



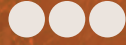
theathering

OPEN

COMPANION GUIDE



The
future
is
NOW



There are moments in our life when we face a choice: will we continue doing what we've always done or will we take a step toward a new future? This is one of those moments. Will you be open to what lies ahead?

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.” Matthew 7:7-8



There is one characteristic that separates people who learn and grow from those who do not. Do you want to know what it is?

OPENNESS

A willingness to listen, to be disrupted, and to make space for new things. Before we can grow, we must be open.

The same thing is true of a church. Every significant season of growth at The Gathering has started with being open to the possibility that God isn't done with us yet. I believe that the greatest chapters of our church will be written over the next few years. We are in a critical time. While so many are waiting on things to return to normal, we believe God is calling us to act. People need the church right now. They need connection, encouragement, and hope right now. God doesn't want the church to hunker down or just try to survive in seasons like this. God wants the church to meet the moment, rise to the occasion, and to be open to the possibility that the best parts of our future are starting right now.

This book contains a vision for what I believe God wants for The Gathering over the next two years. It is a bold vision, one that isn't satisfied with the status quo, but is open to risk, disruption, newness. But before God can do something new with our church, we have to be open to God doing something new with us. So this book is also about a vision for you. I hope you will join me for this adventure. Whether you are new to The Gathering, or have been around for a long time, I am asking just one thing from you. Be open.

PEACE+
REV. MATT MIOFSKY

OPEN



THE FUTURE IS NOW

is a two year initiative to fund the vision and mission of The Gathering. This book is your companion guide to this initiative. Inside these pages you will find:

A CELEBRATION of who we are and what God is doing in our midst

A VISION for where God is calling us next

AN INVITATION to participate in God's story through giving

All that's required of you is a willingness to be OPEN. Are you ready?

Search for "Gathering STL" in any major app store. Download the app and click the OPEN button to:

Be inspired. Capture your thoughts. Join the conversation. Include your family.

Follow the icons to enhance your experience:



Listen to Media Item



Engage with your Kids



Join the Conversation



Study and Reflect



OUR VISION

To create a **Christian community** that is compelling for new generations of people.

We are a Christ-centered, biblically-rooted, welcoming and inclusive community.

Places our OPENNESS has taken us so far include:

**Multiple
Services and
Sites**

**Open
Communion**

**Weekly
CoreGroups**

**LGBTQ+
Ministry**

**Safe Water in
Mozambique**



**Women in
Leadership**

**International
Online Ministry**

**The Literacy
Project**



**Student and
College Ministry**

IMPACT TOGETHER 2006-2021

THE
PEOPLE
ARE THE
CHURCH





**172 Safe Water wells in Mozambique
serving over 600,000 people**

**400+ children in local public schools
mentored through The Literacy Project**

**Scotland, Australia, Mexico- people are
now connecting from all over the world!**

**Dozens of women, minorities, and
LGBTQ+ people in leadership**

**Over 5,000 people worshipping
weekly in person and online**

**98% of revenue funded
by weekly offering**

**Over 1,000 people growing spiritually in
CoreGroups each week**

**6,000+ Gathering app users engage with
worship, prayer, groups and more**

**Over \$1 million has been invested in
local missions and charitable causes**

OPEN TO BELONGING



"During our six-day drive across the country, moving from San Francisco to Saint Louis, my husband and I made a commitment to continue to grow our faith together as a couple, and we decided to look for a church where we could feel accepted for who we are. When we walked into The Gathering, we immediately felt so welcomed. The sermon seemed to be sending a message directly to us. During this first visit, I remember meeting one of the pastors who asked me about ME. I shared my background as a Christian singer in Brazil, and she told me that she was a missionary in Mozambique, where the primary language is Portuguese. Immediately we started speaking in Portuguese -- another signal that I was welcome as I am! The people and the Pastors made me feel as if I had been a part of their church family for a long time. From that point forward, we have not looked back and The Gathering remains our church. Pastor Matt Miofsky performed our wedding and a few days later he introduced me to Ryan Hebel, sharing my passion for singing. The Gathering has given me the opportunity to connect with music again while serving God and my church. Since that time, my soul feels so grateful and confident. Even when I feel limited, singing fills me as I deliver the message of God through my gift. Because of The Gathering, I know that God loves me exactly how I am. I love having The Gathering as my family in God." -- **Sergio Marques**



See Sergio use his gifts
here at The Gathering



WHEN WAS THE GATHERING OPEN FOR YOU?



WHERE WE'RE HEADED



“Be open to listening; be open to growing; be open to changing your mind; be open to disruption. Most of all, be open to where God might be calling you in your faith, not later on, but right now.”

- Pastor Matt Miofsky

We believe God is
calling The Gathering
to be **OPEN** to

NEW GENERATIONS

INVITATION

INNOVATION

TRANSFORMATION

Hear the vision
for **OPEN**





At a time when young people are turning away from church in large numbers, The Gathering is experiencing a resurgence of young people who are seeking spiritual guidance and the support of a community. We want to be a church that is intentionally investing in the next generation.

We are open to relentlessly pursuing our vision of reaching NEW GENERATIONS by making a direct investment in new ministries for young adults. This looks like...

- New ministry opportunities that speak to and support young adults ages 18-30 as they navigate an ever-changing and complex world
- A non-traditional site shaped by young adults that introduces new generations of people to Christ

NEW GENERATIONS

INVITATION

The Gathering is often the starting point or the last hope for people who are looking for answers to life's deepest questions. Whether you are new to church, were hurt by the church, or have been searching for a long time, we want to open doors and remove barriers (no asterisks!).



We are open to persistent INVITATION that results in a revitalization of church throughout the St. Louis region and beyond. This looks like...

- A new site that expands our reach in St. Louis
- A growing network of inclusive churches across the country that receive resources, content, training and support from The Gathering
- Increased accessibility for people with disabilities and a kids ministry that honors neurodiversity

Since its inception, The Gathering has been a church that is both traditionally rooted and innovatively practiced. We want to be on the forefront of new and creative ways to spread an inclusive message of hope in Jesus throughout the world.

We are open to INNOVATION unlocking new and meaningful ways to engage in worship, connection, and spiritual growth beyond Sunday. This looks like...

