

The apostle Paul charged his spiritual protégé, Timothy, as follows:

"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." • 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Why did Paul give this advice regarding the wealthy to his young student? It wasn't because Timothy was running a capital campaign and needed large gifts. It wasn't because he had a shortfall in the operating budget and needed to close it before the end of the year. We are given the compelling, somewhat surprising answer in the very last phrase of the passage: "so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life."

## In other words, Paul wanted something for them, not from them.

It's been said that the gift of giving is the least exercised spiritual muscle in the Body of Christ. There are high-capacity givers in your church just waiting to be asked to practice radical generosity toward your church's vision. The main reason they have not done so is because no one has asked!

Be assured, some para-church ministry or community organization (with whom they have far less emotional and spiritual connection) is ready and eager to ask and will likely receive a major gift from them. It happens all the time.

So, what's the problem? Given the above, why don't more pastors pursue a ministry of discipling their high-capacity givers? Our experience suggests that it comes from lack of knowledge, fear of the process, or both. Pastors don't want to be accused of showing favoritism to someone because of their wealth.

It doesn't have to be this way!

There are actionable steps that pastors can take to intentionally disciple high-capacity givers in their congregations. The two basic steps to begin the process are personal preparation and creating a discipleship pathway for their growth in the "grace of giving".

## **Personal Preparation**



**Identify High-Capacity Givers** | Existing and historical giving patterns are useful, but you should also understand their various passions for past ministry. Where have they previously stepped forward with significant gifts? Look around! Where do they work, live, and play? Who are their close friends? Identifying your high-capacity givers is more of an art than a science.



**Check Your Motives** | In pursuing this ministry, you must take on the posture of wanting something FOR them, rather than something FROM them. Your primary purpose needs to be their spiritual development, not procuring a big gift for your next campaign.



**Avoid Extremes** | Pastoral attitudes toward challenging high-capacity givers typically fall to one of two extremes: a tendency to ignore them due to reluctance or fear of getting involved, or a tendency to overuse them, taking their generosity for granted. You want to avoid both extremes. Your goal should be to disciple them with the same attitude you would someone with a gift of any other type.

## **Personal Preparation (Continued)**



**Get To Know Them** | It's important to really get to know congregation members without any agenda. Visit their businesses, join them in recreation, engage with them socially. In this regard, it is your personal relationship that will truly matter the most.



**Be a Good Steward of Past Gifts** | You should lead with "thank you" for past generosity, rather than asks for future gifts. Show genuine appreciation for their past generosity. Demonstrate the return on their investments by sharing ministry impact using stories of changed lives.

## Discipleship Pathway

Once you have accomplished your personal preparation, you are positioned to create a discipleship pathway for high-capacity givers. This is where the rubber meets the road.

This discipleship pathway for high-capacity givers should be the same pathway that is used to disciple all other believers. It should simply be carefully adapted to those who have the gift of extravagant generosity.

Here are some of the elements of developing a discipleship pathway for givers:



**Biblical Teaching & Study** | Provide regular opportunities to engage them in in-depth study of the Bible, including small group discussions. Topics should be carefully selected and taught by those who would be respected by this audience.



**Service & Outreach** | Encourage use of their gifts and talents to serve others, both within the church and in the broader community. Financial commitment follows personal involvement. Money follows mission...get them involved!



**Mentorship & Accountability** | Pair these believers with other mature Christians who are also high-capacity givers. Doing so develops mentors who provide guidance, encouragement, and accountability in their faith journey. To borrow a cliché, "generosity is as much caught as taught".



**Create Learning Opportunities** | Schedule and promote continuing education classes with content targeted to this audience. Topics should focus on issues that may be very relevant to them (i.e. finding significance, leaving a legacy, etc.), but should be taught within a biblical framework of total life stewardship.

By incorporating these elements into a discipleship ministry for high-capacity givers, your church can provide a comprehensive framework for believers to grow in their relationship with Christ and become faithful and fruitful disciples.

Pastor, will you accept Paul's challenge regarding those with material wealth that are in your care? Will you lead them on a discipleship journey "so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life"? They will be eternally grateful that you did.



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