

Rethinking Stewardship from the Ground Up



Rethinking *Generosity* from the Ground Up





Why is church giving declining

Answer: Giving has everything to do with identity...



...and we have a relatively poor understanding of how identity is *formed*.

In Other Words

Cultivating generosity is a matter of identity formation!

Which in turn means that cultivating generosity....

...is a matter of faith formation!

Faith formation???



Yikes!

Talk of “faith formation” brings out the skeptic in me.

Why skepticism?



Why skepticism?



Makes faith a thing to be formed rather than a gift to be received.

Why skepticism?



Makes faith a thing to be formed rather than a gift to be received.

Grants us too much agency.

Why skepticism?



Makes faith a thing to be formed rather than a gift to be received.

Grants us too much agency.

Not Lutheran!



*"Skepticism is the
beginning of faith."*

~Oscar Wilde



What is faith formation?

Nurturing an identity rooted in Baptism and the Gospel rather than in personal accomplishment, our possessions, and other false promises of the culture.



What is faith formation?

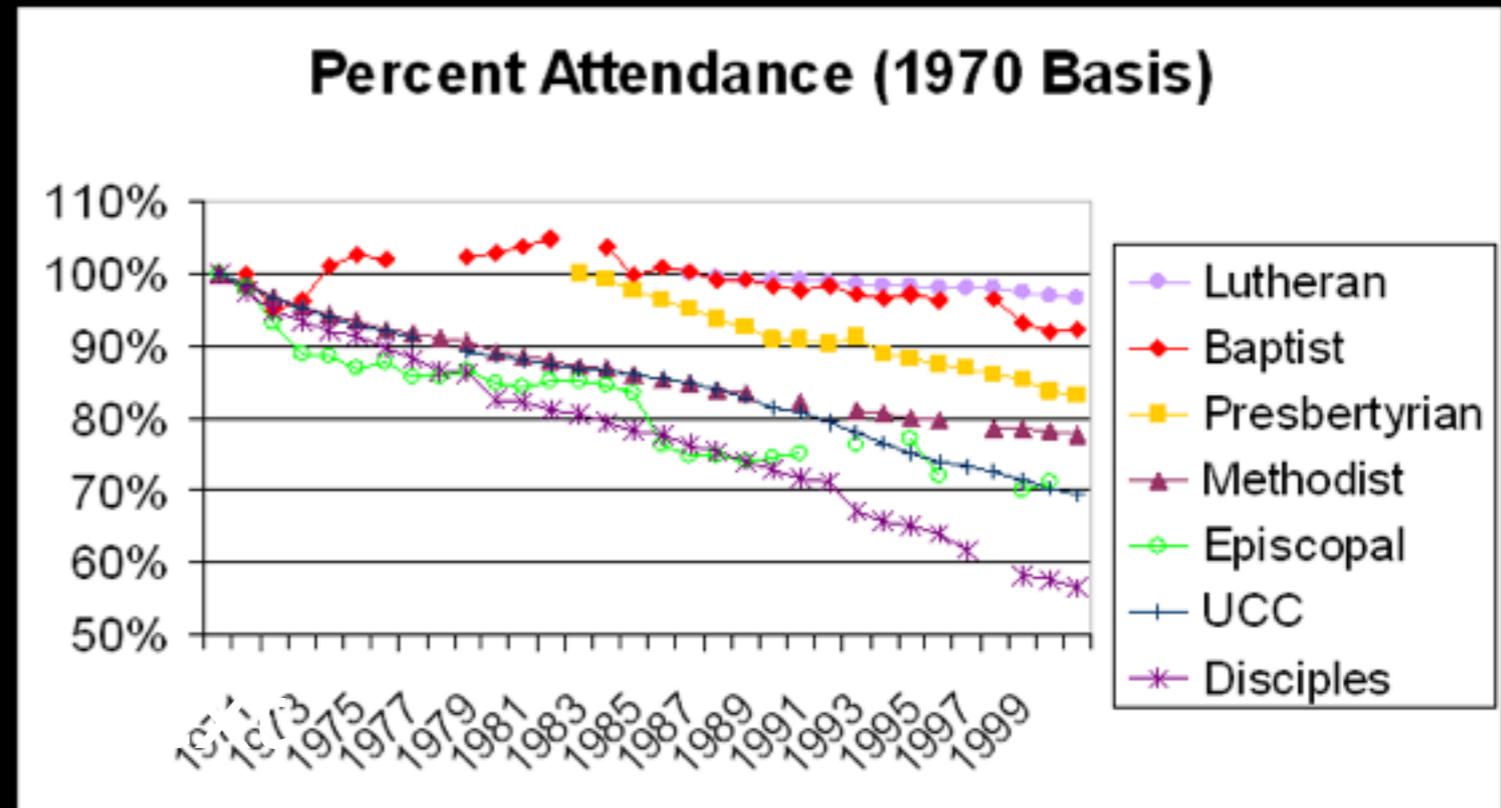
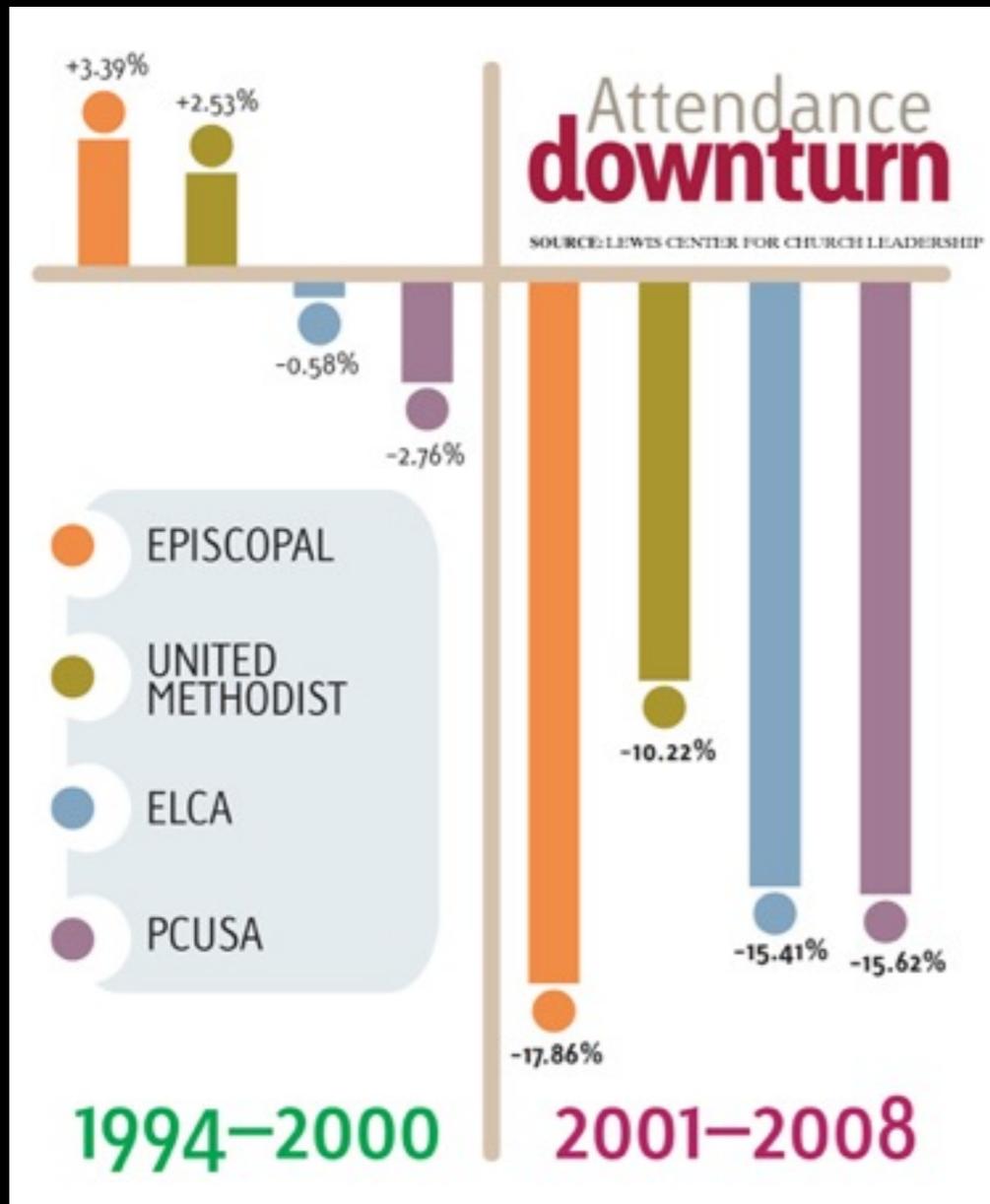
Giving people the language with which they can name their experience in meaningful ways and sense God's activity in their lives and the world.



