

DISCIPLING THE HIGH-CAPACITY GIVER

Some Churches Are Taking New Attitudes and
New Approaches to Caring for Wealthier
Members of Their Congregations

by Alexis Wilson

Article Summary

Some cutting-edge churches have begun personal discipleship to the high-capacity givers in their congregations. These givers are people of wealth or who give away a high percentage of their income. Churches understand that giving is a spiritual gift and are designing ministries to encourage those whom God has gifted as givers.

Further Reading

[Generosity Requires More than a Sermon: Leading Churches find Ongoing Training is the Key to a Lifestyle of Generosity](#)

By Andy Williams

[Staffing for Stewardship: Innovative Churches are Exploring New Pathways for Incorporating Stewardship](#)

By Alexis Wilson

[Secrets of Generous Churches: Creating a Culture in which Serious Stewardship Is Normal](#)

By Liz Swanson



Perhaps the one subject more taboo than politics or religion is a discussion of personal finances. Frame that discussion in the church, and temperatures rise. Churches often shy away from the subject, and even those that have found a way to talk about money, stewardship and generosity still struggle with the idea of conducting that discussion with the wealthy.

“Too often stewardship ministry is treated as an ‘extra,’ and ministry to rich Christians is seen as favoritism, but that’s just not the case,” says Byron Van Kley, former director of Generous Churches Leadership Communities for Leadership Network. “Those who have been entrusted and blessed with much need to be helped along with what they do with all that they have been given.”

These “high-capacity” givers are people of great wealth and financial means, or people who are choosing to give away a high percentage of their income. Some cutting-edge churches have stepped out in faith and begun personal discipleship to the high-capacity givers in their congregations and communities. They understand that giving is a spiritual gift, one that must be called out and nurtured, and they are designing ministries to encourage those whom God has gifted as givers. As a result, passions and visions for advancing God’s kingdom are being embraced, and the lives of the giver and receiver are being blessed as a result.

Activating and Motivating the High-Capacity Giver

John and Suzanne (not their real names) put in long hours early in their respective careers and wisely invested their money. In less than a decade, they yielded remarkable earnings, were able to retire and still enjoy a luxurious lifestyle.

While they had given consistently to their church and other ministries, it never occurred to them to give beyond a tithe, until the minister who led their small group challenged the way they thought about giving.

Churches seeking to engage these kinds of people see the long-term vision of such a

ministry. “We have to emphasize what we want *for* people, not what we want *from* them, and we have to be patiently persistent with them and recognize they are on a journey. We all are. God is patient with us and we should be with others,” says Todd Harper, executive vice president, Generous Giving (<http://www.generousgiving.com>). Generous Giving is a privately funded ministry launched in 2000 that seeks to encourage givers of all income levels to experience the joy of giving and embrace a lifestyle of generosity, according to God’s word and Christ’s example.



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“We have to be respectfully bold and be willing to take risks when appropriate and in the context of a relationship. Again, it has to be what we want for them, not from them. You can’t fake it with these people, and you cannot look at them as targets. The liberation of people is much more important than the liberation of resources. Bigger, better, faster doesn’t make people happy. People who are intentionally excelling in the grace of giving often become giving champions.”

Todd says that keeping an open mind and heart is important to the process, and leading churches avoid being prescriptive. “They don’t define what generosity should be for someone else. They understand you have to leave that between them and God. Sometimes I worry that I won’t challenge people enough. Tell them what other people have done. Coach them in their testimony. Equip them in how to do it. Interview them. Ask them about their first major gift, how they got

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there, what percentage of their income they giveaway... get specific. There is incredible power in specifics. They can replicate themselves when they tell their own stories, but they have to be able to articulate their giving story. What amazes me is how many people go to conferences and hear stories of generous givers, and say, 'I've never thought of giving above the tithe. I've never heard these things before.' For too many churches, the tithe is the finish line, not the starting line. There are people in bondage and we've got an opportunity to free them.

"There is always a story of God's transformational work. That's the power of stories—they aren't prescriptive or judgmental."

In being prescriptive, a disconnect can happen. "One of the great challenges is the church assuming its passions and visions are my passion and vision, and not allowing me to pursue and invest in other parts of God's kingdom, and that can be frustrating," says Larry Powell, president of a private equity investment company in Atlanta and a lay leader at **North Point Ministries** in Alpharetta, GA (<http://www.northpoint.org>). "The church has baggage in the area of 'we want something from you.' Like any good relationship, the relationship between church leadership and givers has to be built on trust and consistency."

