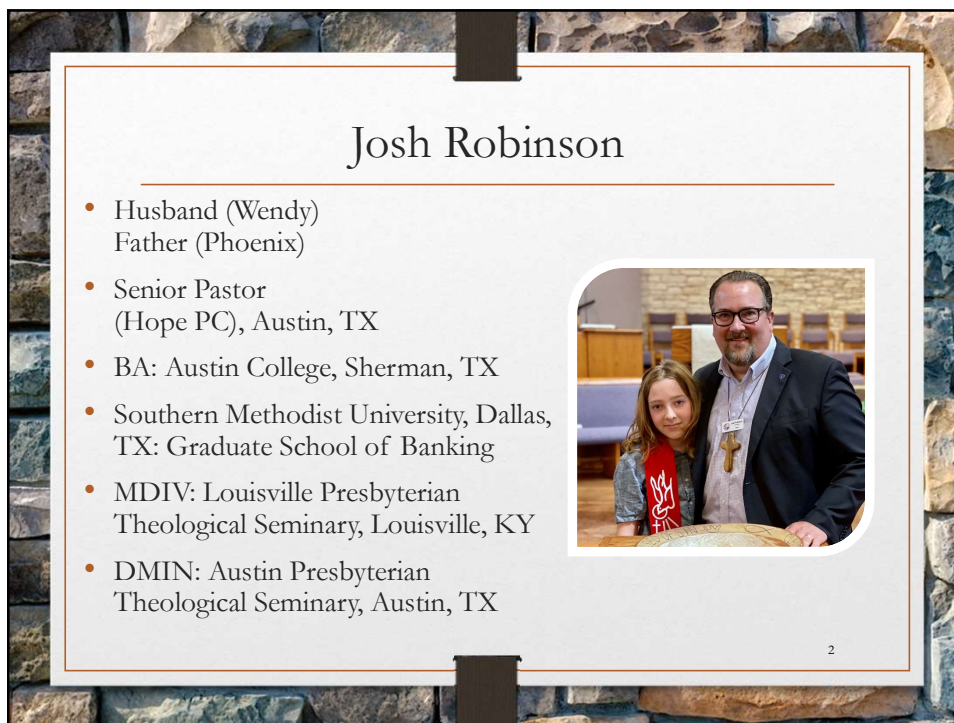


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**Starter Questions**

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- When is your stewardship season, and how long does it last?
- What's the best part of what you do in your program?



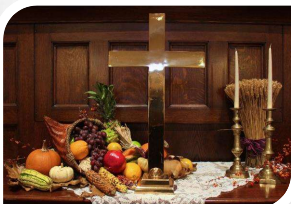
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3

**Starter Questions**

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- What's the biggest challenge?
- If you had a magic wand and could do one thing different, what would it be?





4

4

*PC(USA) Book of Order*

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- W-5.0103: The disciplines of stewardship and self-offering are a grateful response to God's love for the world and self-giving in Jesus Christ. As Christians, we are called to lives of simplicity, generosity, hospitality, compassion, and care for creation. Tithing is a primary practice of Christian stewardship and self-offering. We are accountable to God for how we use our material goods, spiritual gifts, and time in God's service.



5

5

*PC(USA) Book of Order*

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- G-3.0106 (Administration of Mission) The funding of mission similarly demonstrates the unity and interdependence of the church. The failure of any part of the church to participate in the stewardship of the mission of the whole church diminishes that unity and interdependence.



6

6

## PC(USA) *Book of Order*

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- *Session Responsibility: G-3.0201*  
(Composition and Responsibilities) *c.*  
*nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ.* This responsibility shall include ...encouraging the graces of generosity and faithful stewardship of personal and financial resources; managing the physical property of the congregation for the furtherance of its mission; ...leading the congregation in participating in the mission of the whole church; ...



7

7

## Speaking the Same Language

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- **TITHE:** a financial response set aside as holy unto God alone. The traditional, commonly defined biblical understanding of what a "tithe" indicates is 10% of gross income given for the glory of God. Just as 1/7 of our time (*keep the Sabbath*) is to be allocated in worship and service to God, 1/10 of our gross income is to be used for these purposes as well.

8

8

## Speaking the Same Language

- *Old Testament:* In the Old Testament there is no explicit "Thus saith the Lord, 'Thou shalt tithe!'" Scholars believe there was a commonly understood resource that educated the people of God about returning tithe to God.
  - Genesis 14:20; Genesis 28:19-22; Leviticus 27:30-32; Numbers 18:25-26; II Chronicles 31:4-6; Nehemiah 10:30-37; Malachi 3:7-8; Malachi 3:10 (Direction to bring the full tithe (1/10) to the house of God.)



9

9

## Speaking the Same Language

- *New Testament:* There is nothing in the New Testament that changes the understanding of returning a "tithe" unto God alone.
  - Matthew 23:23 – Jesus affirms a tithe ought to be done and place the pursuit of justice and mercy as more weighty.
  - I Corinthians 9:13-14 – God makes provisions for sustaining the ministry of those who work in the church.
  - I Corinthians 16:1-2 – Signifies a definite, predetermined act.
  - II Corinthians 8:14 – Giving equally means all giving the same proportion, and in at this point in the Old or New Testament, the only defined proportion has been a tithe.
  - Hebrews 7:5-6 – A reference to Genesis 14, and a theological reference connecting a "tithe" to Jesus Christ.