Why is church giving declining

Church Decline

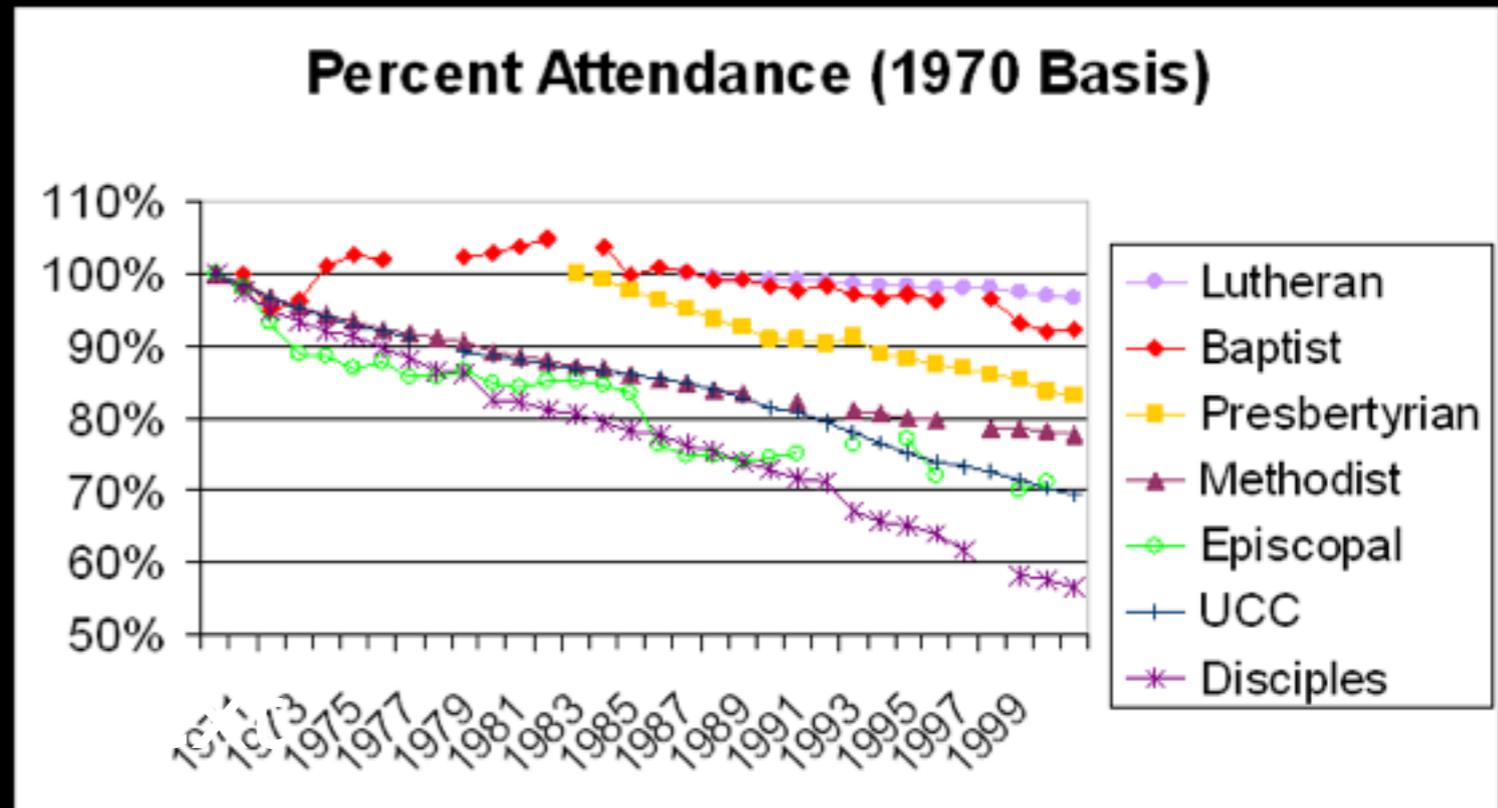
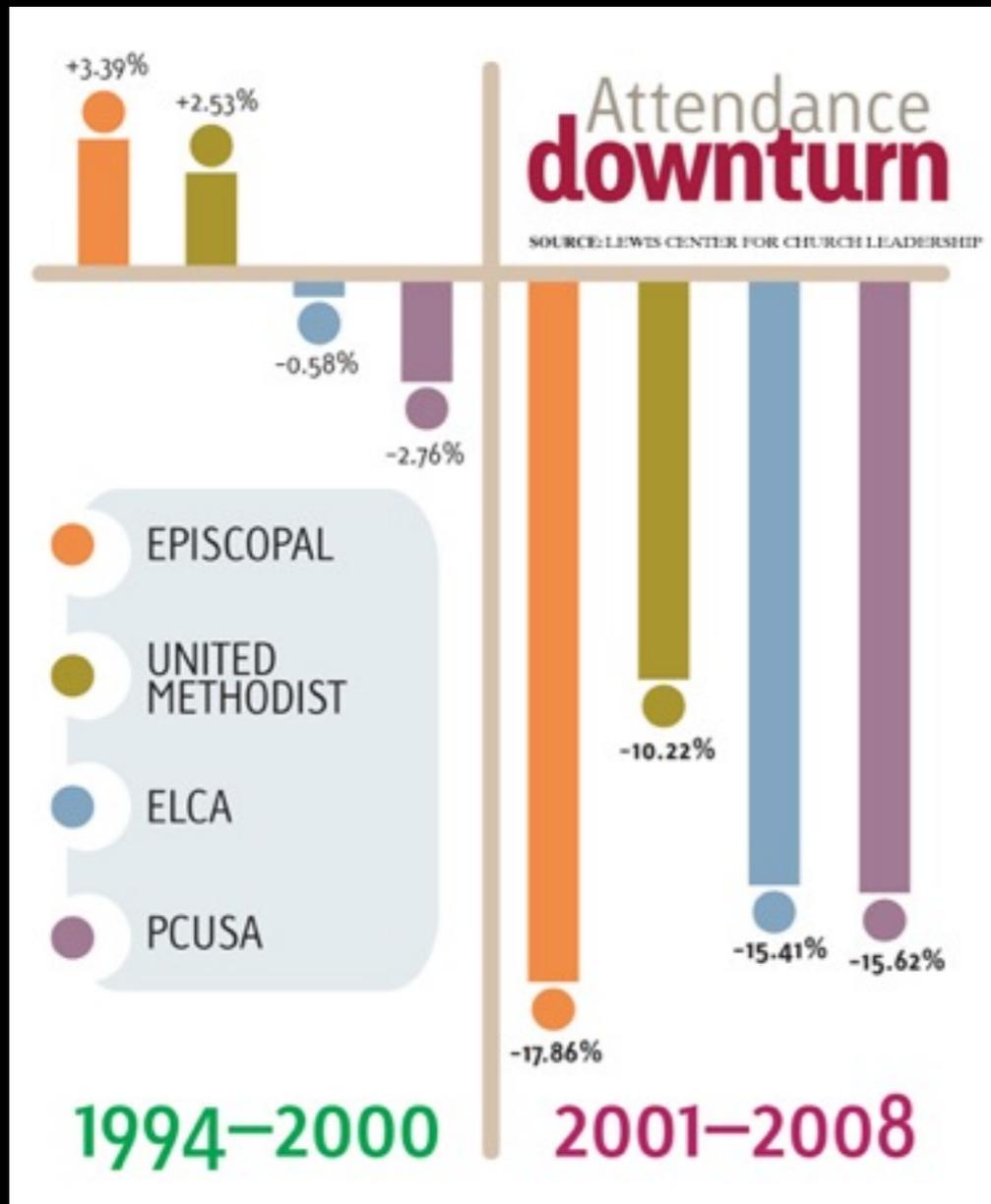
Has nothing to do with...



...failure of leaders
...failure of people
...political tilt to left or right
...irrelevance of the message

Church Decline

Has everything to do with...



...massive cultural change.

The culture is no longer invested in...



1. Helping us tell our story.
2. Whether we go to church.



**KEEP
CALM**
there's a
**PARADIGM
SHIFT**

The curse of abundance.

