

**Here For Good 3.0**  
***Here For Generosity***  
**Proverbs 11:11**

1. **Blessed to be a blessing.**

- *Malachi 3:10; James 1:17; Genesis 12:2-3; Luke 6:38; Galatians 6:9; 2 Corinthians 9:10-11, 8:13-14; Proverbs 30:8*

2. **Just to do Justice.**

- *Micah 6:8; Matthew 5:13-16*

3. **Impacted to make an impact.**

- *2 Corinthians 5:17; Mark 16:15; 2 Peter 3:9; Acts 2:42-47*

West Valley Church  
10/9/22  
Michael O'Neill

## Here For Good 3.0: Here For Generosity

West Valley Church is **Here For Good**. That means that we will be here on this corner in this community until Jesus returns. We're here for good. But we are also here *for* good; that means that, until Jesus comes back, West Valley Church is here to *do* good things in the name of Christ and for his Kingdom.

In this sermon series so far, we've learned that being **Here For Good** means, first of all, that we are **Here for Christ**. All that we have and all that we do is for Christ, for his purpose, his Kingdom, and his glory. That also means that we are **Here for Our Community**; that very clearly, the reason we are not in Heaven yet is because there are other people around us who *won't* be there if we don't introduce them to Jesus. Then we were reminded that we are **Here for Each Other**; that we are called to serve one another and build each other up in Christ. Then last week, Pastor Casey shared with us that part of what it means to be here for each other means we are a multi-generational church, and he shared some of the ways we do that here at West Valley Church. So if we combine all those sermons over the last four Sundays, it means this: if we are going to take our relationship in Christ seriously, we are going to *give* of ourselves for others. We are going to be *generous* with our love and with our lives. We are **Here for Generosity**.

God has called and ordained *this* church to make West Valley a better place. God's will is, that His people who gather at West Valley Church will be a blessing to the people around them.

That's why it has been so important at this point in our church's story, that we would *finally* deal with and address the debt and the desperately needed renovations to our facility.

We believe what we've begun is *vital* for the future of our church and our ability to be **Here For Good**. That's why it was so important for us to eliminate the \$1.1 million mortgage that we had been carrying for 20 years. Now I've said it many times before, but I'll say it again (and it won't be the last time!): in less than one year, during a pandemic and not worshiping in person for almost half the year, we were able to pay off the entire debt!! That was almost \$100,000 every year that was going to the bank, and now your Leadership Team is prayerfully investing those dollars in ways that we can reach our community with the Good News of God's love for them! They are prayerfully determining how to invest those dollars in ways that could introduce people to Jesus Christ, investing in our ministries inside and outside our church!

And, our ability to minister means we need to update the effectiveness of one of the main tools we have – our facility. Except for the café, the newest parts of our building are *twenty* years old, and the oldest parts – including this room – were built in the *1970s*! These spaces were made to meet the needs of people and a culture that lived almost fifty years ago. It's time for us to update these spaces to meet the needs of people *today*. We need to

be able to do our very best to welcome and minister to people who come through our doors every week looking for a church home and a place to worship God, and to make sure that children can learn and grow here in safety and security.

So today I want to make sure we understand that if we are here for Christ, for our community, and for each other, then it inevitably and logically and naturally follows that we will be generous people; we are **Here For Generosity**. We are being called to give sacrificially for **Here For Good**. The vision is not just for *us*; the vision is for those around us – for our community, and for the children and youth who are with us today and will be in the future. We looked at a verse before that I want to return to today: Proverbs 11:11 says that:

“Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted . . .” (Proverbs 11:11)

Another translation says, “A city becomes great when the righteous give it their blessing. . .” Let me translate that to where we live: “Through the blessing of West Valley Church, the community of West Valley will grow and flourish. . .” The point is that *wherever* God’s people are, He intends for them to be a blessing to those around them. Notice that it does *not* say, “Through the blessing of the righteous, the righteous will worship and learn and be a blessing to themselves.” As Christians we have a tendency to think that God and the church are here for ourselves, but remember we are here for Christ, for our community and for each other, giving of ourselves in generous ways. God enables and empowers us to live holy, Christ-like lives, so that by our presence and involvement where we live, we get to exalt and build up our city! Who do we bless? The city!

