

The changing landscape of Christian giving

INSIGHTS INTO THE GREATEST
STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITY IN HISTORY

On behalf of our team at the National Christian Foundation (NCF), I am excited to share the findings of our recent research study, one of the largest of its kind ever conducted on generosity. NCF commissioned this work because we believe there is much to learn about what motivates people to give, what impact they want to have on the causes that are important to them, and the legacy they want to leave for their families.

Wealth is transferring to the next generation at an accelerating rate, and innovative approaches to giving are changing the current landscape of generosity. New causes are emerging, and our desire is to be on the forefront, to help the current and next wave of givers transform the world through their giving.

We would like to thank those of you who participated in this research by sharing your time and insights with us. We are grateful for you and your support of our mission, and we hope this important work paves the way for others to learn more about Christian generosity.

God is writing a beautiful story of transformation through your giving, and it is our privilege for the NCF family to be a small part of it.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K VanderMeulen'.

Kendra VanderMeulen
Chief Executive Officer
National Christian Foundation

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18



A photograph of a group of people, likely in a church or community setting, with their hands clasped together in prayer around a wooden table. The focus is on the hands in the foreground, with a person in a blue shirt visible in the background. The lighting is warm and soft, creating a peaceful atmosphere.

Your generosity
will result in
thanksgiving
to God.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:11

About this study

A Great Wealth Transfer is coming. In fact, we are already in the midst of it. According to a 2021 study by the global analytics firm, Cerulli Associates, nearly 45 million U.S. households will transfer \$84 trillion in wealth to heirs and charity by 2045.¹

This passing of wealth will take place in bank accounts, balance sheets, and businesses. But it will also happen among individuals and in families. It will involve professional advisors, charities, and churches. It is a complex ecosystem with a lot at stake.

In this research study, our team at NCF set out to better understand both the issues and opportunities facing the givers and ministries we serve as the landscape of giving changes.

Are Christians with wealth fully prepared for their own role in this historic, trillion-dollar exchange? As Christians give and receive wealth, there are more than financial principles at play. Christians, especially those blessed with much, have a biblical mandate to be good stewards. Both those passing wealth and those who will receive it have a call to be faithful and wise.

NCF sits at the intersection between Christians and the charities and churches they support. We don't take this responsibility lightly, so we wanted to determine the best ways to help the givers we serve. It was important for us to know how to help equip them and their advisors for the journey that ends with them before the Lord, hearing the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matthew 25:21).

But the complexities involved in this great transfer of wealth are myriad: a multitude of opportunities for giving; conflicting values and desires among family members about when, how, and how much to give; practical considerations like estate and other taxes ... to name just a few. Those who are well prepared will be able to face these complexities with more confidence and with a strategy. With knowledge of what may lie ahead, family values and individual desires may all be able to be accommodated. Disagreements can be resolved. Heirs can be prepared. And, ideally, no one misses out on the journey or the joys along the way.

With this in mind, we sought the help of two research firms – Barna Group and Heart + Mind Strategies – to explore these complexities. As wealth changes hands from one generation to the next, we wanted to know what issues arise from generational differences among those passing wealth and those receiving it. As the ownership of the majority of the wealth in our country shifts from male to female, it was important for us to understand how women approach their giving differently. What relational roadblocks might come as a result of shifting values and strategies? What are the differing approaches these groups take to giving, what will their

needs be, and what values unite all, or most, generous Christians?

The research is helping us understand these changes facing Christian givers. It reveals the needs we, along with all of the organizations serving Christians along their giving journeys, want to meet. And it's informing our decisions as we plan for the future.

The best news about the future of Christian giving is something our research revealed resoundingly: There is a group of people committed to pleasing God with their giving, storing up treasure in heaven, and working to build the kingdom until Jesus returns.

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INSIGHT ONE

Why Christians give



When we use the term “Christian giving” we are describing the giving done by Christians to both faith-based and secular causes.

In our work with Christian givers, we meet people from a vast range of backgrounds, from farmers to investment bankers, from real estate investors and professional athletes to couples who’ve been quietly setting aside a little every month for decades and now find themselves with more than they need.

It seems each person has a unique reason for wanting to give. Everyone has a story.

We often encourage people to ask questions to help determine the “why” behind their giving,

but until this research study, we did not know their answers definitively. Through the research, we wanted to answer the question, “Is there one main emotional motivation of generous Christians?”

