

# How to Create a Culture of Generosity in Your Church

*A Stewardship & Generosity Resource*



The Evangelical Covenant Church

STEWARDSHIP COMMISSION

**L**eading your congregation in responding to the word of God with generosity doesn't happen by accident—it takes effort, planning, and time. The central task of the stewardship and generosity ministry in the church is to develop the capacity of people to give and serve and care. It is a ministry of discipleship.



# Creating a culture of generosity in your church

The goal of the stewardship ministry of the church is not only to work with individuals in their personal growth as stewards, but also to work with the whole congregation to create a culture of generosity in your church. Imagine a future when your community identifies your congregation as a place and people that consistently models the generosity of our Savior. We create a culture of generosity when we:

## Preach Generosity

From God's word, motivate with the power, provision, and purpose of God to create the foundation that gives us the freedom to give, serve, and care.

## Teach and Train Generosity

Biblical giving and service are not intuitive or natural practices for many of us. All growth in Christ comes from intentional effort through which we give the Holy Spirit access into our lives to transform us from the inside.

## Celebrate Generosity

Reinforce God's grace and our faithfulness. Connect the dots between the generosity of God's people and the growth of God's kingdom in our world. Help people see that the good things that God does in and through the church happen through their generosity in giving, serving, and caring.



# Preach Generosity

**W**hen we preach generosity, we instill a growing knowledge from God's word about God's desire to empower us to give, serve, and care. When we preach generosity, we provide the knowledge essential for life change: "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 12:2).

People will not act contrary to what they believe. Stewardship asks followers of Christ to demonstrate a level of giving, serving, and caring that is possible only because of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. When we say preach generosity, we mean regularly and consistently connect the dots between who God is and what that gives us freedom to do in the preaching and teaching ministry of the church. Here are just a few examples:

***Preach God's Grace.*** Generosity that reflects God's love is only possible through grace—God's grace motivates and encourages generosity—all other motivators for giving and service pale in comparison to the liberating truth of God's unlimited grace (1 Timothy 1:12-17).

***Preach God's Abundance.*** Generosity flows when we allow ourselves to be filled by the limitless goodness of God—when we focus on our meager resources, this kind of giving and serving is never possible (Mark 12:41-44).

***Preach God's Economy.*** When we realize that it is never the size of the gift but the capacity and faith of the giver that God uses to transform our world, generosity is encouraged (Judges 7).

***Preach God's Power.*** “Not by might and not by power, but by my Spirit,” says the Lord Almighty” (Zechariah 4:6). Scripture is filled with examples of the generous power and provision of God for the ministry of God’s people—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus creates a whole new context for what it means to live in the present kingdom of God.

***Preach God's Character.*** Each of God’s attributes impacts the freedom with which we live in this world—the stories of Jesus are powerful for opening our minds and hearts to new freedoms for how we live and serve in God’s world.

***Preach God's Passion for Creation.*** Creation care is a complex issue, yet it is an essential practice for those who follow Christ—the stories of creation and the coming kingdom of Christ all frame the importance of caring for our planet—it is important to note that the first to suffer when the earth is abused are always the poor and marginalized (Psalm 24:1-2).

***Preach God's Passion for Economic Justice.*** From the first laws given through Moses to the message of the prophets, to the teaching on the Year of Jubilee, to the parables of Jesus, God’s passion for economic justice is a unifying theme of God’s word and a profound motivator for stewardship and generosity (Isaiah 58:6-14).

We can create a culture of generosity by building the preaching and teaching ministry of the church around the missional themes of generosity and stewardship. Over time this serves not only to form individual believers into people who model the generosity of the Savior, but also to create a culture that gives witness to God’s lavish, abundant, and giving love to our world.

# Teach and Train Generosity



**P**reaching generosity alone is not enough to transform people into generous stewards; we need to supplement preaching with consistent Biblical teaching and spiritual formation. Whole life stewardship must be modeled, taught, practiced—and then caught. We each need to be taught and trained in how to give, to serve, and to care for God’s world.

