



October 27, 2023

Dear Epworth,

We are grateful to continue in meaningful and Spirit-led ministry here at Epworth.

So much has happened in the world and in our hearts over the last 3 years. We hardly feel like the same people. Yet, the call of God on our lives is as relevant and poignant as ever. And the church emerges changed, but unwavering in our call to be used by God for the transformation of hearts, lives, and communities.

This season's Sermon Series is focused on reframing our understanding of life from OWNERSHIP to STEWARDSHIP.

Ownership is synonymous with control and a desire to master our own destiny and destination. Control usually brings us face to face with our true limitations (and what we do not control). And this ushers us into fear and doubt. Everything about the last years has caused us to examine what we really do control. We have and are still fighting our fears.

Stewardship starts with gratitude and acknowledgement of what is beyond our control and bigger than our individual purpose. We let go of fear, doubt, and control to step into the joy of being held by God and holding parts of God's bigger purpose. As such our lives open into meaning beyond what we control and resources that multiply beyond what we can produce.



Thank you God for the gift of life that is beyond my control. Give me the courage to shepherd what you place in my open hands with a sense of reverence to You, responsibility to Your purpose for us on earth, and awe that You God are using me!

During this fall season at Epworth we focus on what we can promise for 2024 in terms of tithes and offerings. What is God calling me to give? Epworth leadership believes that tithing – giving 10% of your annual income – is a Biblical framework intended to push us to risk in our generosity and to continue to care for our individual needs. If you have not ever given 10% of your annual income, we encourage you to take the leap in faith. Some do this all at once. 'I trust you Lord, help my unbelief.' Others step towards 10% as they shave off wants from the basic needs for their family. However you arrive the biblical standard of tithing, this is a first

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step into the audacious generosity we are created to join. As Kevin White says, in his book Audacious Generosity, we step towards freeing the power of God in us!

God is generous and lives in us. As such, we each have a God given desire to live generous and meaningful lives. And so we often try to will ourselves into fearless generosity and the joy of giving with a cheerful heart. But an understanding of the stewardship of God's gifts truly precedes an ability to live generously. God must always come first. And God frees us into true generosity and deep stewardship.

The Biblical foundations of generosity and joy all start with a profound acknowledgement that the earth is the Lord's and everything in it! EVERYTHING STARTS WITH GOD AND BELONGS TO GOD. Sin and death interrupt God's order – but all that is good is a gift from God's hand. And even the things marred by sin and death can be used by God when given to God in love. Stewardship is the profound and simple choice to steward what God has placed in our hands. And the heart of a steward is about far more than how we manage our money. It is about allowing our relationship with God to reframe how we steward the use of our bodies, minds, relationships, profession, education, service, time, and money. It is truly a perspective shift!

Our focus on the book of Joshua helps us to see how God's big moves in our lives, often begin with a call to consecrate ourselves for the next phase. Joshua and the people of Israel were to consecrate themselves before they crossed the Jordan river into the long-awaited promised land. In this season, as you contemplate meaning, challenge, and gratitude we invite you to set yourself and your resources apart so that God might use them. Use the sermon series and bible study resources to reflect on the God given purpose for your life.

Our consecration Sunday is planned for November 19. In each of the three services you will be invited to complete a promise card and bring it to the altar as an act of worship. Cards can be put in the offering plate any Sunday prior. Cards will be available starting Sunday November 5, 2023. The purpose of this season is to reflect and ready ourselves for the next season God has for us.

The high level finance team will use these promises to build a budget for the 2024 year. Your promises matter to God, to kingdom work, and to the next steps at Epworth. Only Epworth's financial secretary Nancy Laing, Epworth's Lead Pastor Rev. Jen Fenner, and Epworth's finance lead Amy Brown see the specific financial promises made. The rest of the team works with total numbers.

By the grace of God we are alive and called. The community called Epworth has purpose and reach. Together we ask - What has God walked us through? What do we have to offer to God? What is God inviting from us and from Epworth in this next season?

We are grateful to walk with you and God. Thank you for being a part of this with us!

Rev. Jen Fenner, Rev. Tammi Brantley, Christina Castillo, Amy Brown, Amy Robinson, Derek Harps

Epworth's High Level Finance Team