Locating Passions, Communicating Visions

Todd says that tapping into a person's passions is integral to the process of helping the high-capacity

giver get in the giving game. "In the beginning, try to discern where they are and what gets them excited, then try to get them connected to a peer with passions in the same area," says Todd. "Go deep with them, and they will help you go wide. Peer influence is one of the most powerful influencers. I often broker relationships between people I believe would connect, and great change happens."

Churches seeking to engage the high-capacity giver have many effective examples in the marketplace, says Larry. "In general, parachurch ministries do a better job of connecting with people's passions," he says. "I had a guy come to me and say, 'With \$3, we can heal a kid's blindness. How many kids do you want to heal?' Parachurch ministries love measurable outcomes. They understand that, and they do a good job of reporting post-gift. They understand how to communicate to and build high-capacity kingdom investors." By replicating such actions, churches can more effectively get high-capacity givers involved.

"You have to remember that it's about vision and accounting for your actions," says Todd. "High-capacity givers think of themselves as stewards, and God has entrusted them to discern where they can prudently invest. They very much want to see a return on investment. Churches that do that—communicate vision and show accountability for the funds—experience success with these givers."

"When I was with Campus Crusade, I made a cold call, and the guy asked what I wanted. I said, 'I want you to give away more money than you ever dreamed possible.' He was taken back and intrigued, so he invited me to come see him. Again I said to him, 'I want you to give away more money than you ever dreamed possible, and I don't care if you give it to Campus Crusade.' That started a relationship that has lasted for years. His giving has gone up 20 fold, and he is having the time of his life. You can't fake that, especially with this audience. They will see through it."

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Teaching and Learning to Live with an Open Hand



MARK DAVIS

"In creating discipleship, we are taking the approach of the whole person, a real multi-dimensional approach, says Mark Davis, executive pastor, **Calvary Chapel Fort Lauderdale**, Fort Lauderdale, FL (<http://www.calvaryftl.org>). "We look at a man and we see all of the roles he plays in life—he is a husband, father, son and brother. We have to nurture all of those areas of life. Stewardship often is not the perceived first area. We are interested in building relationships because our people need discipleship and relationship, and we trust God with the outcome. We have to be OK with not having the same passions. Chad Kauffman, our communications director, or Stuart Easterly, our director of stewardship, is always part of the conversations with the senior pastor and me. We create a sense that they are stronger and know more. In those small group settings, we are sharing relationships at different levels. It has to be a shared thing. It has to be about how we better connect people with the Lord."

Being transparent, being honest and approaching the subject with an open hand are crucial to this undertaking. "Andy Stanley says, 'My job is to teach you God's word and help you give. I don't care where you give,'" says Bruce Nelson, stewardship pastor at **Mariners Church** in Irvine, CA (<http://www.marinerschurch.org>). "We have to take

that approach—we want people to be connected to the heart of God, and he will best allocate where the resources should go."

In order to model that open-handed approach, Calvary Chapel allows access to their congregation. "We invite other ministries to come in and present and ask for money," says Mark. "With individual givers, if you see that principle of taking the

word to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and outermost parts of the world, then we think they have to determine where their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and outermost parts of the world are."

Sometimes, You Ask for Nothing

Another challenge the church must overcome in activating and motivating high-capacity givers is creating a place where they feel secure and where they know they are loved for who they are, not what they can give. "High-capacity givers wanted a safe place," says Mark. "We need to be able to say to them, I'm never going to ask you for anything. I'm going to help you to the extent that you want help, mentor you, invest in you, give you counsel. That disarms them because they no longer have to wonder, "Are you just getting to know me because there is going to be an ask?"

The Necessary Anchor

"In order to create a ministry to high-capacity givers, and for it to truly take root, everyone in the culture has to understand and embrace *fully* the idea that giving is a spiritual gift—they can't just understand it from a utilitarian standpoint," say Forrest Reinhardt, who from 1998 to 2006 served as executive pastor of strategic resource development at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, CA. "We are preventing people from functioning in the way that God endowed them and shaped them. We are holding them back from that if we don't engage them relative to this idea of the gift of giving. Think about Joseph of Aramathea. He was a man of influence and affluence, and he was the only guy who could go and ask for Jesus' body. He was also the guy with the tomb and the means to bury Jesus. How crucial is he to the story? All of us are challenged by Paul to grow in the grace of the gift of giving. You have to help them understand that if they have more than they need, there is a reason God gave it to them.