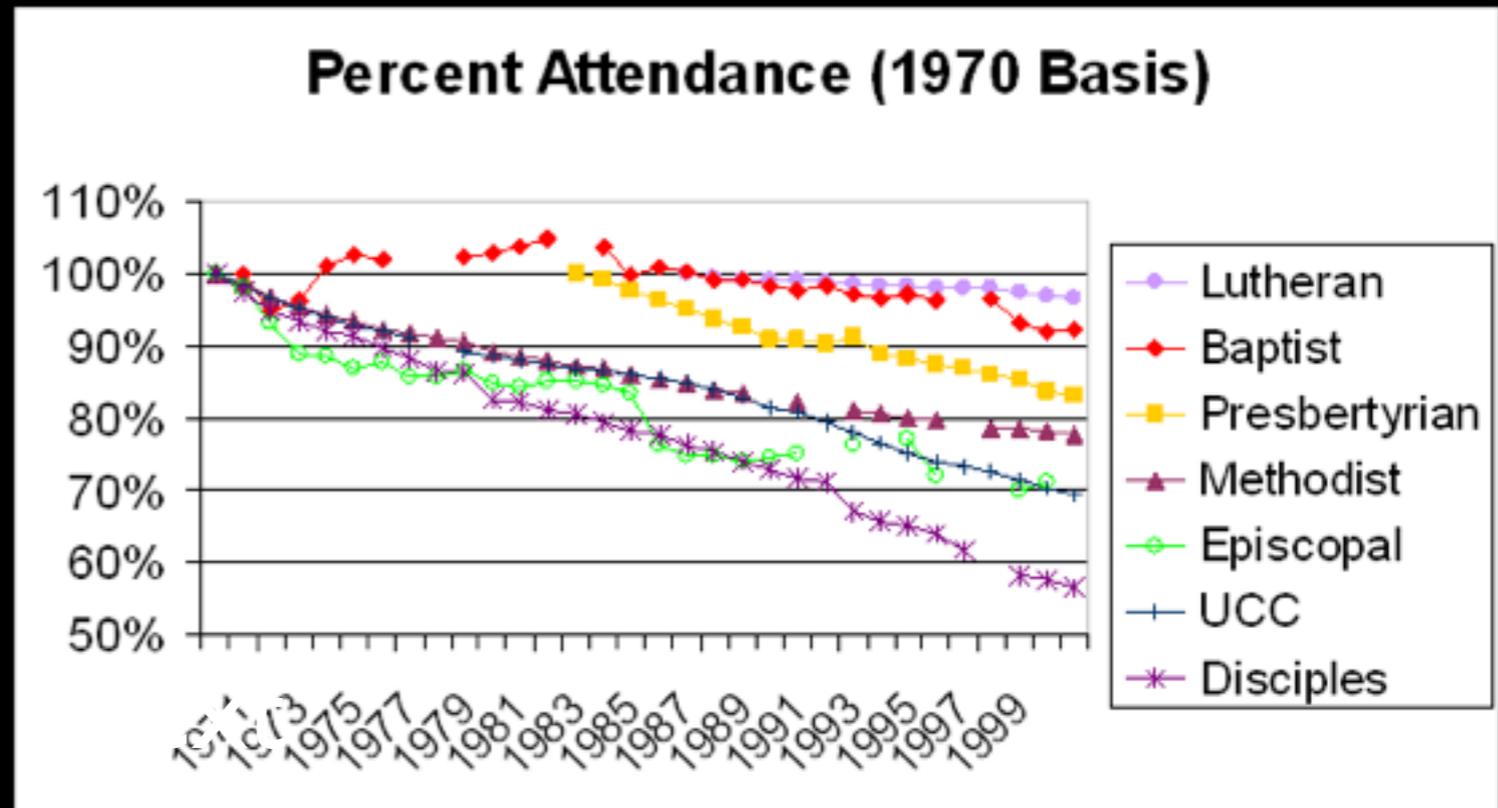
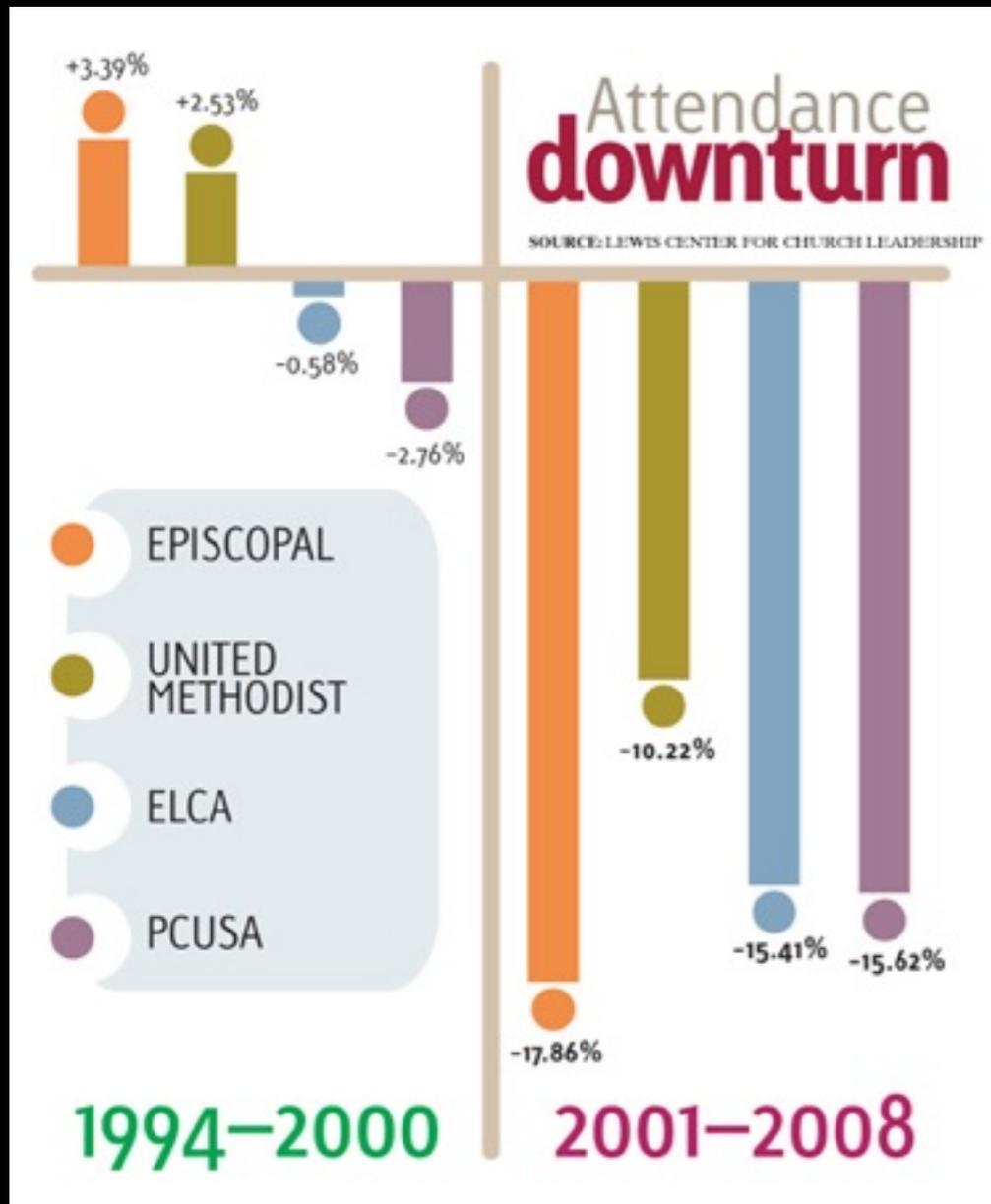