We did uncover a wide array of emotional motivators behind Christian giving. Givers 45 and older reported wanting to connect to their feelings of gratitude and being blessed. And givers 44 and younger said they wanted their giving to help them feel more alive, closer to God, and more hopeful.

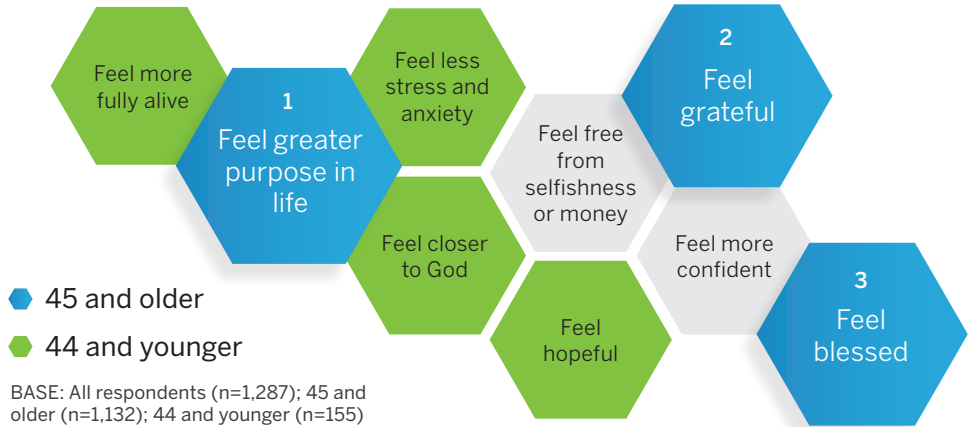
But ranking head and shoulders above all of these emotional reasons, one benefit topped the list. It ranked ahead of all the others, across genders and generational divides. It was the desire for a greater purpose in life. Of the total sample, 32% wanted to feel a greater purpose. The number was slightly higher among women (34%) and slightly lower for younger givers (29%). But among the reasons, no other came close to these percentages or this much alignment.

What are the implications for givers and their families? Choosing to pursue a family purpose, rather than just “deciding where the money will go,” could become a way to unite families. More hands-on

involvement with charities – rather than limiting giver participation only to financial giving – could play a role.

Charities may choose to offer more opportunities for givers to get to know their work firsthand and participate in shaping their organizational mission.

The future of giving may look like more strategy, more unity, and a higher level of involvement from those funding the work of charities. It will likely also look like grateful, hopeful people who feel their life serves a greater purpose.





2

INSIGHT TWO

Transformation and collaboration

Photo: Send Relief

The Gospel of Luke gives us one of the most radical examples of transformation in the whole Bible – the story of Zacchaeus. From swindler to a son of God in one day, this wealthy man began his faith journey by righting all his financial wrongs and immediately giving away far more than the law required of him ... the very day he began to follow Jesus. You can read his story in Luke 19.

We have witnessed the transformation that often takes place in people when they walk with God through their giving. We have seen some who, on learning about the impact generosity has had on their friends or family members, are expectant that their giving will transform their lives too. The research confirmed this is a common thread among generous Christians. An overwhelming majority of Christian givers we surveyed (65%) are seeking more than a transactional experience. They hope their giving will transform their lives and that it might become a tool

for discipleship within their families. This number is even higher among women (71%) and people with children under 18 living at home (also 71%). When we asked givers to elaborate on transformational giving, a deeper story began to emerge. Most Christian givers believe transformation happens better in community. They seek giving collaborations to inspire, encourage, and shape them, especially when it comes to dealing with the difficult issues of wealth and legacy.

They also seek collaboration for knowledge sharing and strategies for giving. They want to pool their resources with others to have a greater impact on the causes they care about. Together, givers want to solve problems, share insights, and build friendships within like-minded communities. And they want churches, ministries, and other nonprofits to seek out collaborations that will multiply their impact. While givers of many ages expressed their desire to work with others, we saw that interest in collaboration was strongest

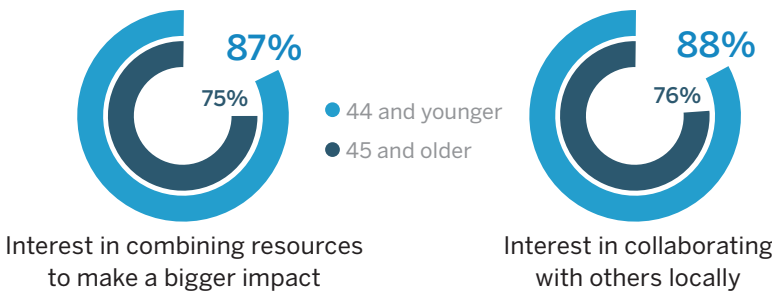
among Christians younger than 44 years old (87% versus 75% of givers 45 years and older). The future of Christian giving will likely involve more grass-roots groups joining together to encourage one another, to find purpose, and to make a greater impact on the world. The data indicate the future may also be shaped by the desire for charities and other nonprofits to work cooperatively. This may not be just what givers want; it may become an expectation.