Forrest also says that if God is going to give someone a spiritual gift, he is going to give them the means to exercise that gift. He is not going to frustrate his children.

"I don't differentiate between the responsibility the widow had to give her mite or the harlot to break her vase and cleanse Jesus' feet and the act

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of Joseph. Though we’re not segregating, there has to be intentionality in finding ‘Joseph.’ We called them “champions,” as they were giving champions. God has uniquely placed them in a time such as this. That was part of my job—to know the top 200 givers and their giving, and to pastor them. I was there to help them understand that they were blessed in order to be a blessing. That is a faith formation process. It also has to be a journey geared to a relationship that is in their best interest. There has to be intentional pursuit of the people God has blessed, doing so with their best interest in mind. That gets you over the hump of fund raising versus faith raising.”

Part of finding the “Josephs” is to put them in a place to recognize their gifts and see how they can be used. “You have to be intentional about getting those people to environments, which you can create or you can invite them to—so they can see resources in action,” Forrest says. “At the end of the year, Rick Warren would write them a letter and send them a book and some CDs that were relevant to the message. We were constantly feeding the conversation in content and event form to develop them.”

The giving champions at Saddleback were encouraged to tell their stories, but they were guided in the process. “We would ask these folks to share their testimonies, but they were some of the most difficult testimonies and required a lot of coaching that goes into that process. You have to make sure they truly know it is God’s money. You want them to get up and talking about it almost

with fear and trembling, wishing someone would take it from them. They can’t talk about it and pat themselves on the back.

“When they share the story of their giving, they almost always connect to someone else in the room who is wrestling with that issue. Just like if someone had the gift of compassion, mercy, shepherding... if they are sharing testimony about how God used them and how he utilized their resources, it undoubtedly will connect to someone. They’re really telling a God story.”

Even as they have seen God at work in their lives, the giving champions have been pushed forward on the journey. Even as they saw God at work in their lives, the giving champions were pushed forward on the journey. “You have to give them opportunities to stretch their giving. Faith and experience have to be stretched,” Forrest says. “You have to say, ‘Here’s what God has put before us.’ You’re almost doing the Joseph thing—who has the influence and affluence to meet the need God has put before us? If you’ve taken the time to do the upfront work—and if you’ve done it relationally and not at arm’s length—then you have to take the risk on the relational side to have the right to ask. Remember, it’s because you care about the person and his family, not his money.”

How the Senior Pastor Can Help

Though there is debate among these churches about whether the senior pastor has to be intimately involved in the process of discipling high-capacity givers, all agree on one thing—the pastor must give permission for the process to happen. “The senior pastor sets the culture, and he has to set the structure so that other people can operate beneath his leadership with empowerment,” says Generous Giving’s Todd.

“Is it necessary for the senior pastor to direct the ministry to high-capacity givers? No, but someone in the church needs to,” says Larry. “It depends on the pastor’s giftedness, on the church, the size of the congregation, the number of high-capacity givers... someone needs to speak truth into their

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lives. Money is a test, and the more money someone has, the greater the test. The idea that we're going to show favoritism isn't Scripturally sound. Those with significant money have spiritual tests other people don't."

Mark agrees. "I'm not sure the senior pastor can or should be involved, but he has to be supportive. When I had a list of our top 20 givers, I was sure Bob Coy, our senior pastor, didn't know at least 12 of them. As we've done a larger profile of people who have the gift of giving, he gets excited about discipling them on a holistic basis."

At **Redeemer Presbyterian Church** in New York City, NY (<http://www.redeemer.com>), the senior pastor's involvement with high-capacity givers grew organically during the church's vision campaign. "We turned the heat up during the vision campaign in 2005, and since we don't have a tradition of doing capital campaigns, it was a good response," says David Bisgrove, senior director of stewardship. "Our people pledged \$19 million beyond our regular operation giving. We expected to only bring in about 30 to 40 percent of the pledges, but we brought in more than 50 percent. Half of the money went to a new building, which is a \$22 million structure. We're at least a year ahead of our most optimistic projection.

"The campaign process made us as a community focus on our vision and why we're here—that we're not here for ourselves, that we're here for the city. People understand that big cities for the most part have been abandoned by evangelical church. For us to truly love and care about the

city is a unique, compelling and exciting vision. "Because of our vision campaign, we have been able to identify our major donors and high-capacity givers. We're calling them financial leaders, people who are gifted to make money. We wrestled with the guilt of privileging people with Tim's time. In some ways, he is allergic to the concept, but as we began working in the campaign, we all began to understand the need for his interaction with individuals like this. It's God's ministry, but Tim has a great vision, and he feels responsible to keep it moving.