This statement from Proverbs was true of God’s intentions for His people in the Old Testament, it was true of His people in the New Testament, and it is still true of His people today. Our mission statement as a church is to:

***Introduce People to Jesus Christ,  
to Equip People with a Faith that Works,  
and to Live as People with Purpose.***

That verse from Proverbs fits our mission, doesn’t it? We must do whatever we can to accomplish that, because that is the mission we get from the Bible for the people of the Kingdom of God. Many of you are committed to that mission and pray for that mission in this church every day. Your Leadership Team, which is your church board, is made up of leaders who plan and pray and steward that mission. And as we carry out that mission, our church will be a blessing to this city and to the world. It’s already happening! And we’ve come to the place in our mission that we must all come together and participate in the incredible opportunity and endeavor, to be...

### ***Here for Generosity.***

So we are going to spend the remainder of our time in this message today unpacking what Proverbs 11:11 looks like. I think it’s clear that for us to bless and exalt our city, it means that we are going to have to give of ourselves; it will require generosity on our part. If we are going to be a blessing, something must come *from* us that benefits those around us. God loves us, and he calls us to love others. You can give without loving, but you cannot love

without giving. We've been loved, we must love. We've been given to, we must give. We are...

## 1. ***Blessed*** to be a ***blessing***.

That word "blessing" in the verse means a couple of things. First, it means that God blesses His people. All through the Bible you find examples of God's desire to bless His people. That blessing can come in many different forms. It can mean health. It can mean material blessing. Now it doesn't *always* mean those things, but "blessing" *will* always include this: *always* we are blessed with more of God Himself. God longs to be with his people, and so the greatest blessing is his presence with us. And with His presence comes the blessing of His provision; He will provide whatever we need, so we can be generous with what we ourselves have been blessed with.

Here's something that's interesting about the blessing that comes from being in God's presence: research has proven that those who faithfully follow Jesus gradually increase their worth. Over time, the bottom line of believers generally increases. Now that doesn't necessarily mean that their money multiplies or that they suddenly get rich. Part of the way that God blesses is that we get more careful, and smart, with what we have; we become better stewards of God's provision and blessings. When we realize that everything we have belongs to God, we are grateful and so we become more responsible and a better steward of God's resources. When we realize how much God loves us and provides for us, we begin to take better care of what he gives us.

Jonathan Gruber of the economics department at Massachusetts Institute of Technology did a study that yielded the following conclusion: Attending religious services may enrich the soul, but it will also fill your wallet. Gruber was quoted as saying:

"Doubling the frequency of attending church leads to a 9.1% increase in household income . . . Those who attend church more, end up having higher levels of education and income, lower levels of welfare receipt and disability, higher levels of marriage and lower levels of divorce." That study simply points out the fact that as we obey God, all the parts of our lives get better and richer, and we take better care of what he provides. So yes, we will be blessed by Him, and sometimes that blessing comes in monetary or material ways. Whether it does or not is not the point; the point is that God will *always* provide what we need as we trust and obey Him. That's what God was saying through the Old Testament prophet Malachi when he said:

"Bring your full tithe to the Temple treasury so there will be ample provisions in my Temple. Test me in this and see if I don't open up heaven itself to you and pour out blessings beyond your wildest dreams." (Malachi 3:10, tmt)

Again, that doesn't mean that we will automatically become rich – our bank account may not be full, but our lives most definitely will change and become more full!

And we can trace *every* blessing in our lives back to God; it all originates from Him. James in the Bible says:

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” (James 1:17, niv)

Of course, the greatest gift of all is abundant life here on earth and eternal life in heaven. It's called salvation, and it is available to those who will receive it because of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

And it is God's intention to bless others *through you*. That's another meaning of the word “blessing” in Proverbs 11:11—that as God blesses you, he wants to use you to be a blessing to others – it's a principle that God set in place through his people Israel:

“I'll make you a great nation and bless you. I'll make you famous; *you'll be a blessing*. I'll bless those who bless you; those who curse you I'll curse. All the families of the Earth will be blessed through you.” (Genesis 12:2-3, tmt)

This is a promise to Israel, but it also applies to believers: you will be blessed, and you will be a blessing.

Every blessing that God has given to you, he wants you to use it to be a blessing to others. **Here For Good** is a major way, right here and now, that you can bless others; by giving out of what God has given you and out of what you trust that he will give you. **Here For Good** is a three-year commitment that many of us made over two years ago, and we've got about nine months left. And it's not too late for you to join us if you haven't already! You don't want to miss out on the excitement and celebration that we will share together next May!

Now, when it comes to giving to the church, the Bible has given us the principle of giving a tithe – 10% of our income to the church we attend. That's clearly stated in Malachi 3 as well as by Jesus in Matthew 23:23. But then **Here For Good** is a commitment we are all making, on faith, that *above* the tithe, we will give whatever generous amount we feel God is asking us to do. It's a commitment to give an amount that we wouldn't normally think we could give. It's a promise, on faith, that God will provide it so that we can give it. So it will likely include both one-time gifts as God blesses, as well as a commitment to give regularly in significant ways above the tithe.