We are encouraged to see givers already reaching out to form these types of collaborative groups. We've seen a group of givers supporting collaborative charities to take on the evangelism of a whole country. In Florida, we are witnessing a group of Christians working with residents to rebuild old neighborhoods, which had been destroyed by decades of racism and neglect. We serve givers in Washington working together to raise the bar on fighting human trafficking.

Key characteristics of transformation-oriented giving:

- Connecting with a broader network of Christian givers
- Sharing knowledge with others
- Increasing impact through collaboration
- Generosity as discipleship

Desire for collaboration is strongest among Christians 44 and younger

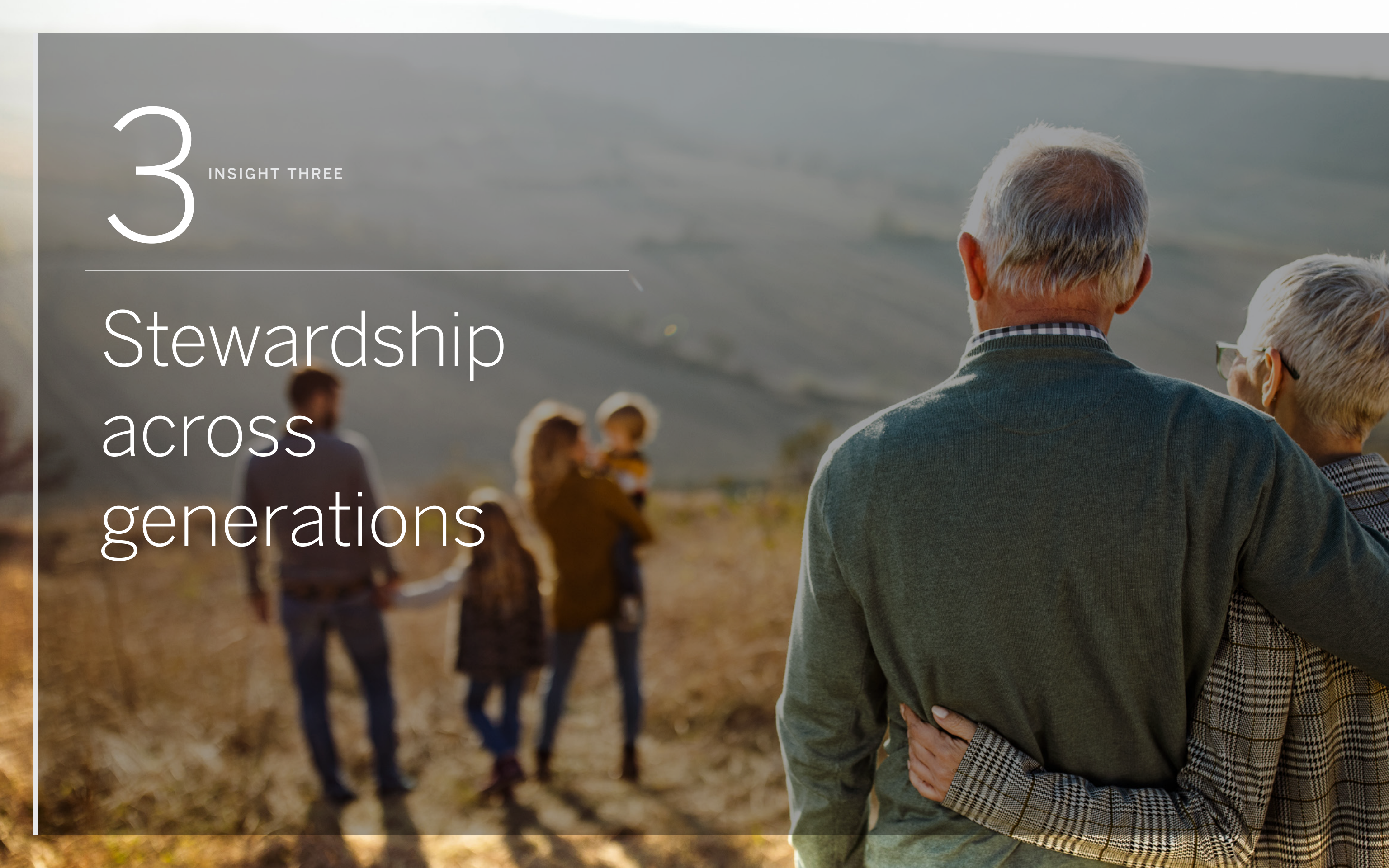


BASE: All respondents (n=1,287); 44 or younger (n=155)

3

INSIGHT THREE

Stewardship across generations



Most pertinent to our growing understanding of this Great Wealth Transfer we are now living through is the idea of stewarding wealth across generations. A clear theme emerged from the research.

Christians want to be as intentional as possible with the resources entrusted to them as those resources are passed down to the next steward(s). They hope their legacy will be more than just financial, that their values will be passed along with their assets. Some are concerned about whether this will be the case.

What was surprising to us is that these beliefs and values seem to be carrying on among the next generation. Most givers surveyed align with the statement that “God owns it all” (96%). They see themselves as stewards of God’s resources, who own nothing

(95%). And many (73%) feel a heavy burden to steward the wealth that has been entrusted to them. And, while a smaller group worries that their heirs are not prepared to handle the wealth they will inherit, we know from our qualitative interviews that this concern is typically a very deep and pressing issue to be resolved.

Though the numbers look slightly different by age group, the differences aren’t significant. Christians who give, despite their age, hold a biblical worldview of their wealth.