10

10

## Speaking the Same Language

- FIRST FRUITS:** This is a biblical reference to tithing, which means returning the first of our income, gross / before taxes.
 





11

11

## Speaking the Same Language

- PROPORTIONAL GIVING:** This is a non-biblical term meaning to set aside a proportion of income if not a full *tithe*, 10%.
  - For example, a person who is growing in discipleship toward a tithe, may contribute 5% of gross income this year and 6% of gross income next year.

| Annual Income | 2.5%    | 5%       | 7.5%     | 10%      |
|---------------|---------|----------|----------|----------|
| \$10,000      | \$250   | \$500    | \$750    | \$1,000  |
| \$20,000      | \$500   | \$1,000  | \$1,500  | \$2,000  |
| \$30,000      | \$750   | \$1,500  | \$2,250  | \$3,000  |
| \$40,000      | \$1,000 | \$2,000  | \$3,000  | \$4,000  |
| \$50,000      | \$1,250 | \$2,500  | \$3,750  | \$5,000  |
| \$60,000      | \$1,500 | \$3,000  | \$4,500  | \$6,000  |
| \$70,000      | \$1,750 | \$3,500  | \$5,250  | \$7,000  |
| \$80,000      | \$2,000 | \$4,000  | \$6,000  | \$8,000  |
| \$90,000      | \$2,250 | \$4,500  | \$6,750  | \$9,000  |
| \$100,000     | \$2,500 | \$5,000  | \$7,500  | \$10,000 |
| \$125,000     | \$3,125 | \$6,250  | \$9,375  | \$12,500 |
| \$150,000     | \$3,750 | \$7,500  | \$11,250 | \$15,000 |
| \$175,000     | \$4,375 | \$8,750  | \$13,125 | \$17,500 |
| \$200,000     | \$5,000 | \$10,000 | \$15,000 | \$20,000 |
| \$250,000     | \$6,250 | \$12,500 | \$18,750 | \$25,000 |

12

12

## Speaking the Same Language

- PLEDGING:** *Tithing* and *Pledging* are sometimes confused. If a person submits a pledge card with an amount that is 5% of gross income, then they have *pledged* a proportional amount. They are not *tithing*. Conversely, if a person submits a pledge card with an amount that is 10% of gross income, then they have *pledged* a full tithe. They are *tithing*.



| Annual Income | 2.9%    | 9%       | 7.5%     | 10%      |
|---------------|---------|----------|----------|----------|
| \$10,000      | \$290   | \$900    | \$750    | \$1,000  |
| \$20,000      | \$580   | \$1,800  | \$1,500  | \$2,000  |
| \$30,000      | \$870   | \$2,700  | \$2,250  | \$3,000  |
| \$40,000      | \$1,160 | \$3,600  | \$3,000  | \$4,000  |
| \$50,000      | \$1,450 | \$4,500  | \$3,750  | \$5,000  |
| \$60,000      | \$1,740 | \$5,400  | \$4,500  | \$6,000  |
| \$70,000      | \$2,030 | \$6,300  | \$5,250  | \$7,000  |
| \$80,000      | \$2,320 | \$7,200  | \$6,000  | \$8,000  |
| \$90,000      | \$2,610 | \$8,100  | \$6,750  | \$9,000  |
| \$100,000     | \$2,900 | \$9,000  | \$7,500  | \$10,000 |
| \$125,000     | \$3,625 | \$11,250 | \$9,375  | \$12,500 |
| \$150,000     | \$4,350 | \$13,500 | \$11,250 | \$15,000 |
| \$175,000     | \$5,075 | \$15,750 | \$13,125 | \$17,500 |
| \$200,000     | \$5,800 | \$18,000 | \$15,000 | \$20,000 |
| \$250,000     | \$7,250 | \$22,500 | \$18,750 | \$25,000 |

13

13

## Speaking the Same Language

- OFFERINGS:** gifts made above and beyond one's *tithe / pledge*. It may be a special gift for the youth mission trip, collection for a needy family, etc.
- DONOR:** any person financially contributing to the ministry of Jesus Christ in relationship with a local congregation.
  - While all members commit to support the church financially, for various circumstances, some do not.
  - We also have regular church attending person who are not members of the congregation who submit a pledge card or contribute financially.

14

14



15

## What's the Common Thread?

- Pledge Program (traditionally)
  - October or November
  - Agricultural words

bringing in the harvest  
first fruits  
cornucopias  
bushels of grain and vegetables  
sow / reap  
harvest




16



## What's the Common Thread?

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- The bible uses agricultural imagery all throughout, but then again it was written in an agriculturally based society.
- Our society was agriculturally based for many years, but that's not who many of us in this room are or ever have been.



