



# Lead:

# Five Leadership Practices of a Generous Church



A generous church is not a large church or even a wealthy church. It is not a church that is found primarily in a suburb or city. A generous church has nothing to do with the age of the membership or of the organization. A generous church is 100% dependent upon how it is lead.

You have the power to lead your church's generosity journey. With that in mind, here are five practices you will want to prioritize as you lead.

## **1. Lead through a generous team.**

Change starts at the top. The senior pastor, staff, and church leadership set the culture of the church. What they prioritize will denote the change that actually occurs. If generosity is important to the team, it will find its way into weekly language and provide decision making filters regarding the calendar and funds. The pastor and team should be the most knowledgeable related to the biblical teachings on generosity, stewardship, and finances. Generosity must not be segmented to an emphasis or fundraising season. It must be a thread in the weekly operating culture.

## **2. Possess a clear and measurable vision.**

The vision for the church must be actionable for every ministry and member. Church vision can fail when it defaults to a restated Bible verse, is too spiritually lofty, or is so general that anything qualifies. Vision must hold the calendar, resources, and ministry accountable toward the same goal. It is best when vision has 90-day incremental benchmarks, a singular focused one-year goal, and a 3-5 year future target. It is critical for your church to see the immediate action, short-term success, future direction of the vision, and their role in making it happen.

## **3. Create a focused and aligned ministry strategy.**

If the tithe is considered holy to the Lord when it is received, it is also holy when it is spent. The church simply cannot fund ministries, programs, missions, or even staff positions that are not in line with the vision. It is so easy for the church to simply redistribute the previous year's expenses with slight adjustments into the future. However, each ministry must be evaluated critically. If a ministry has had a better past than future, then the tough call needs to happen. If a staff member is a great person but in the wrong place, then the best decision for both the individual and church needs to be made. In the same way, because an event is fun and well received does not mean it is producing measurable fruit toward God's vision for the church. It is ok not to do everything and cut expenses that do not help achieve your strategic ministry goals. Learn to let go and focus your resources towards God's specific calling.

## **4. Budget future spending based on 90% of the previous year's undesignated receipts.**

It is very typical for a church to increase its budget every year 3-10%. This often happens due to a lack of a clarified vision and a process that makes it difficult to actually reduce expenses. However, increasing the expenses every year over the amount of current receipts leads to embracing financial pressure and spending all potential margin. Churches need to invest their resources into the specific areas based on the priorities demanded by the vision of the church. This means individual ministries cannot have independent visions, and not every ministry is "priority one" every year. However, every ministry is a "priority one" ministry when it comes to supporting the church-wide direction.

Also, if churches continually raise expenses, then the church is not planning to have any available resources for emergencies, surprise opportunities, or major capital expenses in the future. It takes years to prepare for major expenses. If you are not preparing in advance, then you are preparing for a season of pressurized fundraising or for a limited future.

Finally, church leaders should budget with confidence that God is going to open a door for ministry in the future that is not currently seen. He has big plans and is just waiting for His people to get ready to act. These big plans could be a local disaster, a foreign mission opportunity, or even a capital expansion. Of course, buildings need to be maintained, air conditioners break, and technology becomes outdated quickly. The church needs to always be positioned to say "yes" when God speaks. It also must present the gospel to the highest of standards of operation. A building in disrepair and a technology platform that limits is not desirable. Plan for big expenses and opportunities.

## **5. Resource overflow is a result of a comprehensive plan.**

More often than not a church should experience an overflow of resources at the end of a budget year. Sometimes unforeseen catastrophes or crises can occur that are out of a leader's control. However, most financial results are fully within the grasp of a leader. It can be easy for a church to be either extremely discouraged by a lack of committed givers, or overconfident in its previous resource accumulation. It is also not unusual for a few families to give a significant percentage of the church budget, thus deceiving the leadership that they are possessing a generous culture. These realities, along with many others, combine to keep church leaders from organizing a comprehensive generosity system that is cultural to their organization. The Generosity Cycle enables you to gather all your financial decisions and activities and unify them with a language and supportive systems that create a holistic, comprehensive, and generous culture.

Create the plan, stick to the plan, and watch your team rally around the success.