I'll say this again: as you've pledged, our goal is to raise just over \$1.7m over the next three years. That was \$1.1m to pay off the mortgage that the church had been paying for the last 20 years. We did it, and we did it so quickly that it took less than one million to pay it off, because of the interest we saved. That means more of our pledges can go to renovation, and so now we continue giving in order to raise as much as possible to renovate as much as we can – to make the foyer restrooms ADA compliant, to make our children safe, and to upgrade and update this worship space as much as we can. but we will NOT go into debt to do it!

So take stock of what you have...God has not given you what you have so that you can stash it away somewhere. It is given to you so that you can be generous with it. And as long as you keep giving it away, God will keep giving it back to you. Jesus said it himself:

“Give to others, and God will give to you. Indeed, you will receive a full measure, a generous helping, poured into your hands---all that you can hold. The measure you use for others is the one that God will use for you.” (Luke 6:38, gnb)

The more you give, the more comes back to you, because God is the greatest giver in the universe. You can't out-give Him. Go ahead and try. See what happens.

We were talking about this in a recent class I was teaching here at church, and one couple shared how they were at a previous church out of state, and that church was also doing a giving effort like we are.

The couple had decided to faithfully start tithing 10% about 6 months before the giving campaign started. When it came time to pray about what they should give for the campaign, they both came up with same number, but they didn't know how they were going to be able to do it. They wrote their commitment on the commitment card and turned it in.

They had filed their taxes, which included the deduction for their tithe. Two months after they made their commitment, they received their tax returns and there was an increase in their return; that was – nearly to the dollar – the amount they pledged to the church!

Their tithing was what gave them the larger return that year...and they were able to turn around and give what they had pledged! God, of course, provided as He always does! They found these promises from God to be true! Now, I've said this earlier, but let me sound this warning more clearly in case you get the wrong idea: *We do not give generously in order to get rich. We give generously because God tells us to. Giving is a sacrifice, and sometimes we feel that sacrifice. God's payoff is very real, but the Bible says it comes at the proper time:*

“So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At *just the right time* we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.” (Galatians 6:9, nlt, italics added)

That may be *now*, or it may be *later*, or it may be in eternity. God knows when you need it most; you can trust him.

God has given you lots of material blessings, so you can bless others. Let's look at what the Bible says about how God supplies what we need:

“Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that . . .”

So that...*what?* How do you think he will finish that sentence? Do you think he's saying we will be made rich in every way so that “...we can get rich here on earth”? Nope, that's wrong. Scripture says that the reason God gives us so much is this:

“...so that *you can be generous on every occasion*, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.” (2 Corinthians 9:10-11, niv)

God is generous with *you* so that *you* can be generous. So in that verse, God comes right out and tells us why he gives us more than we need. It's not so we can find more ways to spend it. It's not so we can indulge ourselves and spoil our children. It's so we can give – *generously*.

When God provides us with more money, we often think “Well—this is a blessing!” And while that is true, it is even more appropriate if we say to ourselves, “This is an opportunity to *be* a blessing!” we need to see it as another opportunity for us to be generous. We are *blessed* to be a *blessing*!

God doesn't necessarily expect you to go broke being generous, but he is expecting you to sacrifice for the cause that is greater than yourself—His kingdom and his church. The Apostle Paul said:

"I am not trying to relieve others by putting a burden on you; but since you have plenty at this time, it is only fair that you should help those who are in need. Then, when you are in need and they have plenty, they will help you. In this way both are treated equally." (2 Corinthians 8:13-14, gnb)

God doesn't want you to have too little, nor does He want you to have too much. He intends for you to have just *enough*, and then *give the rest away*. Proverbs in the Bible says:

"Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God." (Proverbs 30:8, niv)

In other words, figure out what is enough for you to live on (and be sure to get out of debt – be responsible, just like we have done here at the church). And be sure that *beyond what you need, you need to give*.

*You are not a bucket; you are a pipeline.* God doesn't pour into your life to fill you up like a bucket so that it all stops with you – He wants his blessings to pass *through* your hands to others like a pipe. You use what you need, and the rest you pass on. That's one of the things that Proverbs 11:11 means when it says that the city will be exalted through you—in the sharing of your blessings – you want to give in a way that blesses others. That's exactly what we've been saying about **Here For Good**; for Christ, for our community, for each other, and for generosity.

The second thing that this verse talks about is that God's people are...

