** questions to gather information about the culture of the congregation.

Year Two

Step #4 — Getting the congregation on board
Congregational leaders will plan and implement a strategy for introducing the congregation to **Generous Congregations**. The strategy will include a schedule of worship services and adult education opportunities, testimonies by church leaders, written communications, and others means.

Step #5 — Growing in discipleship
Church leaders and others will participate in an all-day or overnight retreat during which they will explore their personal attitudes and experiences with money Participants will make a personal commitment to tithe or to move toward tithing.

Step #6 — Developing a plan for year-round stewardship

A plan for year-round stewardship will be constructed. Ways of handling the annual financial stewardship campaign within a context of a year-round stewardship commitment will be considered.

Step #7 — The generosity of the congregation will be evaluated.

Year Three

Step #8 — Growing in discipleship

Some of the activities that have been used to train the church leadership will be repeated for a wider audience. Stewardship will become a part of all church programs and activities.

Step #9 — Planning ahead

The congregational leadership will consider next steps in becoming a generous congregation. The leadership will continue to evaluate the impact of the program on the generosity of the congregation.

Bible Study #1

Pass out copies of the scripture passages on page 23.

Allow a few minutes of silence for each participant to read and reflect on the four passages.

Ask each participant to select one of the four passages.

Divide the participants into four small groups based on the scripture passages selected.

Pass out copies of page 24, instructions for small group Bible study.

Allow each group 30 minutes to complete the activities on page 24.

Psalm 112:4-9
Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man. Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice. Surely he will never be shaken; a righteous man will be remembered forever. He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. His heart is secure, he will have no fear; in the end he will look in triumph on his foes. He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor, his righteousness endures forever; his horn will be lifted high in honor.

1 Timothy 6:6-10
But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 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.

Acts 4:32-35
All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

1 Chronicles 29:11-14
Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thinks, and praise your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

Small Group Bible Study

First Reading
One person reads the scripture passage aloud slowly as others follow along.
Each person mentions a phrase or verse to which he or she is particularly drawn.

Second Reading
Another person reads the passage aloud.
Each person writes a response to the following: *What this passage touches in my life today.*

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Each person shares his/her reflections briefly, using the following sentence:

"I hear; I see; I_____."

Third Reading
Another person reads the passage.
Each person writes a response to the following: *From what I've heard and shared, how does God invite me to change? This week, how does God want me to be, or shat does God want me to do?* Be as specific as appropriate.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Each person shares briefly using the following sentence:

"I believe God wants me to _____."

Each person prays aloud for the person on his or her left, perhaps repeating just what was shared in the prior step. "O God, help _____ to _____."

Bible Studies #2-6

Make copies of response form on the following pages for participants.
Participants will use the form to respond, first individually, then in small groups to the following scripture passages:

Bible Study #2 Stewardship in Scripture

Group 1:
- Job 41:11
- Psalm 24:1-2

Group 2:
- Psalm 50:10-12
- Haggai 2:8

Group 3:
- Matthew 6:24-25

Group 4:
- Matthew 25:14-30

Bible Study #3 Giving in Scripture

Group 1:
- Deuteronomy 14:22, 23
- Deuteronomy 16:16b, 17
- Proverbs 3:9, 10
- Proverbs 11:25

Group 2:
- Malachi 3:8-11
- Matthew 5:23, 24

Group 3:
- Mark 12:41-44
- I Corinthians 16:2
- II Corinthians 8:7-15
- II Corinthians 9:6-7

Bible Study #4 Leadership in Scripture

Group 1:
- I Chronicles 29:1-20

Group 2:
- Luke 16:10-13
- Hebrews 13:5

Group 3:
- I Timothy 3:3, 8
- I Timothy 6:7-19

Bible Study #5 Stewardship and Leadership

Group 1:

I Corinthians 16:1-4

Group 2:

II Corinthians 9: 6-15

Group 3: II Corinthians 8:1-15

Bible Study #6 Stewardship and Leadership

Group 1:

Acts 4:32-37
Acts 11:29

Group 2:

Acts 18:1-3
I Thessalonians 2:7-9
II Thessalonians 3:10

Group 3:

I Timothy 3:2-3, 8
I Peter 5:2

Observation
What does it say?

Interpretation
What does it mean?

Application
What do we/I need to do?

Giving in Scripture

Observation
What does it say?

Interpretation
What does it mean?

Application
What do we/I need to do?

Leadership in Scripture

Observation
What does it say?

Interpretation
What does it mean?

Application
What do we/I need to do?

Stewardship and Leadership in Scripture

Observation
What does it say?

Interpretation
What does it mean?

Application
What do we/I need to do?

A Challenge to Commitment

We are asking you as faithful followers of Jesus Christ at _____ Church to join many of the church's leaders in making four commitments to yourselves and each other. We believe that these commitments are critical to your own spiritual life and to the spiritual health and vitality of our congregation.