- The creative use of technology to help you find the perfect CoreGroup, grow in your relationship with Jesus, and put your faith into action 7 days-a-week
- Fun and engaging online programming that supports parents in guiding the faith development of their kids



TRANSFORMATION

Over the past fifteen years, a distinguishing mark of The Gathering is our genuinely welcoming and caring culture. Thousands of people have found a deep sense of community and connection through CoreGroups. We want to build on the strength of our community and find new ways to support people's physical, mental, and spiritual health. You're done struggling alone.

We are open to the TRANSFORMATION that happens when we care for, support, and serve others. This looks like...

- A wellness ministry that provides healing, support, and community for individuals struggling with mental health, experiencing life transitions, or dealing with loss
- Committing \$1 million to missions and outreach while also offering more opportunities for you to serve others



What Will It Take?

We are about to embark on the most ambitious journey of generosity that The Gathering has ever considered. We do this during a time when so many people need to experience the hope and transformative power of Christ. In order to accomplish this bold vision it will take gifts totalling **\$9 million** over the next two years.

Ongoing Ministry and Operations: \$5.5m

general funds the church needs for facilities, personnel, ministry, worship, etc.

Missions and Outreach: \$1m

safe water in Mozambique, The Literacy Project, and NEW investments in missions and serving opportunities that will yield a significant impact

New Generations, Invitation, Innovation, Transformation: \$1.5m

fund new and creative approaches to ministry, including a non-traditional site for young people, programs and spaces for disabled and neurodiverse groups, tools for daily faith development, engaging content for kids and parents, and a wellness ministry for so many who need help and healing

Reduction of Debt: \$1m

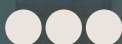
continue to responsibly pay down associated debt which has already been cut by more than 50% in four years (\$10m to \$4.8m)

One Fund To Fuel Ministry

Together we've built buildings to welcome new people.
Brought safe water to hundreds of thousands in Mozambique.
Developed new ministries for those the church left behind.
Created a community that leans on one another in good times and bad.

This has all been possible because of those who believe that The Gathering should be a church in motion, a church that has real impact in your life and the lives of others. Together, we are all on ONE mission – inviting people to become deeply committed followers of Christ. Everything we do is part of God's ongoing story and everyone can participate through the practice of giving.

Over the next two years, we are directing all of our giving into ONE single fund that will fuel the mission and vision of The Gathering. This ONE fund will serve as a catalyst for all that we do together as we open our hearts to the good work God is shaping through this church community.



TAKE A MINUTE

Look back over pages 11-16. What speaks to you? What excites you? What challenges you?

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OPEN TO BECOMING



"In January of 2020, I relocated from Mississippi to St. Louis to start over after a traumatic divorce and being laid off from Mississippi State University. In the days and weeks following my move I had a series of injuries and illnesses that plagued me for more than a year. During this time, I cried out to God, asking why I was placed in St. Louis? With the answer still unclear, on April 1, 2021, I started this radical thing. I began jumping rope and uploading the videos to social media as a form of accountability. Initially, I could barely do 25 jumps because COVID wreaked havoc on my body, but over time I got better and made it to approximately 550 jumps a day! People commented on my posts that I was challenging them to GET UP. Connections Pastor Dave Merrill reached out to me and said, "I see you jumping and it is inspiring. I think you have gifts that can be used in online worship!" Little did he know that in March when I was battling COVID, I had written a journal entry asking God to show me a new way to serve at The Gathering that would help me find my voice and discern if I should pursue a career in ministry. Initially, I was shocked, nervous, and baffled that someone I had never met saw me and my potential because I felt like I didn't have much to offer. However, serving as a host has restored my confidence, taught me to own my voice, and provided a community in which I feel I belong. I sense God doing a new thing in my life, shaping me as I BECOME a woman in ministry to others. I offer you a word of encouragement - be open to trying something different, even if it makes you feel uncomfortable. Who knows where it will lead!"

-- **Brittany Radford**



See Brittany use her gifts
here at The Gathering



**HOW HAVE YOU BECOME MORE OPEN TO GOD
DOING NEW THINGS IN YOUR LIFE?**

I STAND AT THE DOOR



I stand by the door.

I neither go too far in, nor stay too far out.

The door is the most important door in the world -
It is the door through which [people] walk when they find God.

There is no use my going way inside and staying there,
When so many are still outside and they, as much as I,

Crave to know where the door is.

And all that so many ever find

Is only the wall where the door ought to be.

They creep along the wall like blind [people],

With outstretched, groping hands,

Feeling for a door, knowing there must be a door,

Yet they never find it.

So I stand by the door.




The most tremendous thing in the world
Is for [someone] to find that door - the door to God.
The most important thing that any [person] can do
Is to take hold of one of those blind, groping hands
And put it on the latch - the latch that only clicks
And opens to the [person's] own touch.

[People] die outside the door, as starving beggars die
On cold nights in cruel cities in the dead of winter.
Die for want of what is within their grasp.
They live on the other side of it - live because they have not found it.

Nothing else matters compared to helping them find it,
And open it, and walk in, and find Him.
So I stand by the door.

Go in great saints; go all the way in -
Go way down into the cavernous cellars,
And way up into the spacious attics.
It is a vast, roomy house, this house where God is.
Go into the deepest of hidden casements,
Of withdrawal, of silence, of sainthood.
Some must inhabit those inner rooms
And know the depths and heights of God,
And call outside to the rest of us how wonderful it is.
Sometimes I take a deeper look in.
Sometimes venture in a little further,
But my place seems closer to the opening.
So I stand by the door.

There is another reason why I stand there.
Some people get part way in and become afraid
Lest God and the zeal of His house devour them;
For God is so very great and asks all of us.
And these people feel a cosmic claustrophobia
And want to get out. 'Let me out!' they cry.
And the people way inside only terrify them more.
Somebody must be by the door to tell them that they are spoiled.
For the old life, they have seen too much:
One taste of God and nothing but God will do any more.
Somebody must be watching for the frightened
Who seek to sneak out just where they came in,
To tell them how much better it is inside.
The people too far in do not see how near these are
To leaving - preoccupied with the wonder of it all.
Somebody must watch for those who have entered the door
But would like to run away. So for them too,
I stand by the door.



I admire the people who go way in.
But I wish they would not forget how it was
Before they got in. Then they would be able to help
The people who have not yet even found the door.
Or the people who want to run away again from God.
You can go in too deeply and stay too long
And forget the people outside the door.
As for me, I shall take my old accustomed place,
Near enough to God to hear Him and know He is there,
But not so far from [people] as not to hear them,
And remember they are there too.

Where? Outside the door -
Thousands of them. Millions of them.
But - more important for me -
One of them, two of them, ten of them.
Whose hands I am intended to put on the latch.
So I shall stand by the door and wait
For those who seek it.