## 2. ***Just to do Justice.***

The book of Proverbs makes a big deal out of justice; 10 different proverbs address this directly and many more refer to it indirectly. The context of Proverbs 11 is all about the way of living of God's people – they live in ways that are just, so when this verse talks about God's people exalting a city, it is talking about justice, too: *it is referring to the moral character that God's people bring to the culture, and their influence on the systems that oppress people. (repeat)* That's what it means for us to be just. God spoke through the Old Testament prophet Micah, saying:

"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8, niv)

What we are talking about is the character of our lives, and God expects His people to have it. Read through the whole chapter 11 of Proverbs. In fact, read through all of Proverbs. It's all about the honest character that God expects of his people. God is looking for the good character of His people at West Valley Church to have an effect on the culture of the community around us, causing West Valley to be a better place to live: more fair, more just, more safe.

I can't tell you how many times I cringe to hear about people in our community who claim they are Christians, and yet they lie, they steal, they cheat, they gossip, they cuss like sailors, they slander and mischaracterize people of other races. They post horrible things about democrats or about republicans that they would never say to a person's face (or maybe they would!). They don't stop to think about the truth that they are saying and posting nasty things about real people that Jesus died for. Trust me – I hear what people say and I read it on social media. They slander others. They gossip and bad-mouth people – even in their own church family!

There's been some interesting research done by the Pew Research Foundation. It's probably no surprise to you that Christianity has been on the decline in the United States, and the condition of our culture is both a symptom of that and a contributor to it. But recent research shows that about 64% of Americans identify as Christians. Fifty years ago, that number was 90%. There are several reasons that we could point to that might explain why, but there are two significant ones that the lead researcher thinks may be factors, and both have to do with what we are talking about.<sup>1</sup>

One factor is that the decline is nearly a direct correlation to the early 1990s with the rise of the religious right. In other words, as Christianity became involved in politics and began being used as a lobbying group, people became disenchanted with Christianity. Many Christians were being coerced into voting blocs that made enemies of democrats, liberals, homosexuals, and on and on. As Christians began acting more politically and less and less like Christ, less and less people were drawn to Christianity. Instead of becoming just people in order to live justly in this world, they became angry people who demonized those who voted differently than them.

Another factor that has contributed to our culture's decline in Christianity, according to Stephanie Kramer, the lead researcher, is that as more and more people have their basic needs met, they rely less and less on religious faith. Let me translate that: as God blesses us, we begin to think that we don't need God. We stop living lives of dependence on God, stop being grateful, and start living for ourselves. We don't recognize the blessings of what we have, so we stop being a blessing. We become self-reliant and stop looking out for those who can't help themselves. Instead of acting justly in this world, we blame others for the injustice that they face; somehow, they've refused to take advantage of the opportunities, or stopped paying attention in school, or got themselves addicted, or on and on.

What's happening in America today isn't an indicator that we are being persecuted for our faith; it's an indicator that we've stopped living out our faith and living lives of generosity.

The world does not need more mean-spirited people or self-seeking people. The best antidote to meanness and self-reliance is generosity! The world needs people of loving character who are honest and fair and just. And if God's people are *not* that way, then who in the world will be? But when God's people *are* that way, that's revolutionary! It's counter-cultural! We are just to do justice. God saved you so that your life can help others.

Imagine how our community would respond to people who are gracious and honest and just. At first, they might have a hard time believing it; they might wonder if it's insincere.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2022/09/15/1123289466/americas-christian-majority-is-shrinking-and-could-dip-below-50-by-2070>



But eventually I can guarantee you they would be grateful for it and even want to be a part of a group of people like that – like you!

This is the kind of character that Jesus was referring to when he told us that we are to add seasoning and light to the culture around us:

"You are like salt for the whole human race. But if salt loses its saltiness, there is no way to make it salty again. It has become worthless, so it is thrown out and people trample on it. You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead it is put on the lampstand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:13-16, gnb)

We are people who are blessed to be a blessing, and we are to be just in order to do justice. Through being generous in **Here For Good**, we will be able to do even more for those members of our community who have so much stacked against them. Think about the children in our partner schools. The vast majority of the children in those schools qualify for free and reduced lunches; that means they are on the low end of the income scale. When we provide backpacks and school supplies, when we volunteer in the schools, when we aid them with their homework each week, when we help them discover that learning new things is fun in our summer science camps, we are helping children and families who need justice when the system is working against them in many ways. When we welcome and bless our Latino families, we are providing justice for our community. Think about the over 700 children who enroll in Upward Soccer with us, and all the families they represent. These families need a place for their children to learn how to play a great sport and be a valuable part of a team, and they can do it in a positive and safe and loving environment. More than that, they can do it in a way that they are hearing the Gospel each week of the season – for 10 weeks! – with multiple opportunities to accept Christ and to know that we are a church that loves them. We are providing hope and love and a church family and a future for those kids and families; if *that's* not justice, I don't know what is. We did all those things while still paying \$100,000 each year toward a mortgage. Now that we've paid it off and once we've renovated this place, we can do so much more!