It seems this connection to a biblical worldview both directs the actions of Christian givers and brings a sense of hope and purpose in others.

How givers feel about wealth, giving, and legacy

VERY COMMON



Recognize and live in the belief that God owns it all.

See everything they are or have belongs to God. They own nothing. They are just a steward of what is his.

COMMON



Feel a heavy burden to wisely steward the wealth God has given them.

Don't want to make a mistake when it comes to where they give.

UNIQUE



Worry their heirs aren't prepared to handle the wealth their estate plan will leave them.

Are concerned their estate plan doesn't adequately reflect their faith.

Sometimes feel isolated and alone because of their wealth.

Are told by family or friends that they worry too much about money and financial matters.

BASE: All respondents (n=1,287)

A photograph of a group of people outdoors. In the foreground, a woman with long, light-colored hair is smiling and looking down. She is wearing a blue denim jacket over a blue patterned top and a red belt. To her left, a man with grey hair is smiling. In the background, other people are visible, including a man in a blue shirt and a woman in a blue top. The scene is set outdoors with trees and foliage in the background.

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INSIGHT FOUR

Women as decision-makers

As a result of the Great Wealth Transfer, wealth will shift not only by age, but also by gender. Indeed, that shift has already begun. Women already own a third of U.S. household financial assets.²

However, over the next decade, wealth will begin to change hands rapidly, not only from one generation to the next, but from men to women (whose life expectancy is five years longer). In addition to this,

women's earnings are climbing, and an increasing number of women are becoming business owners³ and entrepreneurs.⁴

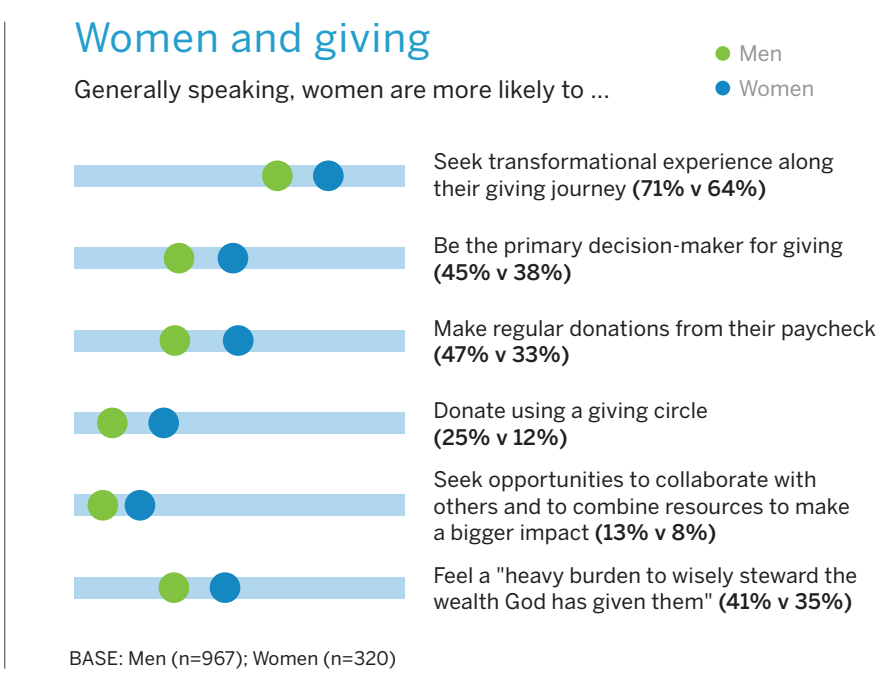
It was important for us to know how this growing group of wealthholders views giving differently and what unique needs they have. We discovered that among the givers we surveyed, women were already more likely to be the primary decision-makers for household giving (45% versus 38% of men).