I had rather be a door-keeper
So I stand by the door.

-- Sam Shoemaker



HOW WE PARTICIPATE



We believe God has a vision for The Gathering that will have a significant impact on the lives of people and will allow us to reach generations to come. This requires us to be OPEN to the ministry God is preparing for us. This may mean leaving behind comforts and fears so that we can step into the future. But we deeply believe that this future is full of possibility and hope.

How You Can Participate In

OPEN

ATTEND weekly worship, whether in-person or online. Make it a priority to listen to all the messages in the OPEN series, even if you can't make it to worship.

PRAY for our church, our community, our world. Be open to the work God is doing in our midst. Ask God to reveal your role in supporting this vision for the future.

REFLECT on your personal relationship with God using the daily scriptures and prompts contained in the following pages.

LEARN with your CoreGroup each week. Be open to the ways God is speaking to you through the weekly material and through the stories of others. If you're not in a CoreGroup, visit www.gatheringnow.org/coregroups to find a group that's right for you.

MAKE TIME to review your finances. How does giving fit into your life? Consider making one specific change that will allow you to take a step toward greater generosity.

OPEN TO BELIEVING



"A little over fifteen years ago a pastor named Matt Miofsky shared with me a vision for a new church that would reach new generations of people in St. Louis. As I listened to this vision, I knew it was something that I wanted to be a part of. The church didn't even have a name yet, but I believed in the vision so much that at the end of our conversation I decided to make a financial gift to help get it started. I couldn't have imagined at the time the impact that gift would have, not only on others, but on me and my faith. It's been exciting to see that gift multiply over and over, thousands of times. The blessings that I have seen take place through The Gathering, and in my own life, are overwhelming to think about. When I made that initial decision to support The Gathering, I didn't realize at the time God was using that decision to transform me. I thought I was just helping a young pastor I believed in. But saying yes to that moment of generosity opened up a doorway to a new journey in my life. I learned the truth of the verse that says, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be." Because of The Gathering, my relationship with God has deepened in ways I could never have imagined. God has taken me on quite a journey over the last fifteen years that has included trips to Mozambique, helping launch new sites of The Gathering, and now worshipping online from my new home in Philadelphia. I am grateful for The Gathering and for the ways God used a simple act of generosity as a vehicle for doing new and significant things in my life." -- **Mark Miller**

Watch Mark's story



YOUR OPEN STORY

Think about a time when you've been open to God doing something new in your life. Reflect on what happened as a result of your openness.

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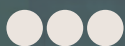


“And let us consider each other carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds. Don’t stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near.”
Hebrews 10:24-25

The background is a solid orange color. It features several large, faint, light-orange geometric patterns. In the top left, there is a large 'Z' shape made of parallel lines. In the middle left, there is a square-like pattern with internal lines. In the bottom left, there is a circular pattern with concentric lines. The text is centered in the upper half of the page.

Weekly Messages & CoreGroup Guides

ABOUT THIS STUDY GUIDE



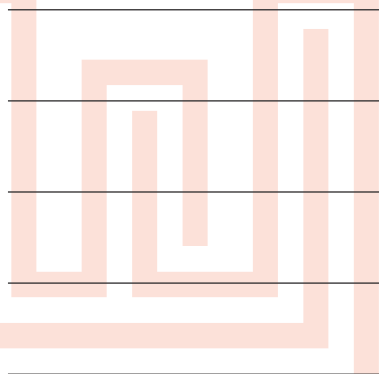
OPEN is ultimately a discipleship journey. The following pages are designed to be your companion throughout the OPEN Initiative. How we show up in worship (in-person or online), the messages we hear, and our time together in CoreGroups will be rooted in our openness to God doing something new in our life.

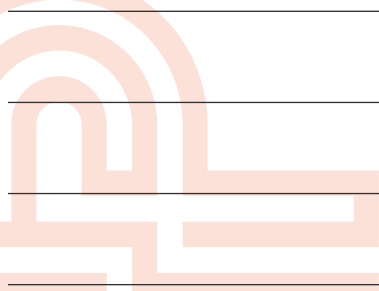
If you aren't in a CoreGroup, now is a great time to take that step. You can find a CoreGroup on The Gathering App or by visiting www.gatheringnow.org/coregroups. Even if you don't join a CoreGroup, please follow along each week. Listen to the sermon, study the scriptures, and set aside time for daily reflection. God can do amazing things when together, as a church, we are OPEN.

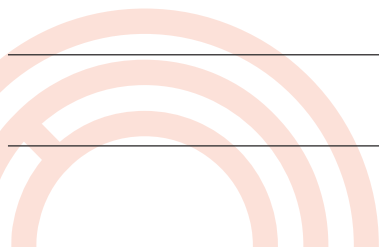
WEEK 1: HARD HEARTS VS. OPEN HEARTS

This week we will consider what a hard heart looks like and contrast that with an open heart. We will consider the state of our own heart, and begin to think about how we can cultivate a greater openness to God's calling on our lives.

Sermon Notes:









WEEK 1 READING PLAN

Monday - Exodus 5

Think of a time when following God's direction made things worse before they got better. How did you continue to trust God in that situation?

Tuesday - Exodus 6:1-7:13

What insecurities hold you back from doing the things God has called you to do?

Wednesday - Exodus 7:14-8

Why do you think we often resort to stubbornness in the face of our mistakes? Have you seen this pattern play out in your life?

Thursday - Exodus 9:1-10:29

The situation in Egypt had to become dire before Pharaoh changed his heart. What is one practice that will help you cultivate an open heart to God?

Friday - Exodus 11:1-29


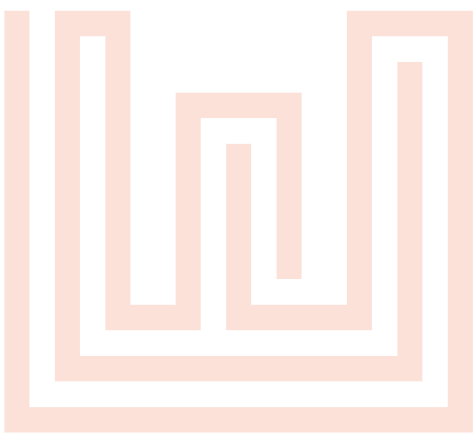
God always offers us opportunities to repent of our hard heart. Today, ask God for forgiveness for areas where you have been stubborn and unwilling to let God in.