17

17

## What's the Common Thread?

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- Urban areas — defined as densely developed residential, commercial and other nonresidential areas -- now account for 80.0 percent of the U.S. population.
- The states with the largest urban populations are:
  - California (37,259,490)
  - Texas (24,400,697)
  - Florida (19,714,806) <sup>1</sup>



18

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/urban-rural-populations.html>

18

“  
*For everything there is a season,  
and a time for  
every matter under heaven...*”

-Ecclesiastes 3:1

---

**Where Do We to Start?**

19

19

Where Do We to Start?

- **Stewardship (financial)** should be a...
  - *Transformative*
  - *Joy-Filled*
  - *Journey*





20

20

## Where Do We to Start?

- A *transformative* stewardship program is a journey that should cause us to be overwhelmed with joy and move us to pay homage to Christ.
- **Our Goal:** explore a new way to enact stewardship programs to embolden generous disciples.

21



21

## Embrace a Season of Epiphany

- **Matthew 2:1-12 (NRSV) - The Visit of the Wise Men**

2 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” <sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup> and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup> “And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.”

22

22

## Embrace a Season of Epiphany

- **Matthew 2:1-12 (NRSV) - The Visit of the Wise Men**

<sup>7</sup>Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." <sup>9</sup>When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw that the star had stopped, ***they were overwhelmed with joy.*** <sup>11</sup>On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and ***paid him homage.*** Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup>And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, ***they left for their own country by another road.***



23

23

## Embrace a Season of Epiphany

- We Three *Scientists*, not kings.  
Studied the night skies and set out in pursuit of what they believed was some sort of celestial occurrence that indicated the rise of a new king.
- Foreigners from a foreign land
- Not from Jewish faith



24

24

## Embrace a Season of Epiphany



- Not unusual or bazaar to see dignitaries from foreign lands travel to pay homage and offer gifts to a new king. Common practice.
- Herod wasn't interested in a new "king of the Jews."



25

25

## "...overwhelmed with joy"



- "...overwhelmed with joy."
  - Greek: "they exceedingly rejoiced with great joy."
- They were standing outside.
- They were overwhelmed with joy because their journey was over.
- They failed to comprehend the transformative encounter that was to happen on the other side of the door.




26

26

“...they knelt down and paid him homage.”

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- Instead of kneeling at a king’s throne, they kneeled before an impoverished, frail baby boy, lying in a manger, surrounded by the filth of animals.




27

27

“...they knelt down and paid him homage.”

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- Paying homage to the king:
  - *gold*, an extravagant treasure fit for the **celebration** of royalty;
  - *frankincense*, an aromatic gum resin used for **worship**;
  - *myrrh*, also a resin, used for embalming the deceased, perhaps foreshadowing the **sacrifice** this baby would endure in his adulthood.




28

28

“...they knelt down and paid him homage.”

---

- What is something we can learn from the Magi?
- **Radical generosity is the chief response of thanksgiving to God’s greatest gift to us in Jesus Christ.**



29

29

“... they left for their own country by another road.”

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- They could no longer be the same person.
- They could no longer keep doing the same things they’d always done before.
- The next journey of their lives was to be different in a wholly meaningful way.



30

30

“... they left for their own country by another road.”

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- This is the moment of **Epiphany**. The moment of being transformed from one state of believing into another because of Jesus Christ.




31

31

## A Moment of Epiphany

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- Their encounter with Christ was a...
  - *Transformative*
  - *Joy-Filled*
  - *Journey*
- How does this compare to our current stewardship programs?



32


32



## A Moment of Epiphany




- **In your own lives**, how has your experience with Christ been a...
  - *Transformative*
  - *Joy-Filled*
  - *Journey*



33

33


## Embrace a Season of Epiphany



- For me, I understand:
  - the power of being stunned by something so profound that words can't describe it (*transformative*).
  - what it means to be moved so deeply and so powerfully that all I could do was fall to my knees in wonder (*joy-filled*).
  - that the choices I make, the path I take, the next chapter of my life will not be the same (*journey*).

34


34

Embrace a Season of Epiphany 

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I understand  
**Epiphany.**

Epiphany makes  
theological  
sense to me.



35

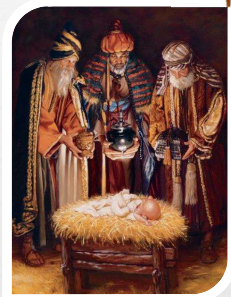
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Embrace a Season of Epiphany 

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Contextually speaking...

- Epiphany is *the* time of the year when many people are already thinking about who they want to be and do in the year to come.
  - New Year's Resolutions
  - *Auld Lang Syne*



36

36

## Embrace a Season of Epiphany

- What if we posed these questions to our congregations every January:
- ***Transformative.*** Who does God want us to be?
- ***Joy-filled.*** What will be our gifts of celebration (gold), worship (frankincense) and sacrifice (myrrh)?
- ***Journey.*** How will our lives be a generous response of gratitude as we continue our journey of faith?



37

37

## *Transformative Stewardship: A Joy-Filled Journey*

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### Thoughts, Questions & Answers

*Rev. Dr. Joshua S. Robinson*

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