They are twice as likely to already participate in collaborative giving (25% versus 12% of men) and more likely to want to work with others to make a bigger impact (13% versus 8% of men). Women are also more interested than men in seeking transformational relationships to help them along their giving journeys (71% versus 64% of men) and empower them to make a greater impact. And it is more likely they sense a heavy burden to wisely steward what God has entrusted to them (41% versus 35% of men).

see women gain economic influence and increasingly take on the giving decisions for their households, we will likely see more collaborative projects, more advisors finding creative ways to serve women in their giving, and even greater impact from women-driven communities.⁵

It also means that advisors and others who work with women givers will have to make plans to accommodate the needs of this growing segment.

What does this tell us about the future of giving? As we



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INSIGHT FIVE

Good and wise stewards



When we began to explore the ultimate aspirations of Christian givers – not their financial goals, but what they hoped to accomplish overall – we expected to see a wide range of ideas. And various perspectives did emerge.

Some givers valued making an impact most (7%). Others prioritized sharing God’s love with the world (8%). Some just wanted to give more (4%).

But the most defining aspiration of Christian givers we discovered was their desire to be good and wise stewards of what God has given them (42%), followed by wanting to be effective and strategic (16%).

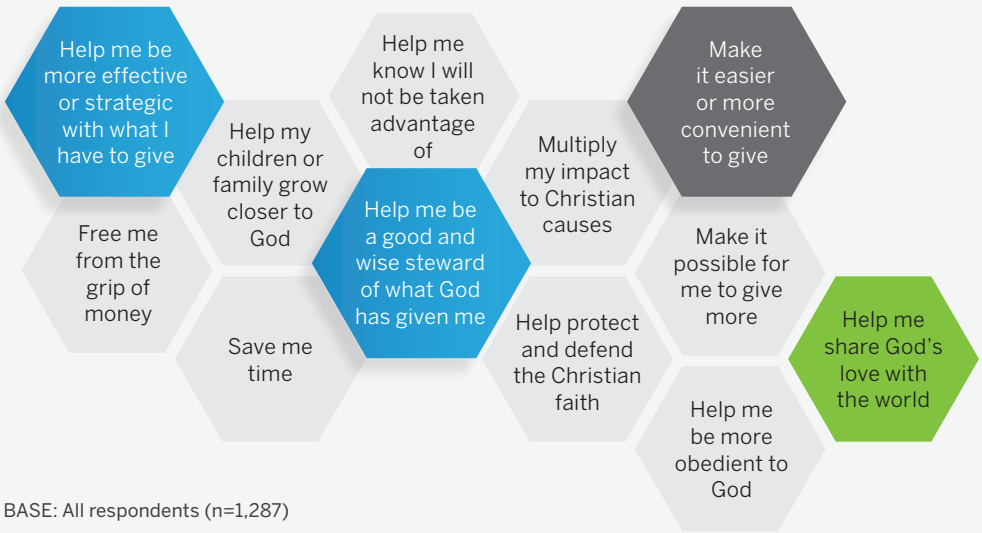
The desire to be a good and wise steward is the driving force for almost half of the Christian

givers we surveyed. It was selected by more than twice as many respondents as any other option. The motivation behind that aspiration is likely the recognition and belief that "God owns it all" and that everything they have belongs to him.

In fact, almost all of the givers in our sample (95%) somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement, "I own nothing. I am just a steward of what is his."