We are blessed to be a blessing; we are just to do justice. Two great ways that West Valley becomes greater because of your generosity.

Finally, a city is exalted because we have been...

### **3. *Impacted* to make an *impact*.**

When you became a Christian, God made a profound impact in your life. The Bible says:

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come!"  
(2 Corinthians 5:17).

You have been dramatically changed; you will never be the same. You heard and accepted the Good News of God's great love for you. And now, God expects you to share that same Good News with others, too:

“Go into all the world and preach the Good News to all creation.” (Mark 16:15, niv)

God’s ultimate desire for people is that they would know him and not leave this world without being in a relationship with him:

“God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9).

God wants His people to share the Good News with others so that others can be blessed by Him, too.

In Acts chapter two there is a great description of the impact that the church was having on the city they were in:

“They spent their time in learning from the apostles, taking part in the fellowship, and sharing in the fellowship meals and the prayers. Many miracles and wonders were being done through the apostles, and everyone was filled with awe. All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. They would sell their property and possessions, and distribute the money among all, according to what each one needed. Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts, praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:42-47, gnb)

Did you catch that phrase: “enjoying the good will of all the people.” The church was having a positive impact on the world around them, and the city appreciated that impact. That’s the same impact that God wants our church to have on West Valley. And that is the impact that God has positioned us to have—to make a difference in our community that the city will value and appreciate, being a blessing to them through our giving and through our actions in this community, for the ultimate goal of people responding to the Good News of God’s love for them.

That’s exactly what God is preparing us to do.

I hear all the time about the great reputation you have in our community – most people know how much you care; how generous you are. Our church is “enjoying the good will of all people.” And do you know what else that means? God is blessing us and wants the city to be exalted through us – the city of West Valley and beyond.

We’re just getting started! That means that one very clear way we can live generously is to give in very significant ways to **Here For Good** so we can continue and expand these ministries and update our facility. It means we must live lives that have good character, that are making an impact in the city around us. If we fail in any of these things, then God will not be able to exalt this city through us, according to His desires.

Church, it’s *that* serious. There’s that much on the line. Let’s give like He told us to. Let’s live like He tells us to. Let’s exalt cities like He wants to.

*Prayer*

Can I encourage you, if you haven't joined us yet, to follow the example of so many and prayerfully consider what you might want to give, in faith, above your regular tithes and offerings, to help us do everything that needs to be done here in our great church? You'll find information out on the table, in both English and Spanish. There's the first book we created that lays out all the details of what we're doing, along with a daily devotional that you can go through. There's also another booklet that updated everyone when we were about halfway through. And there are these cards that you can use, when you feel that God has given you a number for your commitment, that you can fill out and turn it in so we can add it to what all the rest of us are doing! And in two weeks, we will give you a full update on everything! Watch for details!

Every year, your leadership team selects one person to receive what is called the Distinguished Service Award. The person we are awarding this year is an example of exactly what we have been talking about. This person lives their life for Christ, and is incredibly generous in the ways that they give of their time, resources, and money to the church and to our community. There are usually four or five different ministries at a time that this person is involved in; there has never been a time that I am aware of that if we asked this person to help in some way, that they didn't do it.

Christ, and the Church of the Nazarene, have been a part of this person's life from the very beginning, from the age of two weeks old when she was adopted into a Nazarene Pastor's family.

We are incredibly honored and humbled to give the Distinguished Service Award for 2022 to Pam Stump.

Mike, would you bring Pam up here please!

Pam, you've loved the church since you were little, through all of the good things and through a lot of our bad things. You have been incredibly faithful and loyal and immeasurably generous. As you've served in the church over the years, especially to children, there is absolutely no way we can count the number of lives you have blessed. You are a blessing and have made an eternal impact. We are grateful, and we love you, and we are so proud to give this to you.

### ***Benediction***

May God richly bless those of you who have stepped out in faith and are given so generously. May he bless each of us as we contemplate His will when it comes to generosity, and may he continue to bless West Valley Church. We are blessed to be a blessing, just to do justice, and impacted to make an impact.