## Why teach people to give, serve, and care?

- ***Giving and serving are not intuitive.*** They need to be learned. Biblical giving needs to be learned.
- We teach people to ***give*** so that over time ***God will transform us into givers.***
- We teach people to ***serve*** so that ***God will transform us into servants.***
- We teach people to ***care*** for our world so that ***God will create in us a heart for all of God’s creation.***

Many of us give because we were taught to give and serve by significant people in our lives. This ministry of training is essential because true life is found in living out God’s desire for us to practice deep generosity in every aspect of our lives. It is a gift to offer people training in the areas of their lives that cause significant concern and stress—such as time and money.

## Teach people how to be good stewards:

***Biblical giving is proportional giving, first-fruits giving, consistent and regular giving:*** “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income” (1 Corinthians 16:2).



***Develop a consistent, long-term teaching ministry using financial training tools.*** Some helpful online materials are *Good Sense*, *Crown Ministries*, and *Three Simple Rules*. The stewardship pages of the Covenant website list many more resources and links.

***Model generosity.*** Challenge leadership to increase their giving by 1 percent. Together, write a pledge and invite the members of your church to join you.

***Model giving that will transform your congregation.*** Make sure that as a church you tithe everything that comes in the door before you pay the bills.

***Teach people to serve.*** “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received” (1 Peter 4:10).

***Teach people that acts of giving are not only acts of obedience but also intentional spiritual disciplines*** through which our gracious God will change us from the inside out to look more and more like Jesus:

- “God disciplines us for our good that we may share in his holiness. . . it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:10-11).
- “Train yourself to be godly. . . godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come” (1 Timothy 4:7-8).
- “This kind of training is any activity I can do by direct effort that will help me do what I cannot do now by direct effort” (John Ortberg).
- We grow to be more like Christ by what Dallas Willard calls well-directed effort (2 Peter 1:3-9, Philippians 2:12, Colossians 1:29, Ephesians 3:20).

# Celebrate Generosity

**R**einforce God's grace and the faithfulness of God's people. Connect the dots between the generosity of God's people and the growth of God's kingdom in the world. Help people see that the good things God does in and through the church happen through their generosity in giving, serving, and caring.

- Celebrate some part of God's work in and through the church, or a "ministry win." Remind your congregation, "This happened because of your generosity" and "We can do this because you are generous people."
- Always connect offering to ministry. "Last week three of our teenagers made first time commitments to Christ at the youth retreat. That happened because of your generosity."
- What gets celebrated gets repeated.
- People want to know their generosity matters—we need to link generosity to life change.
- The highest motivation for giving, serving, and caring is, "Join me."
- Make generosity one of your stated core values.
- Identify giving and serving as essential marks of a disciple.





## Thank people again and again and...

- Send a quarterly giving report with a “thank you” and a story.
- Express thanks to God’s people for their generosity.
- Make liberal use of lay testimony. The power of hearing people tell about what stewardship has released in their lives is powerful. Your church is full of people who have been amazed by God’s faithfulness in their lives.

The Apostle Paul modeled “thanks” in his ministry with the churches he planted.

- “For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers” (Ephesians 1:15-16).
- “I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now” (Philippians 1:3-5).
- “I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine concern for your welfare” (Philippians 2:19-20).

# So, in the life of your church we encourage you to...

- **Motivate** by preaching generosity
- **Educate and train** by teaching generosity
- **Give thanks** again and again and again by celebrating generosity

## The result is transformation:

"He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone complete in Christ" (Colossians 1:28).

"If Christian leaders show as much concern for their people's spiritual growth as their church's financial needs, these leaders will help grow giving hearts" (Rebekah Burch Basinger - edited).

"And we, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).



Visit [CovChurch.org/stewardship](https://CovChurch.org/stewardship) for tools to help you get started with...

- Narrative budgets
- Stewardship of the earth
- Year-round stewardship education



The Evangelical Covenant Church

STEWARDSHIP COMMISSION