COREGROUP STUDY:

Scripture Study: Exodus 5:1-11:29

The most famous example of a hard heart in the Bible is Pharaoh in the Old Testament story of the Exodus. Moses had been called by God to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. The only problem, Pharaoh refused to let them go. This story wrestles with questions about the nature of evil, and ultimately presents a cautionary tale of the disastrous consequences of a human heart that is closed off to God.



Taking it Further:

Ever wondered why the Bible says “God hardened Pharaoh’s heart”? Scan the code to find out.



COREGROUP QUESTIONS

In the end of this story, the Israelites are freed from slavery in Egypt. God accomplished God's purposes despite Pharaoh's stubbornness. What does this tell you about God's character?

What images or descriptions come to mind when you think of a hard heart? How do these differ from how you imagine an open heart?

What areas of your life feel locked in? Set in stone? If God were to call you to something new, how would you feel? Would you be more open in some areas than others?

In my **RELATIONSHIPS**

With my **FAMILY**

In my **WORK**

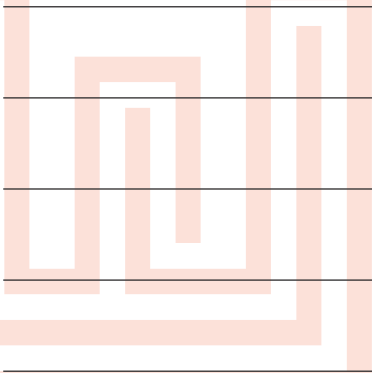
With my **RESOURCES**

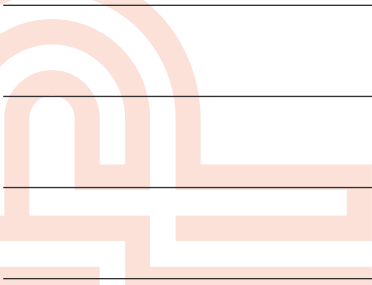


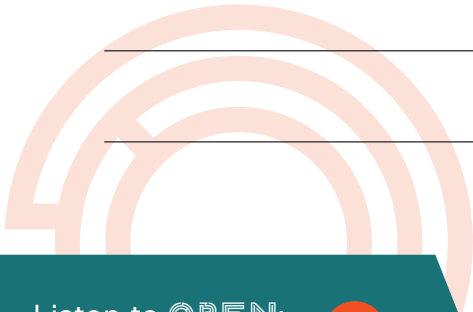
WEEK 2: OPEN TO GENEROSITY

Do you feel like you're rich? Did you know that most of us living in the United States are among the top 20% wealthiest people in the world? What we do with the resources we have been given plays a key role in remaining open to God.

Sermon Notes:









WEEK 2 READING PLAN

Monday - Mark 10:17-27

Why do you think the rich young man was so disappointed by Jesus' answer to his question? Do you relate to his feelings?

Tuesday - Mark 10:28-31

The promise of our ranking systems being reversed is a challenging one. Where in your life can you choose sacrifice over striving to be first?

Wednesday - Luke 19:1-10

What about Zacchaeus' excitement to see Jesus sticks out to you?

Thursday - 1 Timothy 6:17-19

What do you think it looks like to place your hope in God instead of material possessions?

Friday - Matthew 6:19-21

Where does your heart stand with the things of this world? With the things of God?

COREGROUP STUDY:

Scripture Study: Mark 10:17-27, Luke 19:1-10

Jesus has much to say about money and possessions, but two of his interactions with rich men stand out. The unnamed rich young man and the tax collector Zacchaeus offer us valuable lessons through their contrasting relationships with wealth.

Taking it Further:

Scan the code to experiment with the global income calculator and see how your wealth compares with the rest of the world. Talk about your findings with someone close to you.



COREGROUP QUESTIONS

When Jesus interacts with the rich young ruler and Zaccheaus, the focus is on how these men treat their money. Why do you think this carries so much weight?

Do you think of yourself as rich or do you think of yourself as someone just trying to get by financially? How do you think this view impacts the decisions you make with your money?

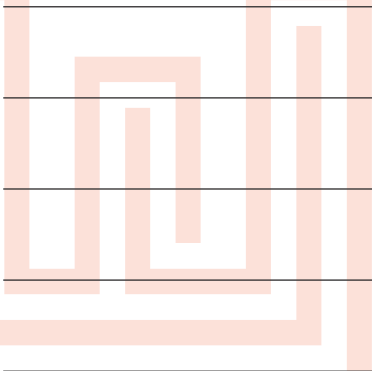
What steps can you take to loosen your grip on the money you have? How can you put yourself in a position to be open and respond to God's call to generosity?

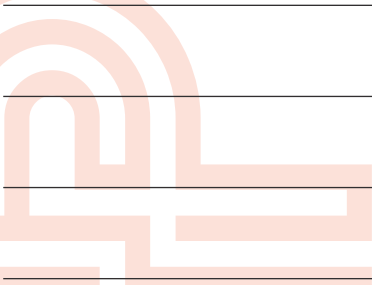


WEEK 3: OPEN TO GROWTH

At the end of the day, none of us want to be known for our stinginess. Generosity is a virtue, and while we can appreciate the power of it, making it a significant part of our lives is challenging.

Sermon Notes:









WEEK 3 READING PLAN

Monday - Luke 8:1-15

Jesus' parable of the soils can be viewed as a story about being open to God. If God is trying to plant new seeds in you today, how would you describe the soil of your heart?

Tuesday - 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

In these verses, Paul is writing to the church in Corinth about a collection for the poor. What strikes you about the examples of generosity Paul shares?

Wednesday - 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

How would you describe your level of trust in the provision of God that is promised to us?

Thursday - Mark 12:41-44

Do you ever feel like what you have to give is too small to matter? How has that impacted your generosity in the past?

Friday - John 15:1-8


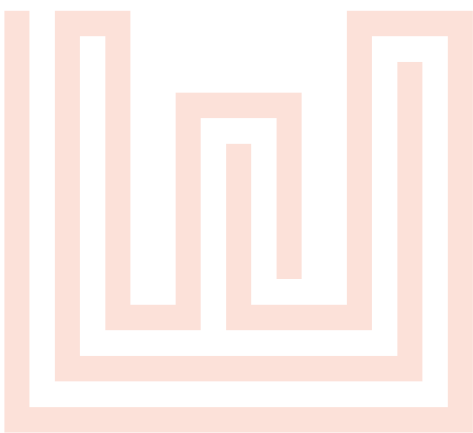
No matter how hard we try, we cannot produce fruit without God. Today, express your commitment to God and open yourself up to the things God wants to do in and through your life.