While men tended to value ease and convenience in their giving, and those under 44 were more likely to value help in sharing God’s love with the world, still this desire for faithfulness and the value of stewardship stood out as most important.

The most important benefits Christians seek from a giving partner



With this insight, it becomes clear why being a good and wise steward of what God has given is the overwhelming driver for the majority of Christian givers. It doesn't matter their age, their gender, or the amount they give.

With few exceptions, our research revealed a group of generous Christians who take a broad view of the financial resources they have through the lens of good and wise stewardship. Despite differing perspectives on a variety of subjects, the desire to be good and faithful stewards unites just about everyone.

In the end, we were able to build a map (see next page) connecting the most important attributes quantitatively to help us uncover the dominant pathways for Christian givers to realize their ultimate goals.

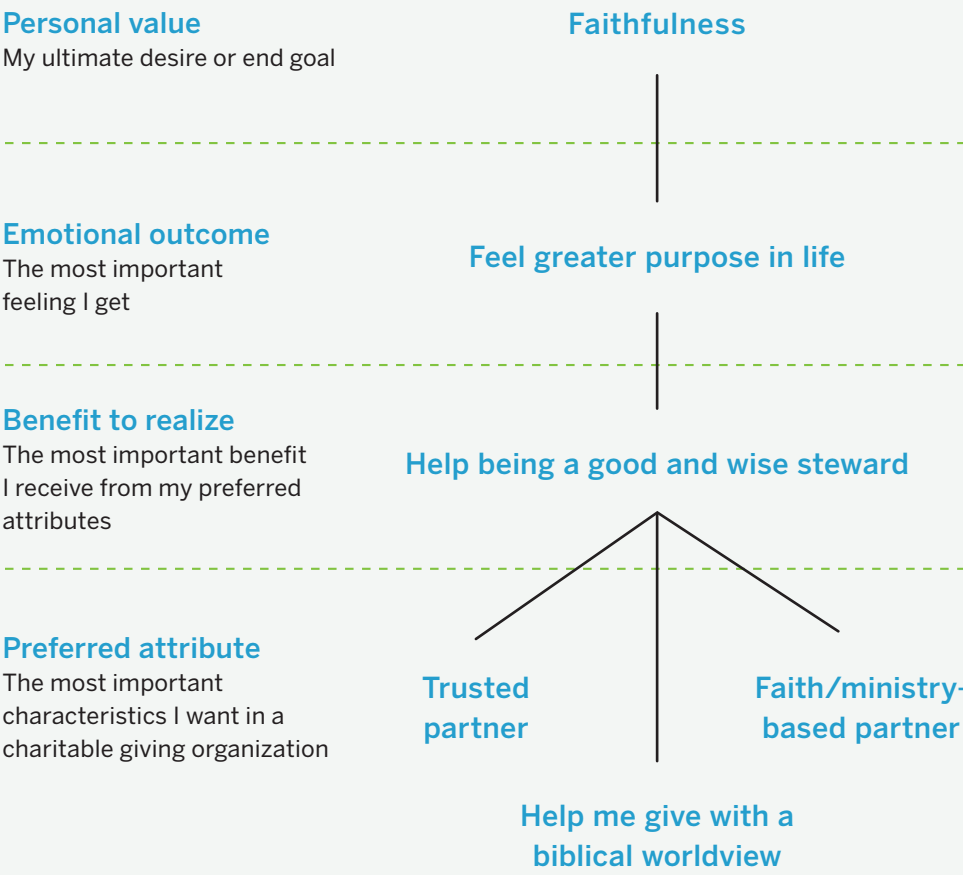
What we found surprised us significantly. We expected to see more complexities and a variety of pathways. Instead, we