**So many choices
So little time!**

The curse of abundance.

There are multiple options for compelling stories to tell yourself and meaningful activities in which to engage.

Church Decline



We've never lived at a time when forming a Christian identity was more important and we have less help than ever in doing that.



Great Performances



CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED RECORDINGS OF THE BASIC REPERTOIRE



Mr. Stern and Mr. Perlman gave an astonishing demonstration of musical sympathy and seemingly clairvoyant collaboration on Bach's Double Concerto in D Minor. -The New York Times



BACH

"DOUBLE" CONCERTO

FOR TWO VIOLINS IN D MINOR

PERLMAN / STERN

MEHTA / NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

VIOLIN CONCERTOS Nos. 1 & 2

STERN / SCHNEIDER

MEMBERS OF THE LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ENGLISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

We have trained a generation of Christians who appreciate the faith but do not know how to play.

Giving - and church attendance and participation and all the rest - has everything to do with identity..



...and we have a relatively poor understanding of how identity is formed.

malleable

dynamic

Identity

multi-faceted

fluid





=



Our task is to help nurture a Christian identity in a world that offers so many other possibilities.

Identity Formation

Cognitive/Narrative



Experiences

Habits & Practices

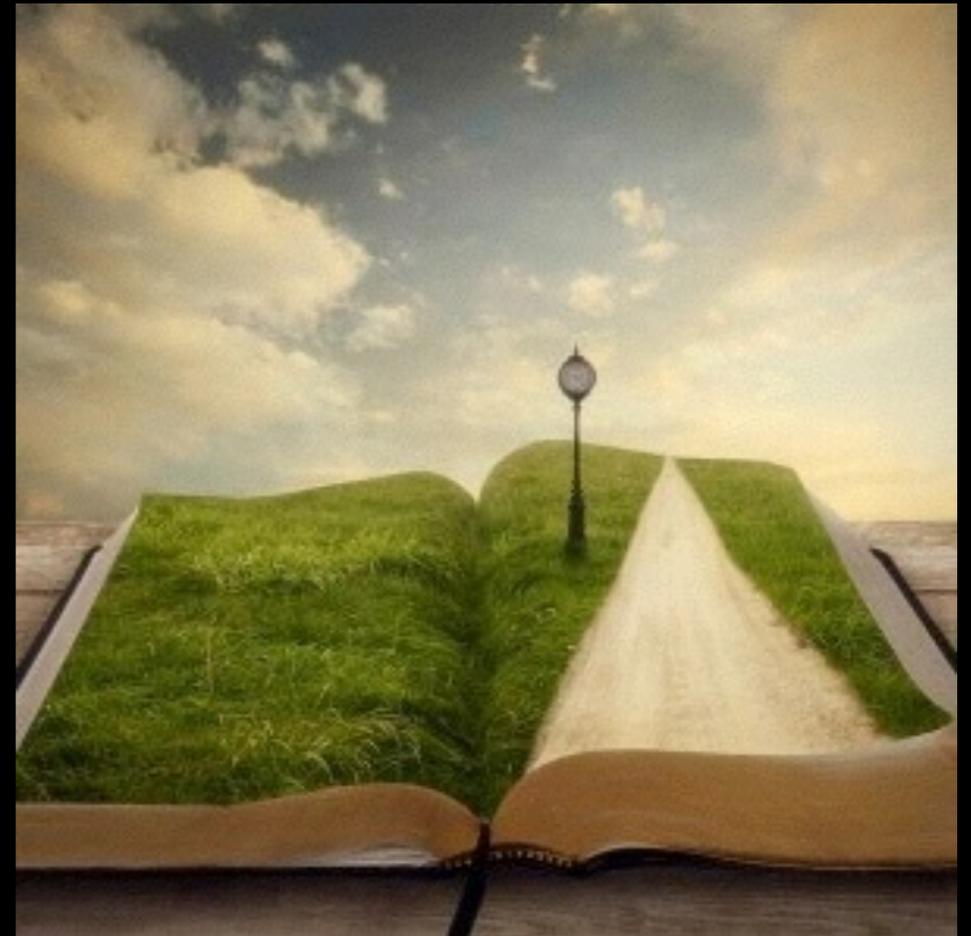
Cognitive/Narrative Dimension of Identity

4 Common Misunderstandings

(a.k.a: opportunities for growth!)