"We want to create a movement in the city that can be replicated in big cities around the world. We've had inquiries from Belgium, from Hong Kong, all happening without any kind of impetus, and we now have a chance to make it formal and really make an impact. As part of moving forward with this vision, Tim made 30 individuals calls on our financial leaders. We then were converted to the idea of identifying 10 to 20 couples or individuals who have shown a willingness to show up. Tim had dinner with these people off site to encourage them, thank them and update them on the vision. We didn't ask for anything—we were just building into them. That's new to us.

"Tim is a pastor at heart, and he realized when he sat down in people's living rooms, they really wanted him there. People are asked for money all the time—by their colleges, medical schools—and they are almost insulted if you don't ask them. He saw it as part of his responsibility to challenge people to be generous."

"The senior pastor's role, or anyone's role, has to include a sense that we have a responsibility," "Believers blessed with a high capacity to give



The people at Redeemer Presbyterian pledged \$19 million beyond regular operation giving when challenged during a 2005 vision campaign.

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often view their giving role, not just as a privilege but a high responsibility—they see themselves as stewards. When spiritual maturity and capacity intersect, propensity to give naturally follows. Then comes the questions of where, how much and when? Stewards desire to wisely and faithfully allocate what God has provided amongst what at times can feel like unlimited opportunities to give. Ultimately the question becomes very personal; God, where then would you like for me to give?” says Bruce Nelson of Mariner’s Church. “At times, it can be very powerful for these people to sit with the highest levels of leadership to hear the vision directly from the source, from the hearts of those with whom God has impassioned about the ministry.”

Like any other ministry a church undertakes, developing a ministry to high-capacity givers requires commitment. “If you are going to do it, make sure you put the resources in play. It’s a sowing and reaping thing, from the standpoint of time, staffing and finances. It can’t be a trite, trivial, lip service thing,” says Forrest. “One of the reasons why Rick [Warren] and I figured this out was that I knew it mattered to him, it was a life message, and what he gave me in return was a tremendous opportunity to get after it. I had an expense account to do with guys what they were doing and to live in that world without feeling like I was having to grovel to be there. It’s a precarious issue, and if you swing and miss, you’ll fall down. You have to make sure you’re committed.”

Larry says, “It’s simple—does the senior pastor trust God to provide for his church? God will not honor a double mindedness in ministering to the high capacity giver. If a church will simply teach the high capacity giver what God says about money, I believe God will bless this church. He will honor this single mindedness. It’s all about a church trusting God to provide, if the church is faithful in teaching God’s Word. The church cannot be ministering to the high capacity giver with the real purpose of this ministry being fund raising.”

Growing a Ministry that Fits the Culture Lincoln Berean Church (www.lincolnberean.org) in Lincoln, NE, has started the discipleship process on a most personal level. “Bryan Clark,

our senior pastor, invited about 15 of the area’s leading businessmen to begin meeting monthly. These are top business owners and CEOs, not all of whom attend Lincoln, but people he knows,” says Brad Brestel, personal stewardship pastor. “He’s met with them over the last year. Not everyone is required to be a believer. No one had ever brought this group together before. Freeing their resources was not the goal, freeing them to follow Jesus was. He’s investing in their lives.”



BRAD BRESTEL

While Bryan has approached this smaller group, Brad continues to develop the rest of the ministry. “I am the stewardship pastor, but I am also an attorney with a finance background, and I meet with individuals about all kinds of things—legal issues, mortgage questions, debt consultations—it’s really across the board. Some business owners have come in and want to know what I charge to take a look at what they’re doing. I have probably had five to six couples, business owners, who have come to me and said, ‘I love running the business, but I don’t know how to manage resources. Will you help us?’ That’s been fun for me, because I become a strong influence toward God in their life. Because I’m on the church staff, I can base it on spiritual values and bring everything back to the spiritual reasons to give and save, and help them discover how much is enough for saving and for investing in their lifestyle. It’s good for us to wrestle through those questions together.”



Brad Brestel is the personal stewardship pastor at Lincoln Berean Church.