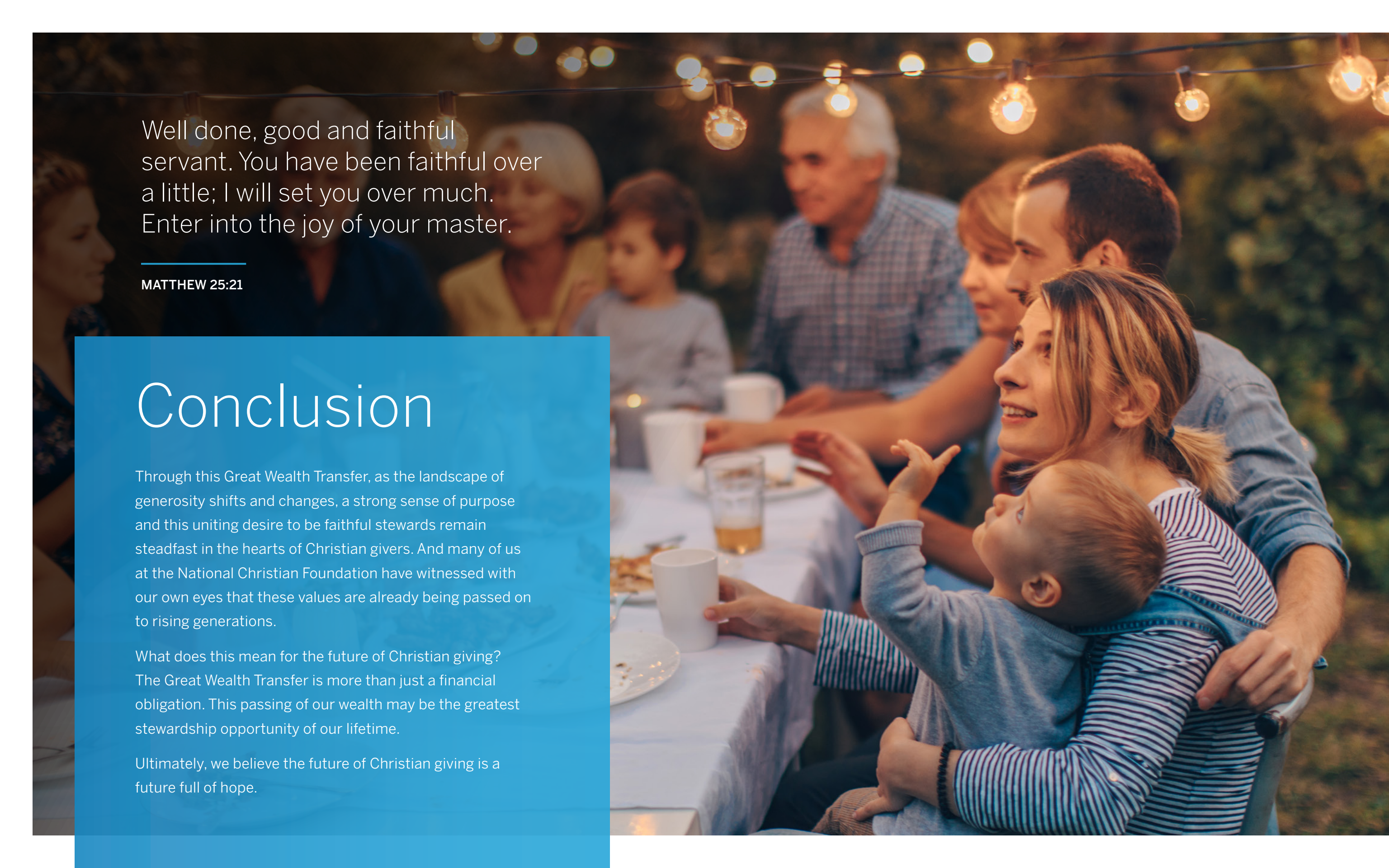
found one dominant pathway shared by the majority of Christian givers we surveyed.

It starts at the bottom with the characteristics givers say they want from a giving partner and climbs to the benefit they are hoping to receive from those attributes: help being a good and wise steward (42% of all respondents). Being a good and wise steward of what God has provided makes them feel a greater purpose in life (32%). (32%). And at the top is their ultimate goal: faithfulness (31%).

Ultimately, givers want to be good stewards who are faithful in the giving God has called them to do. And that faithfulness brings them joy and helps them feel grateful. Their biblical worldview has informed their thinking and reached their hearts. It travels with them up this ladder to the top of their giving journey and ties back to what they long to hear: "Well done, good and faithful servant...."

Majority of Christian givers share a unified pathway to faithfulness





Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.

MATTHEW 25:21

Conclusion

Through this Great Wealth Transfer, as the landscape of generosity shifts and changes, a strong sense of purpose and this uniting desire to be faithful stewards remain steadfast in the hearts of Christian givers. And many of us at the National Christian Foundation have witnessed with our own eyes that these values are already being passed on to rising generations.

What does this mean for the future of Christian giving? The Great Wealth Transfer is more than just a financial obligation. This passing of our wealth may be the greatest stewardship opportunity of our lifetime.