I. Beliefs and attitudes (cognitive) are almost always expressed as stories.

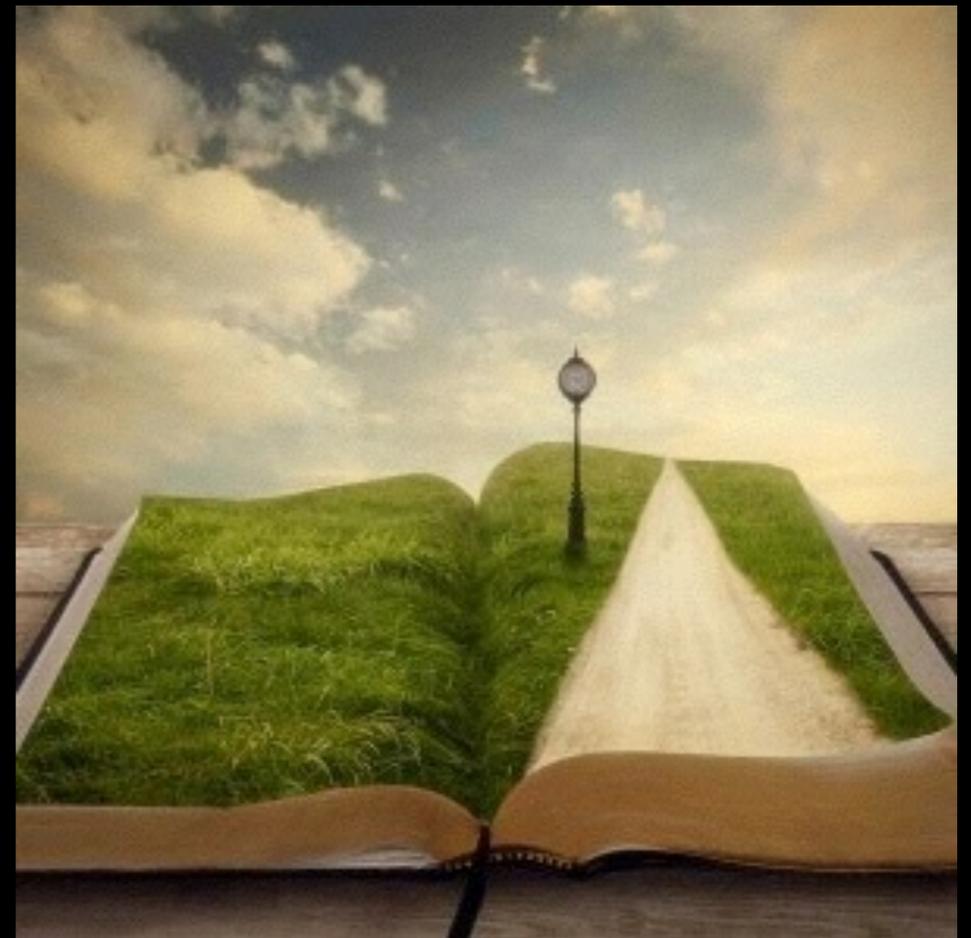
Identity is essentially “the story we tell ourselves about ourselves.”



Cognitive/Narrative Dimension of Identity

4 Opportunities for Growth

1. Employ minimal statistics and maximal stories.



Cognitive/Narrative Dimension of Identity

4 Common Misunderstandings



2. Stories of *commitment* are far less effective than stories about *community* and *compassion*.

Cognitive/Narrative Dimension of Identity

4 Opportunities for Growth



2. Stress what giving accomplishes in terms of extending compassion and building community.

Cognitive/Narrative Dimension of Identity

4 Common Misunderstandings



3. Crisis is the most powerful motivator of all.

Joy is a more powerful motivator than fear.