COREGROUP STUDY:

Scripture Study: 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

The problem with generosity in church is that the focus has often been placed on the church. For example, the church needs you to give so they can keep the lights on. Throughout scripture, though, God presents generosity as an essential part of growth and flourishing for each of us. No matter where you start on this journey of generosity, God is inviting you to trust, surrender, and follow Jesus' example of sacrifice.



Taking it Further:

Spend some time reflecting on the “Journey of Generosity Pathway” on Page 59. Where are you on your generosity journey? What would it take for you to move to the next step on the path?

COREGROUP QUESTIONS

Let’s go verse by verse this week...

Verse 6

Paul uses the image of seeds and harvest here. Can you think of a time when you have seen a seed planted and over time it grew into something new?

Verse 7

What pressures do you feel when you are making financial decisions? Do you feel anxiety around current demands on your money? Insecurity from comparing yourself to other? Fear of not having enough?

Verse 8

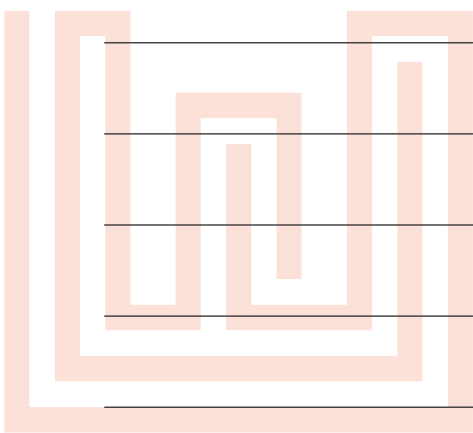
What steps can you take to strengthen your trust in God’s provision?




WEEK 4: OPEN HEARTS OPEN DOORS

When we give, God changes us, but our gifts are also used to impact others. When we open ourselves up to generosity, the church is able to invite new people to experience the love of God. When we do this together, the power of our gifts is multiplied exponentially.

Sermon Notes:







WEEK 4 READING PLAN

Monday - 1 Chronicles 29:10-15

Read this passage slowly two or three times. What words or phrases stand out to you?

Tuesday - Nehemiah 10:35-37

What would it look like for you to give the first and best of what you have to God?

Wednesday - Matthew 5:17-20

Jesus tells us that the Old Testament law takes on new meaning in light of his teachings. What pieces of Old Testament teachings about giving do you find helpful?

Thursday - Luke 6:38

What do you think the portion we receive in return for giving looks like?

Friday - Acts 2:42-47


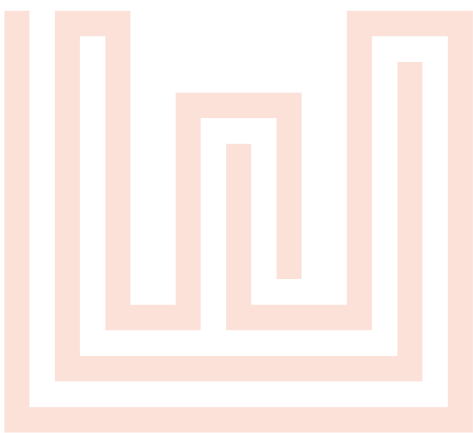
This picture of the early church is often held up as the ideal for what the church should look like. What excites you about this picture?



COREGROUP STUDY:

Scripture Study: 1 Chronicles 29:10-15

The Old Testament principle of the tithe has been a stumbling block to many Jesus followers trying to figure out what generosity looks like in their life. This week we will attempt to set aside the confusing rules from the Bible, and instead look at the spirit of the Law and the effects of communal generosity.



Taking it Further:

Have you ever paid close attention to how you use your God-given gifts? Take a few minutes to review where you spent your money in the past month. Did anything surprise you? Are there ways in which you'd like to be more intentional?

COREGROUP QUESTIONS

Most of us would agree with King David's declaration that everything we have comes from God. Do you think the way you handle your money is evidence of this belief?

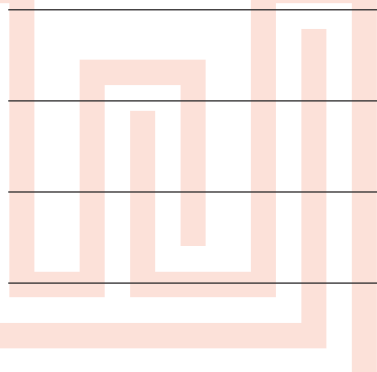
How can you shift your view of money and possessions from being something you earned for yourself to being a gift from God? Are there practical steps you can take?

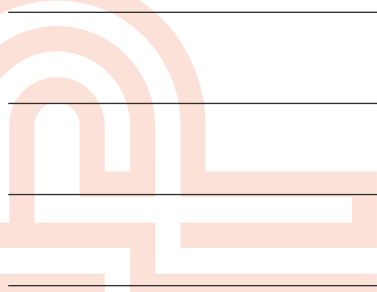
This blessing from King David comes as the Israelites are raising funds to build the temple in Jerusalem. This is a task they could only accomplish together as a community. What about the vision presented for The Gathering's future excites you?

WEEK 4: OPEN TO YES

Do you ever feel like you are waiting for God to do something big in your life? Things are stale or boring or you're stuck in a rut. We could spend the rest of our lives waiting, but this week is an opportunity to get into the action. Listen for what God is calling you to and say yes.

Sermon Notes:









WEEK 5 READING PLAN

Monday - Genesis 12:1-4

What is God asking you to do? Will you say yes?

Tuesday - Joshua 1:7-10

What is God asking you to do? Will you say yes?

Wednesday - Esther 4:12-17

What is God asking you to do? Will you say yes?

Thursday - Matthew 4:18-22

What is God asking you to do? Will you say yes?

Friday - Acts 9:1-19

What is God asking you to do? Will you say yes?



COREGROUP STUDY:

Scripture Study: Genesis 12:1-4

One of the most famous characters in the Bible is Abraham. He is known for many things, but his obedience to God stands out. God asked a lot of Abraham, but by saying yes, Abraham opened himself up to bringing more blessing into the world than he could have ever imagined.



Taking it Further:

A huge part of saying yes is first learning to say no. In order for us to create margin in our lives to say yes, it's important to review where we are overextended or feel stuck. What spending, habit, or use of time are you prepared to say no to in order to be open to saying yes to God?