Brad has taken a different but equally effective approach to these individuals. “I haven’t put them all together in a room, but rather I’m reaching a lot of those business couples on a one-to-one basis. It may not seem efficient, but it’s effective. For people who want to grow in their understanding of giving, I want to go as deep as they want to go and truly make disciples. I’ve also found that they reproduce through their children



Volunteers offer information at the stewardship booth at Lincoln Berean.

and their friends. They think ‘Christianly’ about their business, their personal wealth, and their eventual wealth transfer. I could never have afforded to do that in business. Now, our people own my time and I can spend all the time they need on going deep with whatever the topic.”

In order to continue developing leaders who can effectively work with those seeking guidance in stewardship, Lincoln Berean has developed a Christian Leadership College. “We have three full-time students in our nine-month Christian education program. It’s designed for business people wanting to go into full-time ministry or who want to be a more effective witness in the marketplace,” says Brad. “We teach church history, doctrine, interpretation—it’s a Christian finishing school. I’m teaching a stewardship class—we’ve going over basic stewardship theology, questions about how Scripture deals with money and generosity, practical application in both financial and legal terms... well beyond what someone would get from just a financial review. We’re reading respect authors who have written commentaries on parables used in popular books, and we’re getting not only centuries of Orthodox Christian thought on these subjects, but we’re also seeing the contrast between agreed upon interpretation and the unusual interpretation found in some authors today. Getting these academic points of view leads to good theology, which ultimately has an affect on the application. Almost every stewardship pastor I know has come from

financial background, not a seminary program. I’m learning things I would never have known had I only read the recent books on stewardship. We have seminary-level discussions about the meaning of passages said to teach about giving.”

Eagle Brook Church in Hugo, MN (<http://www.eaglebrookchurch.com>) has developed its ministry to high-capacity givers by focusing on those who have generous hearts. “We decided to kick off a new campaign, which was for church renovation, paying down our debt and building another campus. We’re building up and building out,” says Ray Zaffke, stewardship pastor. “Before we rolled out anything, our executive pastor and our senior pastor had a lot of focus groups and invited individuals who were consistently giving and were growing in their giving. We also did vision casting dinners so we could ask for input from these people on what we should do. They asked what we should do. We didn’t just do it—we did it through people we know have generous hearts.”

“We have a structure designed by a team of people at the church. It’s kind of a bell curve of people. It starts with selfish—those that don’t understand—and ends with selfless to the point of sacrifice of something—the people who really get it. We are focusing on the meat of the bell. We are a seeker-sensitive church, so our weekend messages were to communicate it more as meeting needs in the world, where the mind and heart of God are, as opposed to the pull of the culture.”

The next layer down is to hit all of the church’s ministry areas—from small groups to early childhood classes—with five weeks of Five G Training. “Our five G’s are Gifts, Good Stewardship, Grace, Groups and Growth,” Ray says. “We make sure that through every ministry area value is built up and taught in a midsize group. If you are attending anything you get that build up, and you have a chance to talk as a group, so it’s not just hearing about it from the stage. We direct questions to people so they have a chance to discuss each value. Then the next layer down is a lot more organic—from conversations in the hall at church to discussions at home over the dinner table.”

“We talk about ‘raising the tide’ of our giving rather than capital campaigns,” says Neal Joseph, executive pastor at **Fellowship Bible Church** in Brentwood, TN (<http://www.fellowshippnashville.org>). “Last year we averaged 5.6 percent per family in giving, we’re now at 6.4 percent, and our goal for 2010 is 10 percent. We are trying to develop a vocabulary that keeps us all on the same page. It’s part of the terminology we used in a series called *Beyond Belief*. We are an expository teaching church, and a few years ago we spent 18 months in the book of John. We discovered together that the book of John is about ‘believing,’ so our theme for that series was



Fellowship Bible Church in Brentwood TN held a special 8-week topical series called *Beyond Belief* to further instill the theme “BELIEVE.”

‘BELIEVE.’ Then we followed it up with a special 8-week topical series entitled *Beyond Belief*. We don’t want to rest in our belief, but put what we believe into practice on an everyday basis. That was there the term “G3” came from. We want to live Globally, Generationally and Generously. Globally—we want to take the message to Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Generationally—we want to give to our generation and down to future generations. Generously—we want to be generous with our time, talent, treasure and Truth. G3 is the handle we use and everyone understands what we mean.”

