

FIELD GUIDE

# Support the Church



CHRIST COVENANT

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# Support the Church

## INTRODUCTION

Though when the church actually began is debated, most people agree that the church’s truest and current form can be dated to the day of Pentecost as described in Acts 2. While the apostles were together in an upper room, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and then they went out to preach the gospel in Jerusalem. This resulted in 3,000 people believing the gospel for salvation. From that day on, many of the new believers gathered together to form a church in Jerusalem, which we read about in Acts 2.

### ***Acts 2:42–43***

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.”

These verses provide a basic description of three priorities that every church should exercise: teaching, fellowship, and prayer. The author of Acts continues to describe what he witnessed in the verses that follow.

**Acts 2:44-47**

“And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

Early on (literally three verses into the church), that generosity becomes a theme of Christian faithfulness. This theme continues through the New Testament and throughout church history up to this very day.

Money and generosity are consistent themes throughout the Old Testament. God regularly challenged His people to be generous to others and generous in their offerings to Him (Deut. 15:7-8; Ps. 112:5, 9; Prov. 21:13; 22:9; 28:27; Mal. 3:10). During His earthly ministry, Jesus actually talked more about money than any other subject with the one exception being the kingdom of God. He regularly challenged the coldness of His hearers' hearts toward the needs of the poor, as well as their stinginess toward advancing the kingdom (Matt. 6:24; 19:21; 21:12-13; Mark 12:41-44; Luke 14:28; 16:13-15). Throughout Acts and the rest of the New Testament, we see a deep concern among churches for one another reflected in offerings being made for churches in need. We also see an urgency toward being generous in support of advancing the kingdom of God (2 Cor. 8:1-15; 9:7; Phil. 1:5; Heb. 13:16). Even in Revelation, Jesus condemns the church of Laodicea for their dependence on and confidence in their wealth (Rev. 3:17).

Generosity is a priority for the church. We offer here some reasoning for generosity and some practical things to consider as you prayerfully pursue kingdom-focused generosity in your life.

## THREE BIBLICAL REASONS FOR GENEROSITY

### *1. Be generous for yourself*

Matthew 6:19–21 is a fascinating passage of Scripture. These words are spoken by Jesus during the Sermon on the Mount.

#### **Matthew 6:19–21**

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

You would expect Jesus to say something like, “Where your heart is, there your treasure will be also.” However, He actually says the opposite. He declares, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be.” It’s as if Jesus is saying that if you want to have a heart for the Lord, then you need to be invested with the Lord. If you want your heart to be in line with the things of God, then you must get your treasure in line with the things of God. Giving is the best way to resist the tyrannical power of money over our lives. As Jesus says a few verses later, “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Matt. 6:24).

### *2. Be generous for your church*

As previously mentioned, just a few verses into the existence of the church, people within the church were being generous toward one another. One of the most striking passages about the early church is found in Acts 4:33–35.

#### **Acts 4:33–35**

“And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the

proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.”

There was not a needy person within the early church. Isn't that incredible? The church was so concerned with the needs of one another that they worked to meet one another's needs fully. Today, we should still be concerned with one another's physical needs and certainly continue working together faithfully to meet one another's physical needs when they arise. However, we should work together to meet one another's spiritual needs even more so!

As members bring resources to the church, those resources are distributed in various ways. Some are used for hiring pastoral staff who work to care for the congregation and serve to meet their spiritual needs. For example, our children's ministry staff is working to meet the spiritual needs of our children as they partner with parents to help shepherd our kids. Also, our Biblical Counseling Center stays full of men and women with acute spiritual needs, and it's such a blessing and means of grace in their lives that our church has this center that can address their needs. Other resources are used for our building. This gives us a place to worship, host Bible studies, hold meetings, and connect with the community at large. Other resources are used for specific church ministries that are directed at meeting spiritual needs inside and outside of the church family. Last but certainly not least, resources are deployed for the global mission of the church. By joining together, we can work to support various ministries in our city and advance the work of Christ around the world.

### ***3. Be generous for the mission of God***

One of the motivations for giving is indeed to see the mission of God advanced outside of our church. Jesus has given us the most urgent and world-changing command in all of history—to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18–20). The responsibility for people coming to know and follow Jesus, the only hope of salvation, has been given to the church. God is known, worshiped, and glorified, while the eternal destiny of billions of souls hangs upon Christians faithfully going and giving to advance the Great Commission. The Great

Commission is great in that it is an amazing task, but it's also great because it is a massive task. God has called us to make disciples of every nation, and that requires immense resources. Effectively training pastors, planting churches, and sending missionaries are all expensive, but if we want to see the kingdom of Christ advanced, we must be generous as individuals and generous as a church.

### ***TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURE***

It takes far more than money to fulfill the Great Commission. Though Scripture challenges us to be generous with our money, God's Word also addresses the way we use the other gifts God has given us. We are called to use our time, talent, and treasure in ways that glorify God, serve others, and direct our hearts heavenward. We have developed a Stewardship Tool to help you steward your resources in all three areas toward kingdom purposes. This tool gives you an opportunity to reflect on how you are currently using your time, talent, and treasure, what that says about your priorities, and how you could develop in these areas in the future. See the appendix for the Stewardship Tool.