- **We commit to prioritize our giving by giving to God's work from the first part of our income, not the leftovers.**
  "Honor the Lord with ... the first fruits...." Proverbs 3:9

- **We commit to giving a percentage of our income.**
  "Each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income...." I Corinthians 16:2

- **We commit to increasing our freedom to give by reducing our debts and controlling our lifestyle.**
  "Put your hope in God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment...be generous and willing to share." I Timothy 6:17

- **We commit to grow in giving by adding an additional 1% of our annual income to our giving each year until we reach our prayerfully-determined target percentage.**
  "For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have...." II Corinthians 8:12

Please cut on line and return bottom portion to _____

In prayerful dependence on God to help us grow as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ in financial stewardship:

____We commit to **prioritize** our giving
____We commit go giving a **percentage** of our income
____We commit to **reducing** our debts and **controlling** our lifestyle
____We commit to **grow** in giving

_____ _____
Signature Date Signature Date

Resources

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Prayer Team

Purpose: To gather the most faithful pray-ers of your congregation to make a commitment to pray for your congregation as it grows in faithfulness to God through *Generous Congregations.*

Who will do this activity?

The session will recruit a prayer team with the help of the pastor and other key leaders. The prayer team will appoint its own convener.

Description: The prayer team will agree to pray individually and as a group throughout the time of commitment to *Generous Congregations.*

Procedure:

1. The session will recruit people to serve the congregation on the prayer team.
2. The prayer team members will be asked to make a commitment to pray individually each day for the spiritual well-being of the congregation and for the session, stewardship committee, and pastor as they provide leadership for the *Generous Congregations* ministry.
3. The congregational will recognize and commission the prayer team during a worship service.
4. The prayer team will set a regular time and place to gather to pray.
5. The prayer team will appoint its own convener who will gather the group, introduce a suggested format (see p. 34), and suggest appropriate scripture passages for meditation (see Bible Study suggestions on pp. 22-30).
6. The session will appoint a liaison between itself and the prayer team, who will make sure that the pray-ers stay up to date on the specific prayer requests of the congregation and of the *Generous Congregations* leaders.
7. The prayer team will be dismissed with thanks when the commitment to *Generous Congregations* is complete.

Format for Prayer Team Meetings

Focus on God

Reflect on a scripture passage.
Report on how you have seen God's presence and activity in the life of your congregation this week.
Sing a hymn or praise song.

Bring the congregation before God

Pray for the spiritual health of the congregation.
Pray for the work of the *Generous Congregations* leaders.
Pray that your congregation would become more generous.
Pray for specific needs of the congregation.
Pray for needs of individuals in your congregation and community.
Pray for yourselves.

Conclude

Conclude, as you began, with expressions of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Notes to convener:

Invite people to pray aloud, but don't pressure anyone.
Don't be afraid of silence or feel that silence must be filled.
Help the group learn that silence can be a time of listening to God.
Pray in short, simple, heartfelt sentences. Avoid long, preachy, flowery prayers

Generous Congregations Bible Study
1 Timothy 6:3-19

If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 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.

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time – God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen

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.

Instructions for Leader

Materials: Newsprint and marker, colored pencils, crayons or markers.

Procedure:

1. Pass out copies of the scripture passage (1 Timothy 6:3-19) to all participants. Explain that the passage speaks (among other things) about financial issues. Ask participants to underline each word or phrase that has some reference to money or any financial matter as the passage is read aloud. Ask several participants read aloud one paragraph each. At the end of the reading, ask people to name some of the words or phrases they have circled.

2. Explain that although a lot of financial terms are used in the passage, the words have different meanings in different places. Point out the last paragraph as an example where the word "rich" has three different meanings. Explain that Paul is using familiar words to point out a contrast between two different ways of looking at money. We can call these two different ways: "false doctrines" and "sound instruction" (see the first sentence of the passage). Write those two phrases at the top of two different pieces of newsprint or two different columns on a chalkboard. Ask the participants to read through the passage again silently. As they do so they should underline or circle, using one color, words or phrases that apply to the "false doctrines" way of looking at money and using a different color, words or phrases that illustrate "sound instruction."

3. When participants have finished the assignment, ask people to name aloud some of the words they have associated with each of the two categories. Write their suggestions in the proper columns. The lists may look something like this:

False Doctrines	Sound Instruction
Conceited	godly teaching
Understands nothing	contentment
Envy	righteousness
Strife	faith
Temptation	gentleness
Robbed of the truth	honor
Foolish and harmful desires	eternal life

Ask the participants to reflect on the two lists. Indicate that Paul is painting a picture of two different ways of thinking about the resources God provides. Ask: What is the difference?

4. Conclude by saying that the Generous Congregations journey is designed to help a congregation distinguish between "false doctrines" and "sound instruction" concerning money in both their individual and their corporate lives.

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