A Lesson in Faith and Giving

Here’s the story of one family from Fellowship Bible Church who began to truly live out the “G3 lifestyle” in the area of their financial generosity:

During the Living Beyond Belief series, my husband and I were debating how we could increase our giving when we had so much school debt and credit card debt of our own. I had suggested an amount, but then my husband suggested that we could do more, though he didn’t specify how much more. On Sunday morning, I somewhat flippantly doubled the amount we had originally discussed and wrote a note saying that we would ‘raise the tide’ by giving an additional \$10,000 over the next three years. I told God that I trusted He could provide that money some way, somehow. I was willing to work extra Saturdays and do whatever it took in order to cover the amount. We thought surely over the course of the next three years we would be able to give that amount. I have to admit I was pretty nervous as to how God was going to do this.

Little did we know that we would be moving to Germany a year later and had to sell our house in Nashville. When we put the house on the market by owner, we thought, “Wouldn’t it be great if we could make ‘x-amount’ and put a huge chunk toward our personal debt while also giving part of it to Fellowship?”

Apparently God didn’t want to settle for part of it—He wanted the full amount.

We sold the house in three weeks... by owner. Amazingly, at the last minute, while we were waiting on the lady to bring the contract, which was already for more than we had hoped for, another man offered us even more than our asking price. We got into a bidding war, which is something that just doesn’t happen in our neighborhood.

What was crazy about the whole deal was that, because of the bidding war, we were able to walk away with the “x-amount” that we had hoped for plus an additional \$10,000—the exact amount we felt the Lord wanted us to give to Fellowship. We were able to give to the Lord and put the entire portion towards our personal debt. God is so faithful and good.

North Point Ministries in Alpharetta, Ga is building a second campus, and they've done so in an unusual way. "There is a tendency to focus on the real estate because we are building 3,000 seats of worship in a high-rise area on 2.3 acres of land," says David McDaniel, director of campus expansion. "We are leasing parking places around it that are empty on Sunday. It's a four-story building. We really don't want this to be about the building, we want this to be about people. At its most basic core, this represents empty seats, an empty life that doesn't have Jesus Christ. In our last fundraising talk, the set of the stage is an empty chair. People understand that it is not some big monolithic building they are giving to, which people can object to, but no one objects to the idea of creating empty seats that can be filled with people who need to know Jesus. We are engaging giving champions because this concept of creating empty chairs defuses conversations about whether we're doing the right thing.

"We also recognize that people have to have something to do—they will give or get involved in projects," David says. "We chose a mission trip. In our pastor's application during his Sunday message, he said, 'You can either go or you can give.' People who might not be able to go on a trip can tune out, so they need to have another application point. We had about 900 applications and have about 750 people placed for trips. The giving has been about \$200,000 not designated for an individual."

Strategies for Overcoming Obstacles

Understanding the gift of giving and calling it out in potentially high-capacity givers is not without challenges, but each can be overcome with thoughtful planning. "There is a dysfunctional relationship between the church and high-capacity givers," says Generous Giving's Todd Harper. "There is plenty of blame to go around. The wealthy bring their own stuff to the party. Generally, in terms of first-generation wealth, people are used to being in charge, and that's part of the dark side. Their giving can have strings attached. People who have created wealth particularly do not embrace people controlling them. From a financial standpoint, churches try to do that. It's paternalistic—'let me tell you what we've got, see how you can buy in.'"

Todd says that churches must realize that there are all kinds of ministries for the sake of ministry. "From single moms to the homeless, ministries are designed without any expectation of receiving anything back. High-capacity givers are never related to that way. We always want something from them. As humans we tend to forget that God is the provider. Instead we seek out who we can motivate and inspire to give money rather than trusting that God will provide. There is always a quid pro quo—a transactional relationship. I'm struck by the fact that we are anxious to activate people's spiritual gifts, but in giving, it's with an agenda. We need to instead think about developing a person's gifts for the sake of the person and for the kingdom, not for our own gain.

"This is a spiritual calling—being spiritual directors to the wealthy," says Todd. "At Generous Giving, we believe a pastor to this audience must have relational ability, be spiritually mature, be an influencer, be passionate about giving, be able to build trust and be a self-starter. We believe these are non-transferable qualities."

To effectively deal with the concept of giving, pastors have to examine their own practices. "In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul says, 'Follow me,' not 'Follow the example of Christ,'" Todd says. "We cannot take people where we are not going ourselves."

"This is a closet issue for some pastors. There was a study done relative to tithing, and many pastors don't," says Forrest. "They justify that their time counts as their money—there is lots of rationalization. Until they get through that, they can't be bold. It certainly won't come from a place of strength, and people can only lead out of their strengths, not weaknesses."