### ***WHY AND HOW SHOULD YOU GIVE?***

Whether you are just getting started in kingdom generosity or have been giving to the church for a long time, there are two important passages worth meditating on regularly when considering why and how you should support the church.

#### ***WHY?***

##### ***2 Corinthians 8:9***

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”

If the previously mentioned reasons aren't motivating enough to move you toward greater generosity, then listen carefully to what Paul is saying here in 2 Corinthians: ultimately, we give because God has given so much to us in Christ. Jesus, who was

rich, became poor so that we could be rich in Him. Jesus wasn't just rich; He was the Lord of the entire cosmos. Everything was His and He was the Lord over everything. Yet, He willingly gave up everything to become like us. The Lord of all became a pauper for all.

Jesus didn't just become physically poor in His life; on the cross, He became spiritually poor in His death. He took on all our sin and became the object of God's wrath. The debt of our sinfulness that we could never repay was placed on the very Son of God on the cross. In other words, the richest became the poorest so that we who are poor before an almighty God might become rich, heirs to His worth and glory. If we believe this is true, it should motivate a radical kingdom generosity in all of us who know God in Christ.

As we see in 2 Corinthians 8, Paul urges the Corinthian church to give in light of the gospel, but he also teaches them how they should give in 2 Corinthians 9.

## **HOW?**

### **2 Corinthians 9:7**

"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

There are three principles for giving that can be drawn from this verse.

#### **1. Your giving should be structured and planned**

Faithful Christian giving is not something that you do on a whim; rather, it's something that you budget for like any other financial obligation in your life. We encourage each member to pray and think about what he or she is to give when joining the church. This plan should consider times throughout the year when you get a raise or bonus and should be reevaluated at least once per year. It's good to set spiritual goals at least once a year, and giving to the kingdom of God should be one of these goals. Many members try to increase their giving by a percent or half a percent every year, resulting in more and more resources deployed to help God's kingdom grow as



He continues to provide. Some Christian churches make a big deal out of tithing (giving 10% of your income to your local church). At Christ Covenant, we consider the tithe a good principle that typically represents a generous gift for many people. However, we can also see in the New Testament that Christians would often give generously beyond a tithe to advance the work of Christ.

## ***2. Your giving should be consistent and obedient***

Once you have created a plan, it's important to follow it. The best advice on this is to make your giving habitual and regular. While you can give by check in the offering boxes at the exit doors of the auditorium, the easiest and most efficient way to give is by setting up a direct draft online. You can set up a recurring gift and give additional one-time offerings as the Lord leads by visiting [christcovenant.com](http://christcovenant.com). While one-time and end-of-year gifts are great tools for generosity, the practice of giving regular weekly or monthly gifts is a great discipline to develop. Think about it in the same way that you save money. If you try to just save money once or twice a year, you will never save very much. The best way to save is to make savings a regular (usually monthly) part of your financial plan.

## ***3. Your giving should be a joyful priority***

While giving might certainly be a discipline, for those of us in Christ, it should be a joyful discipline. We are giving to advance a never-ending kingdom of truth, righteousness, and joy. We are giving to advance the only part of our lives that is truly eternal. A walk through any of our basements or attics will reveal a number of things that we probably regret buying, but have you ever regretted investing in the kingdom? As Jesus tells us, what we give yields for us an eternal return.

### ***Matthew 6:19–20***

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”

## CONCLUSION

God has given us a huge responsibility to take ownership of His kingdom work on earth. We pray that this guide helps you join in with what God is doing at Christ Covenant and throughout the world. We also pray that this guide would move you to place your treasure in the kingdom and, by doing so, that your heart would love God more deeply. If you have questions about how money is used at the church or anything else pertaining to finances and the Christian life, or if you are interested in learning creative ways to give, contact any of Christ Covenant's pastors. Also, please plan to attend our quarterly members meetings, where we decide how to use the resources that God is providing our church together. Finally, join the members of Christ Covenant in kingdom generosity as we collectively pursue the pleasure and glory of God.





# Appendix: Stewardship Tool

## TIME

1. What are the top areas where you have been spending time this year? List in order of most time spent to least time spent.

- |    |     |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6.  |
| 2. | 7.  |
| 3. | 8.  |
| 4. | 9.  |
| 5. | 10. |

2. How well does the list above reflect your priorities? Would God be honored by the list above? Why or why not?

3. What would you change related to how you spend your time? What things do you need to spend less time doing? What things do you need to start spending more time doing?

**Matthew 6:33**

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

**TALENT**

1. What gifts has the Lord given you to leverage in your relationships with others and for the sake of the kingdom?

2. How well have you utilized these gifts this year?

3. What do you need to change to better use your gifts for the kingdom of God?

**Ephesians 4:15-16**

“Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

## TREASURE

1. How much did you contribute financially to the church and other kingdom work/ministries out of what the Lord entrusted you with this year?

2. How can you grow in this area?

3. How much or what percentage of your gross income can you commit to contributing to the church and other kingdom work/ministries?

### ***2 Corinthians 9:7***

“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”





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