Cognitive/Narrative Dimension of Identity

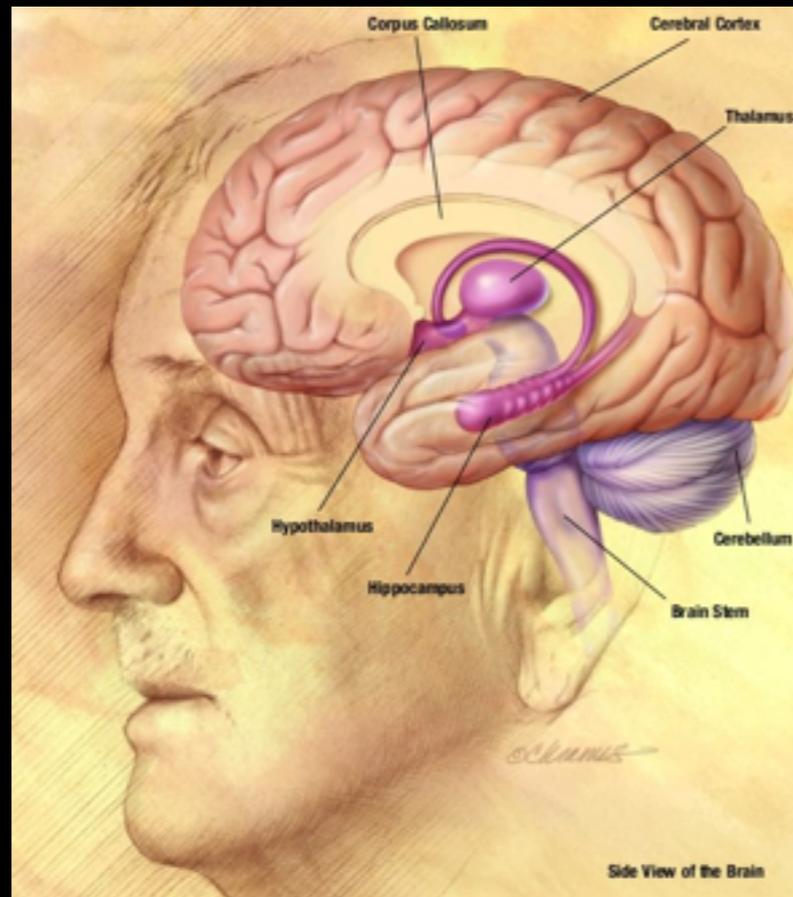
4 Opportunities for Growth



3. Ask a crucial question:
*How does every stewardship
story you tell share the joy
of the Gospel?*

Cognitive/Narrative Dimension of Identity

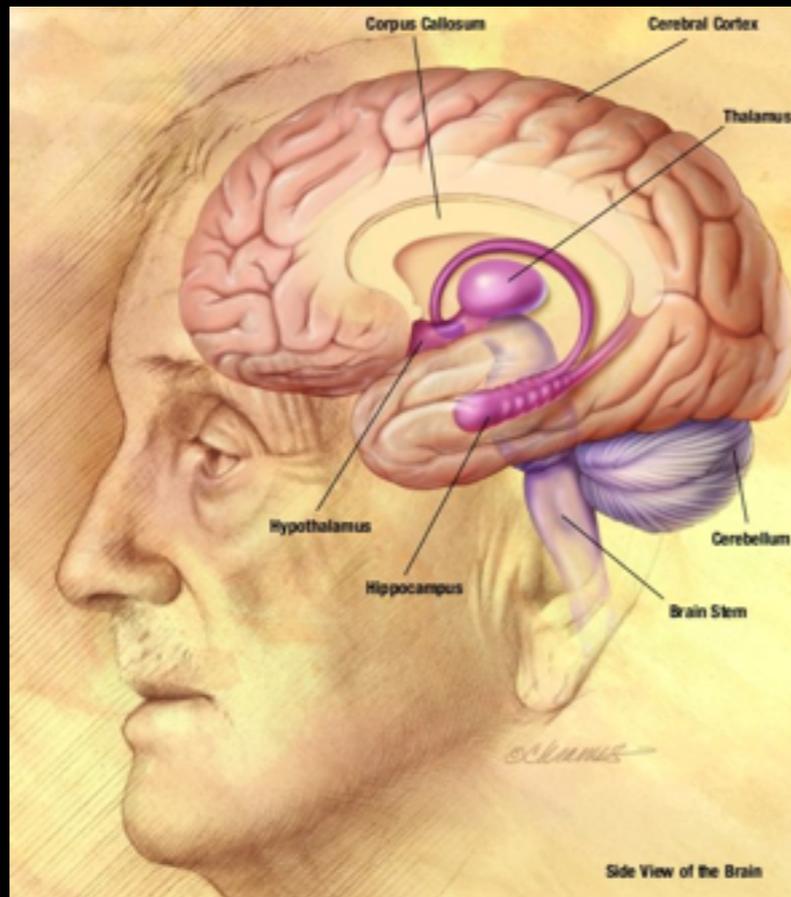
4 Common Misunderstandings



4. The most critical misunderstanding is that cognitive and narrative messages are the most significant element of identity formation.

Cognitive/Narrative Dimension of Identity

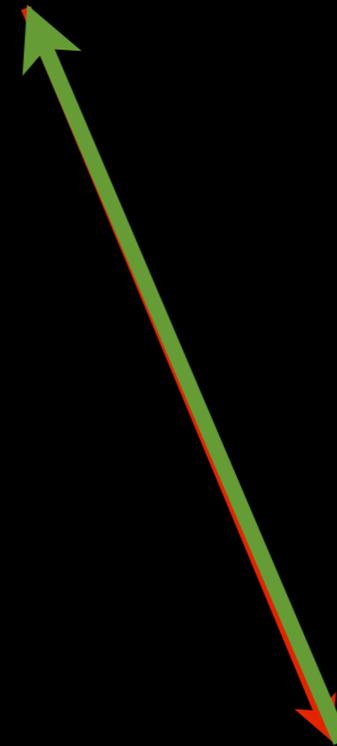
4 Opportunities for Growth



Explore the world of
practice & experience!

Identity Formation

Cognitive/Narrative



Experiences

Habits & Practices

Why?



DENIAL

I know nothing!

Aristotle: Humans are the rational creature.
Lose: Humans are the rationalizing creature.

Why?



DENIAL

I know nothing!

Q: In change or die situations, how many change?

Why?



Cognitive Dissonance: a conflict between belief & practice...

Why?