Don't underestimate the power of modeling living simply and giving generously. "Our church isn't populated with high-net worth givers, but more than 75 percent of our people give a minimum of a tithe," says Pat Murphy, director of development at **Antioch Community Church** in Waco, TX (<http://www.antiochcc.net>). "They got there by watching senior leadership, who modeled it not only in a simple lifestyle but also in real-life

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ANYTHING BACK.

surrender. They've lived this way, so when they talk about the subject of giving, it's powerful. Our generals are on the front lines."

From a Biblical perspective, Todd says, these people are profoundly needy and they are in a spiritually dangerous place. "We tend to think of them as having it all together, and that's a lie. We don't think about ministering to them and their children. It's very difficult to get to their hearts and liberate them from the pull of their resources."

Forrest agrees. "Remember that this is a conviction issue—this is turf warfare. This is the place the enemy knows well. Ours is the most materialistic, affluent culture in history. The

enemy knows that. Pastors have to deal with turf warfare, but they first have to understand it."

PASTORS HAVE TO DEAL WITH TURF WARFARE, BUT THEY FIRST HAVE TO UNDERSTAND IT.

From the perspective of a giver, Larry says that it is a spiritual issue, not an economic issue, so it's a spiritual journey. "In terms of what's it like in local

church, there is a sense of loneliness. In a small group, I found that my issues were different, and I was reluctant to share. There was a man in my group who was unemployed, and he made a beeline for me, which I understood, but there was no giving back to me. Here he was looking for a job, and my big issue is, how much money do I leave my children? That would sound so arrogant. We ended up dropping out of the small group."

Todd reaffirms the sense of isolation in the local church. "That is a recurring theme with people across the country. Wealth isolates, because the more money you get, the more money people want. Layer on top of that the concept of being generous, and you isolate even more."

Mark says that Calvary had a culture of ignoring high-capacity givers, out of fear of perception of favoritism. "I remember coming back from a conference about five years ago, and I felt the principle of 'to whom much is giving, much is required' wasn't being taught at our church. Also, I remembered Paul's word, 'I have not hesitated to give the whole counsel of God.' There was a

sense that we were failing to give them the whole counsel of God. We had to do something in this area. We had three people in prison ministry, three people in halfway house ministry... we've disproportionately gone the other direction. We need to remember that it is ours to give the whole counsel of God."

For Bruce, the concept of creating a ministry to high-capacity givers comes out of his personal experience. "I was in commercial real estate for 10 years, and by age 30 God had put me in a financial position that exceeded all my expectations for that point in my life. Wealth had the potential of becoming a life-or-death issue in terms of following Jesus Christ with my life. God broke through with his words, 'If I gave you all this, don't you think I have to say something about it?' I think about the story of the rich young ruler. I wasn't him, but I could have been. For some reason by God's grace I was able to see Jesus for who he was and respond when he said, 'Come, follow me' he says.

The Results of Talking About Money

During the summer of 2006, the leadership of **Central Christian Church** in the Las Vegas area (<http://www.centralchristian.com>), began examining where they thought God was leading, and they kept coming up with thoughts about kids. "We began our Caring for Kids year end offering campaign, which targeted three areas—the children's ministry at our church, local homeless children, and global issues in child trafficking," says Jason Frame, the church's director of stewardship. "We discovered that our children's ministry had grown over 100 percent in the last year. We also found that there were more than 4,000 homeless children in the Las Vegas valley. Due to the transient nature of the valley, children who move an average of every 90 days are considered homeless since they are generally living in temporary or weekly housing. These kids are fed at school, but often don't have much to



eat, if anything, on the weekends. We also discovered that Las Vegas is a major hub in child trafficking, where children are sold into prostitution and slavery throughout the United States.

High-capacity givers and major donors were the first point of contact for the campaign, although there was an outpouring of support from the community at large. “We challenged our church to feed many of these homeless children for a year. We partnered with another local ministry to fill bags with food for the homeless children. These bags are filled and delivered every Friday, and the children bring them back empty on



Central Christian Church collected over 15 tons of food for the homeless in Las Vegas.

Monday, and we fill them again,” Jason says. “The church responded both with money and with food, giving more than 15 tons of food. We set a goal to raise \$600,000 for the campaign, and we actually raised just under \$1 million for the entire campaign.”