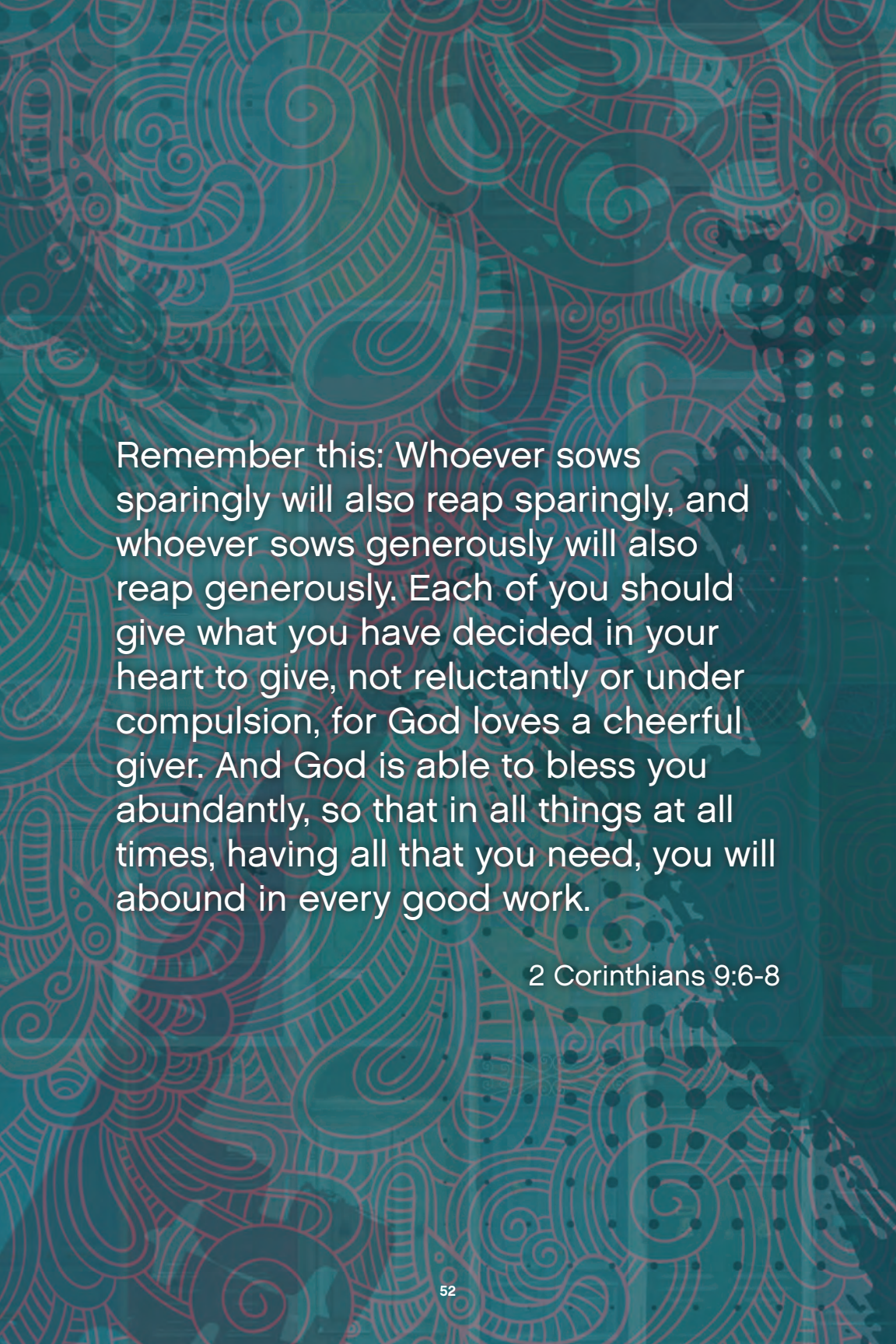
COREGROUP QUESTIONS

God tells Abraham he will receive blessings in order to bless other people. What feelings do you think Abraham experienced when God gave him this responsibility?

Throughout these last 5 weeks, how have you become more open to God?

Are you considering things today you would have said no to at the beginning of this journey?

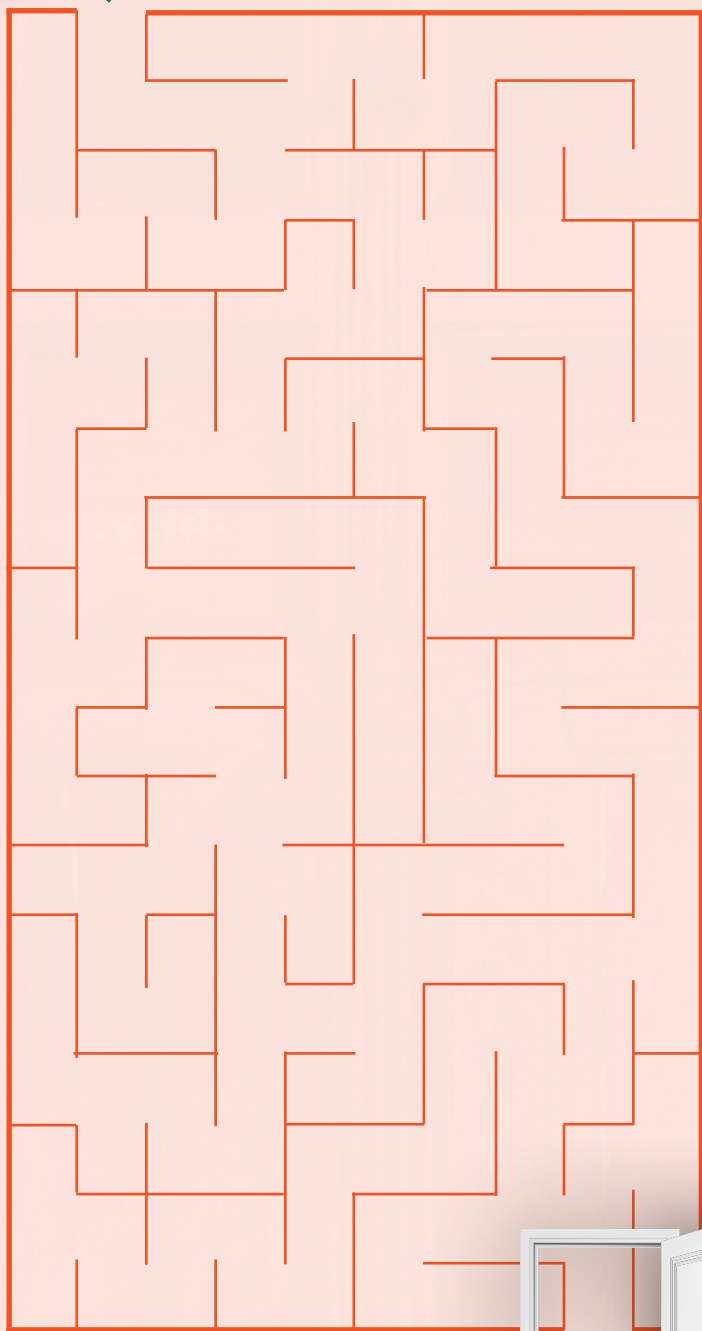
Name your yes. Share some of your hopes for how God will use this yes.



Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

Bonus Section



Family Table Topics

What needs do you see in the world that make you want to do something for others?

What's the best gift you've given someone else?
What made it the best?

How much stuff is enough? How will you know when you have enough?

Imagine a scenario when giving is fun. What does that look like to you?





**Every good
gift, every
perfect gift,
comes from
above.**

James 1:17

A SIMPLE WAY TO PUT GIVING INTO PRACTICE.



Label three mason jars: Save, Spend, Give. Get creative with decorating your jars. With your allowance or spare change, decide on a percentage or amount to put in each jar. When the “Give” jar is full, decide where, or to whom, you will give away the money you’ve collected. Consider setting a personal goal. For example, maybe you want to give away to others as much as you spend on yourself?





TOOLS AND RESOURCES



Our primary goal through OPEN is that 100% of people at The Gathering will engage in this initiative and experience a life-changing encounter with God. We want to encourage each other to take a step forward in giving. We don't just want to learn about generosity, we want to act. Allow the following pages to guide you as you prayerfully consider your commitment to OPEN.

OPEN TO A JOURNEY OF GENEROSITY

The spiritual discipline of giving is a journey. All journeys begin somewhere. Where are you in your giving journey? Where would you like to be and what is the next step in the path to getting you there? Check the box that represents the step you are taking in your journey.

☐

BEGINNING GIVER

I am deciding to give for the first time, trusting God and the church with my gift

☐

CONSISTENT GIVER

I am making giving a regular practice, giving an offering at least once a month.

☐

INTENTIONAL GIVER

I have decided to give a percentage of my income to the church and have signed up online to schedule a regular, recurring gift.

☐

TRANSFORMATIVE GIVER

I am continually making choices about my lifestyle that enable me to give more generously to my church.

☐

LIFETIME GIVER

I am setting a lifetime giving goal that requires me to ask God not “how much should I give?”, but rather “how much am I supposed to keep?”.

PRAYER FOR TRUST

God, you are the Great Provider. Scripture says you encouraged the rich young ruler to sell his possessions and give it away to the poor in order to follow you, but he didn't trust you, and he turned away from you because he loved his things more than your people. Lord, teach us to trust you with our money and our things. May we trust that you will meet our needs and take care of us, so that we can give freely and joyfully and reflect your ultimate generosity.

AMEN

OPEN TO EVALUATING YOUR GENEROSITY

Best-selling author Joshua Becker offers up nine ways that generous people see the world differently:

- 1. They recognize the resource pie is not finite.
- 2. They know that generosity leads to greater happiness.
- 3. They find success in helping others succeed.
- 4. They believe changing even one life is worthwhile.
- 5. They trust others.
- 6. They dream big dreams for their money.
- 7. They see more resources to give than money.
- 8. They fully embrace the reality that life is short.
- 9. They are content to live with less.

The Gathering is full of generous people who are using their gifts to impact others. But every so often, it’s helpful to pause and take stock of how we are using our treasure and talents. Below is a short form to help you do just that.

HOW MUCH MONEY I MAKE ANNUALLY THROUGH ALL SOURCES OF INCOME	
HOW MUCH I GAVE AWAY TO INDIVIDUALS AND CHARITABLE CAUSES OVER THE PAST YEAR	
THREE WAYS I USED MY TIME AND TALENTS TO HELP INDIVIDUALS OR ORGANIZATIONS OVER THE PAST YEAR	

SELF-CHALLENGE

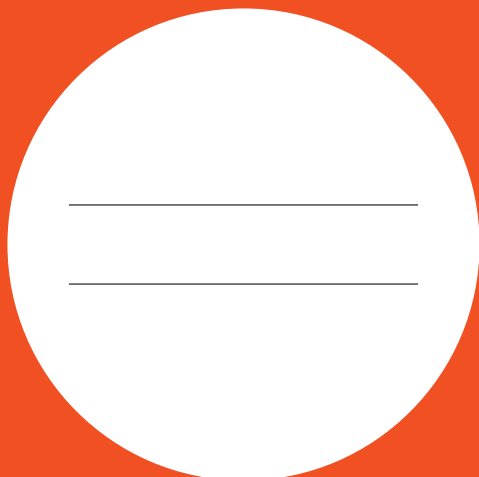
A few things I will do this year to be a more generous person:



A large white circle containing two horizontal lines for writing.



A large white circle containing two horizontal lines for writing.



A large white circle containing two horizontal lines for writing.

**MY TWO-YEAR GENEROSITY
COMMITMENT TO**



Use this formula to calculate your commitment. Your commitment includes contributions to special giving opportunities such as Easter and Christmas Eve.

\$ _____

What I normally give
IN A YEAR

+\$ _____

My additional ANNUAL
generosity commitment
to OPEN

=\$ _____ x 2 years = \$ _____

STORED RESOURCES GIFT +\$ _____

= MY TWO-YEAR GENEROSITY COMMITMENT TO OPEN:

\$ _____

NAME _____

EMAIL _____

PHONE _____

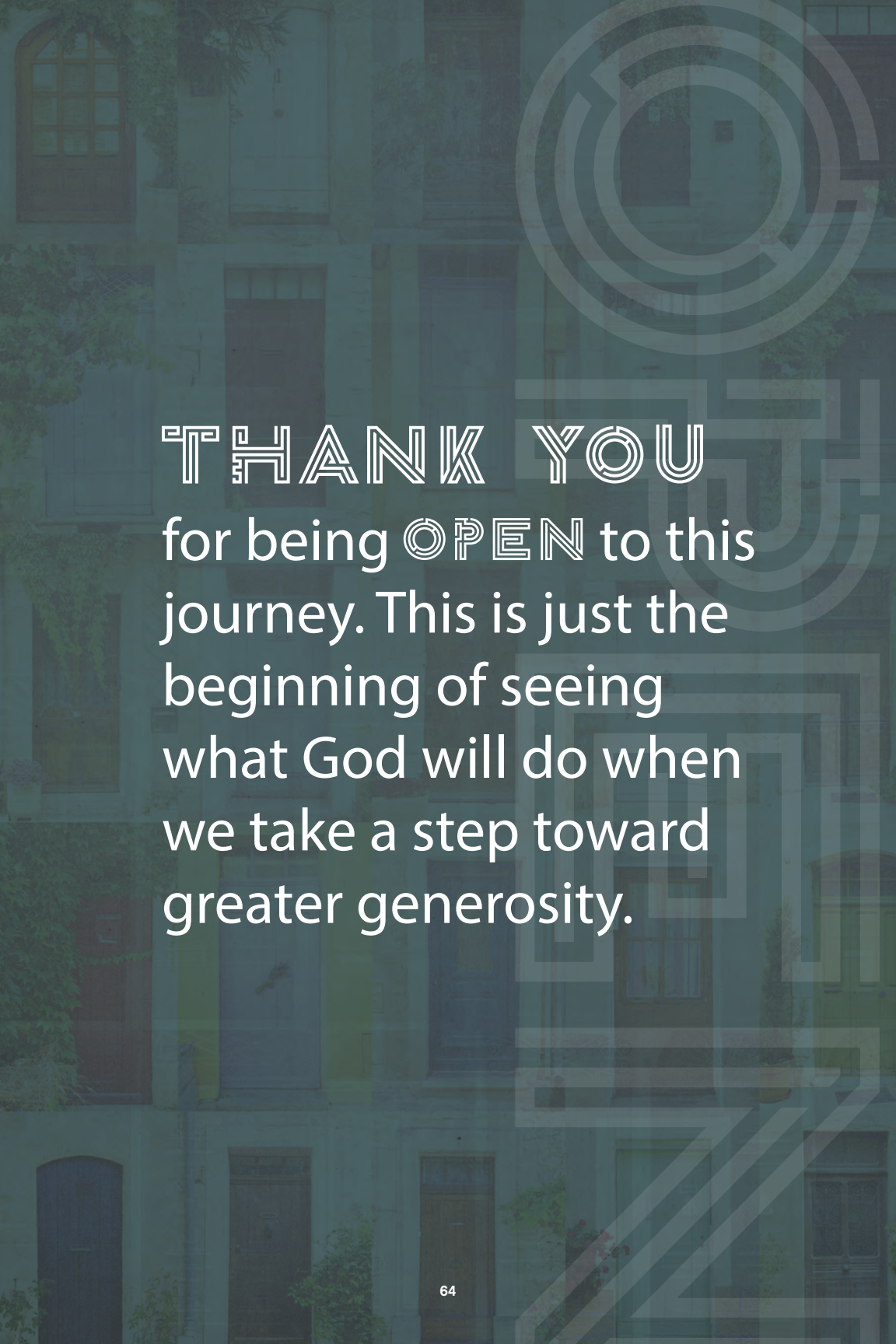
ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____



921 Edgar Rd | St. Louis, MO 63119

The background of the page is a photograph of a row of houses with various colored doors (blue, green, red). Overlaid on this is a large, semi-transparent geometric pattern consisting of concentric circles and lines, resembling a stylized maze or a complex architectural design. The text is centered and reads:

THANK YOU
for being OPEN to this
journey. This is just the
beginning of seeing
what God will do when
we take a step toward
greater generosity.

FAQs

WHAT SHOULD I INCLUDE IN MY COMMITMENT?

As you consider your financial commitment over the next two years you will want to factor in the following: (1) what you typically give on a weekly basis, (2) your faithful increase over what you typically give, (3) any special offerings you plan to give, such as Easter and Christmas Eve, and (4) any stored resources.

WHAT ARE “STORED RESOURCES”?

Stored resources are the funds or assets you have other than income. For example, you may have savings, stocks, bonds, or other investments that you decide to give to the church. You may have a boat, a vacation home, or a collection that you let go of. What would your life look like if you let go of some of the “stuff” you’ve been holding on to?

WHAT IF I AM CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING FINANCIAL STRESS OR HARDSHIP?

If you are currently struggling with unemployment, or if you are carrying the heavy burden of substantial debt, we are here for you. The Gathering offers Financial Peace University, a 9-week class that helps you develop a plan for taking control of your finances. If you are in need of care, we have trained care ministers and pastors who can meet with you to discuss your current situation. As you work to overcome financial barriers to giving, consider that giving isn’t about what God wants *from* you; rather it’s about what God wants *for* you. OPEN is fundamentally about a heart change -- one that is only accomplished by surrendering our lives completely over to God -- and that looks different for all of us.

WHAT ARE THE AVENUES THROUGH WHICH I CAN GIVE?

There are several ways you can give. We encourage you to set up an automatic payment through your bank's online bill paying service. You can also make a gift by visiting our website at gatheringnow.org/give or by texting an amount to 314-207-3587. Of course, you can always give by cash or check at one of our weekend worship services, or by mailing your check to: P.O. Box 435010, St. Louis, MO 63143. If you would like to give a gift of stock or securities please contact our Executive Director of Operations, Dave Dietrich at dave.dietrich@gatheringnow.org or 314-968-5189.

I GIVE TO OTHER CHARITIES. WHY SHOULD I DIRECT MY GIVING TO THE CHURCH?

As followers of Jesus, God calls us to give first to the Church for the work of the body of Christ. At The Gathering, we know firsthand that the church changes people -- we regularly hear those stories of transformation. Giving directly to specific causes can help people in need; however, those causes were started by people whose lives were transformed. When you give to The Gathering, you are investing in a new generation of people who will transform our world.

WHAT IF I AM NEW AROUND HERE?

We hope you'll find the vision for The Gathering something you want to be a part of. We believe that the local church is one of the most compelling missions to give towards, and we would really love for you to make The Gathering your home and join us in OPEN. If you are ready for it, this is a perfect time for you to put a stake in the ground and make this your church. YOU are the future of The Gathering!



“He who began a good work in
you will carry it on to completion
until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 1:6



the**gathering**

BELONG.
BECOME.
BELIEVE.

   [gatheringnow.org](https://www.gatheringnow.org)