Ultimately, we believe the future of Christian giving is a future full of hope.

Strategic research partners



Barna Group (barna.com) is a visionary research and resource company located in Ventura, California. Started in 1984, the firm is widely considered to be a leading research organization focused on the intersection of faith and culture.



Heart + Mind Strategies (heartandmind.us) is a team of researchers and strategic planners working together to connect the dots. Their specialty is revealing the latent, non-conscious motivations and behaviors of consumers using a mix of advanced techniques they have developed over the years.

Methodology

Research for this study, conducted in partnership with Barna Group and Heart + Mind Strategies, is based on a 20-minute online survey of 1,287 U.S. Christian givers recruited from NCF’s database and a wide range of contributing partner organizations. The survey was conducted between September 9 and October 1, 2021.

In addition to the online survey, the researchers also conducted qualitative, exploratory interviews with givers and advisors.

Referenced sources

¹ Cerulli Associates, “Cerulli Anticipates \$84 Trillion in Wealth Transfers Through 2045” (January 2022). <https://www.cerulli.com/news/cerulli-anticipates-84-trillion-in-wealth-transfers-through-2045> (accessed February 2022).

² McKinsey & Company, “Women as the Next Wave of Growth in U.S. Wealth Management” (July 2020). McKinsey: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/financial-services/our-insights/women-as-the-next-wave-of-growth-in-us-wealth-management> (accessed February 2022).

³ U.S. Census Bureau, “Women Business Ownership on the Rise” (2021). <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/03/women-business-ownership-in-america-on-rise.html> (accessed February 2022).

⁴ American Express OPEN, “The 2017 State of Women-Owned Business Report” (2017). <https://ventureneer.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017-AMEX-SWOB-FINAL.pdf> (accessed February 2022). <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/financial-services/our-insights/women-as-the-next-wave-of-growth-in-us-wealth-management> (accessed February 2022).

⁵ New York Life Investments, “Women and Investing” (2019). <https://www.newyorklifeinvestments.com/assets/documents/lit/women-and-investing/infographic-women-and-investing-part-1.pdf> (accessed February 2022).

Contributing partners

We would like to recognize all of the contributing partners who played an essential role in helping us recruit participants for this research.

C12 (joinc12.com)

For nearly three decades, C12’s singular focus has been to create a framework that gathers and equips Christian CEOs and owners to build great businesses for a greater purpose. Members meet in Business Forums monthly to encourage and challenge one another to make better decisions, avoid costly mistakes, and create solid plans for business growth – all while striving to create eternal impact far beyond the bottom line.

Convene (convenenow.com)

Convene’s mission is to connect, equip, and inspire Christian CEOs and business owners to grow exceptional businesses and become higher-impact leaders to honor God. Through a community of peer-to-peer advisory teams, executive coaching, and world-class consulting, they work with Christian CEOs and business owners to impact the life of a leader, leading to an ultimate kingdom legacy.

Kingdom Advisors (kingdomadvisors.com)

As the leading advocate for the Christian financial industry, Kingdom Advisors offers the CKA® designation, the only industry-accepted designation for financial advice that aligns with Christian values; ongoing training and a step-by-step process for advisors to confidently deliver advice that aligns with Christian values; a community of 3,500 like-minded peers; and advocacy with the public, regulators, large firms, and universities.

MoneyWise (moneywise.org)

MoneyWise helps millions of people every day integrate their faith with their finances to meet the growing demands of today’s culture. As a nonprofit organization, they provide the opportunity for others to learn, manage, and connect through national radio programs, money management application, a feature-rich website, and other resources.

Women Doing Well (womendoingwell.org)

Women Doing Well (WDW) helps women live and give wholeheartedly. Their research-based content and experiences help women discover their unique, God-given purpose and passion and develop a plan to share who they are and what they have in order to make a difference. The WDW transformational pathway ignites, grows, and activates a woman’s generosity so she can give more confidently and joyfully.



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Growing generosity nationwide

With over 30 local teams, unparalleled expertise, and the most creative giving solutions available today, we help Christian families like yours send more to their favorite causes and connect with the larger movement of biblical generosity taking place around the world. Since 1982, givers at NCF have mobilized more than \$14.5 billion to 71,000 charities through a giving platform that includes Giving Funds (donor-advised funds), expert strategies for non-cash giving, highly personalized service, and local community building opportunities.

Connect with your NCF team at
ncfgiving.com or 800.681.6223