“Project X” has been Eagle Brook’s annual Christmas project for the last few years. It’s promoted through the junior and senior high ministries to serve families at church and beyond that would not have a Christmas because they can’t afford to. “Our goal is to spend \$100 per person, and we get a list from the families. The kids actually do the shopping in small groups,” says Ray Zaffke. “We had so many families come forward that we needed more help, so the small group pastor sent out an email to the small group leaders, and within 24 hours, we were able to care for another 20 families. In fact, we took care of every family.

“The stories from that are incredible. Not only does it touch lives of people receiving, we want them to humbly thank God for that provision. It’s inspiring to see families and small groups come together and see what generosity does in their lives, and what it teaches their kids,” Ray says. “We had a mother, father and 12-year-old son come to Christ because of Project X. It was their first experience with Eagle Brook; in fact, they

hadn’t come to church before, but they came because of the church’s generosity.

Focusing on generosity certainly results in amazing stories, and each story ultimately includes a personal touch from the Lord. For Antioch’s Pat Murphy, the story took many years to develop, but clearly included God’s hand. “When I was 22 years old, I wrote down my goals, which included a ‘mountain home’ and a ‘home in the desert.’ Having experienced success in business, my wife and I purchased a second home in Colorado.”

The Murphys moved from their home in Kansas City to Waco, Texas, and joined the staff at Antioch after seeing the transformation their daughter had experienced through the ministry at Antioch. Simplifying their lifestyle, they sold the home in Colorado.

When their daughter left to live overseas for a year as a missionary, she talked about wanting to go to Colorado, so they called their former next-door neighbors and asked if they could rent their home for a week. They refused to let them rent it and instead offered it for free. When they returned home, they got an email saying, “We think this should be a yearly event.”

Months later, they went to Phoenix to visit some friends, who flew them out and sent them to the Grand Canyon. “We stayed in their guest home which is a very nice house itself.” While they were in Arizona, the couple invited them to use the house any time they liked.



Members of Eagle Brook generously sponsor needy families for Christmas.

On the way home, Pat's wife said, "Do you realize that God has given us a house in the mountains and a house in the desert?"

GOD CARES
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"God cares about the stuff we need, but he also cares about the stuff we want, and if we give him the opportunity, he will meet us in amazing ways."

For one woman at Redeemer in New York City, her story developed in unforeseeable directions. During the first vision campaign, she made a pledge that required her to give up trips to France for three years. She expected to do

something similar for last year's campaign, but God had something different in mind. "Dave Bisgrove preached a sermon on friendship with God. Through his sermon I realized that if I was so willing to spend on myself, I needed to be willing to spend more on God, to extend myself financially in order to share with this city that I love the incredible riches of church, a community and a saving faith that Christ has provided me. More than anything, I want to see New York become God's light on a hill for the world."

Somewhat apprehensively, she pledged a much higher amount to the campaign and she volunteered to host a Vision Group. Then a friend committed to spending two years in Uganda to do mission work and asked her to be part of the support team. "When it came time to decide what level of support, I again heard God telling me, more, more, more. Stretch," she says.

God wasn't done. The piece de resistance was a soft voice saying, "Adopt a child from Africa." "When God asks you to do something, he doesn't ask small. Each sermon of the vision campaign,

and its emphasis on the Gospel, served to challenge me to do something bigger. In January 2006, I filed the first of many documents to adopt a school-age child from Liberia. This was the biggest stretch, but in some ways, it's no longer a stretch at all. This child, whenever she arrives, will draw me in more deeply with Redeemer, which I didn't think was possible after 16 years, and with the city as I educate myself on the life of being a single adoptive parent in New York. Instead of resisting, I feel in sync with God's call, stretching for him, as he stretched for me, all the way from heaven to a cross on a hill."

Finding these willing hearts and giving champions is an important spiritual journey, one that affects individuals and ultimately the kingdom of God. "Psalm 121 asks us where our help comes from, and the way we answer that question gets to heart issues," says Leadership Network's Byron Van Kley. "The way people answer that question will tell you where their help, hope and trust come from, and it will tell you who they are. It's also a question that we are helping people sort out."

"I believe there are millions of Christians with the gift of giving, but that gift is latent," says Todd. "You have to relationally call out the gift of giving and invite people to think differently about what God has entrusted to them. We have been blessed to be a blessing, and you have to help them understand why it is that they have more than they need."

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Leadership Network’s mission is to identify, connect and help high-capacity Christian leaders multiply their impact.

** Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is taken from the NIV translation.*