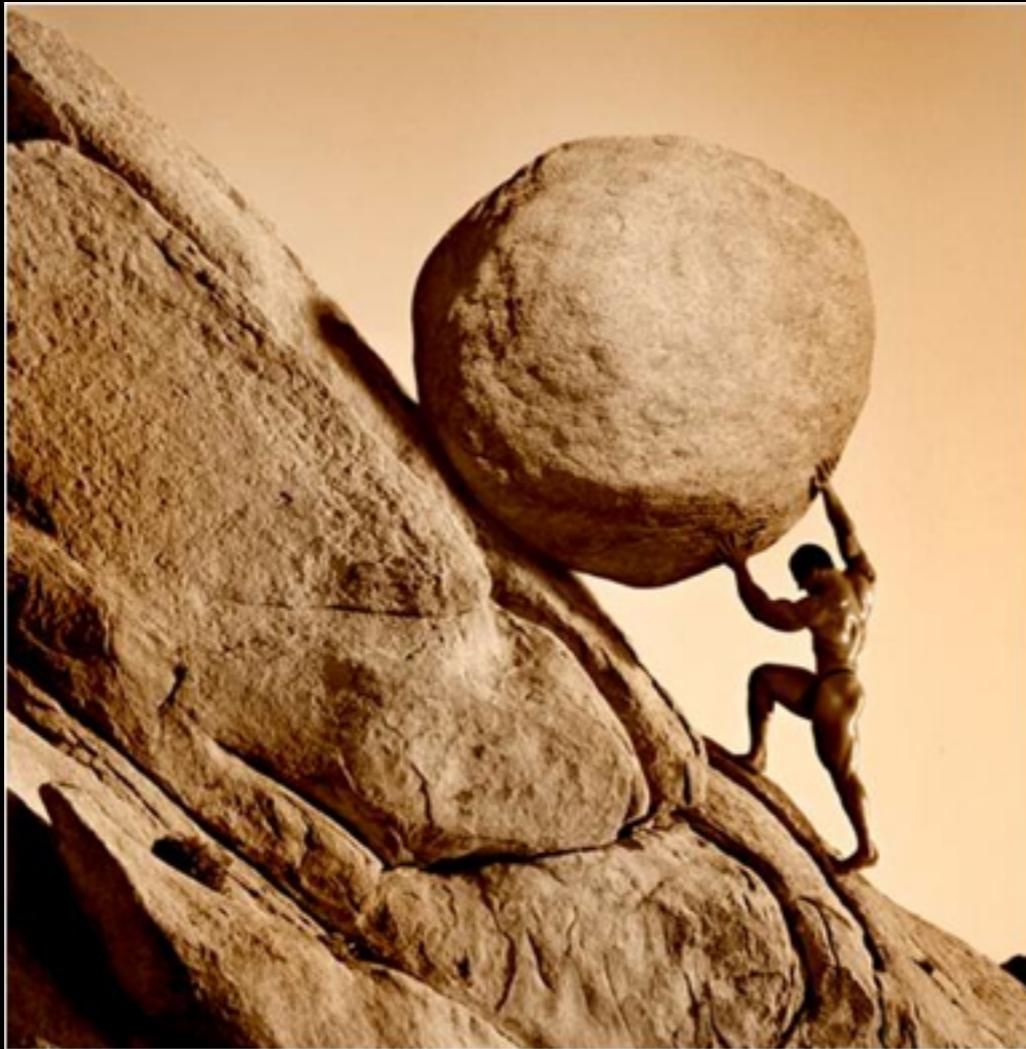
...that is incredibly uncomfortable
and ultimately intolerable.

Why?



And precisely because we are highly cognitive we find it easier to adjust our cognition.

Habits & Practices: The Behavioral Dimension of Identity



Why is changing behavior
so d*% hard



Because change itself is pretty d*&% hard!



And we often misunderstand the dynamics of both habits and change.

Habits & Practices



I. Habits serve a purpose....

...which means they
need to be dependable...

...which means they're
hard to change...

...and that's a good thing!

3 Principles of Changing Habits/Practices



1. Change is difficult in groups, but nearly possible alone

Support groups are essential.

3 Principles of Changing Habits/Practices



2. Big Change is often easier than incremental change.

Plan something worthwhile.

3 Principles of Changing Habits/Practices



3. If the change matters, then everything needs to be affected.

Q: Does *everything* we do align with what is the *most important* thing we do?

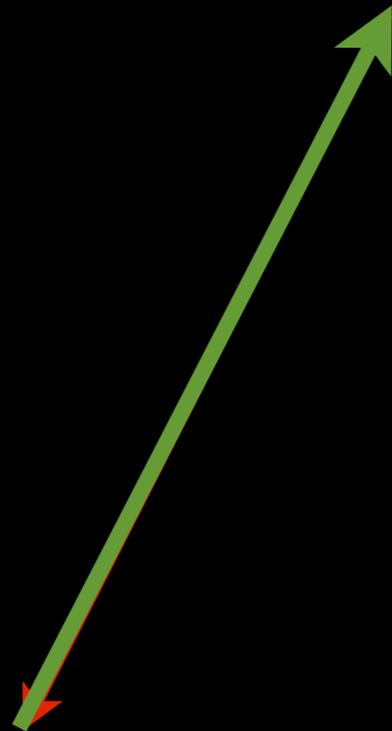
Identity Formation

Cognitive/Narrative



Experiences

Habits & Practices



Identity Formation

Cognitive/Narrative



Experiences



Habits & Practices

The Role of Experience in Identity Formation



I. Experiences - good and bad - invite reflection (change in cognition) and adjustment of practices (change in habits).

The Role of Experience in Identity Formation



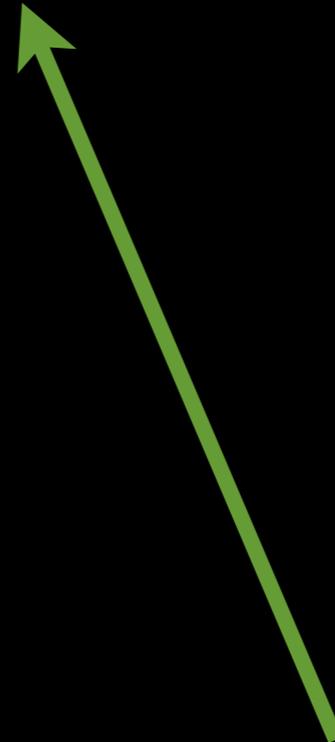
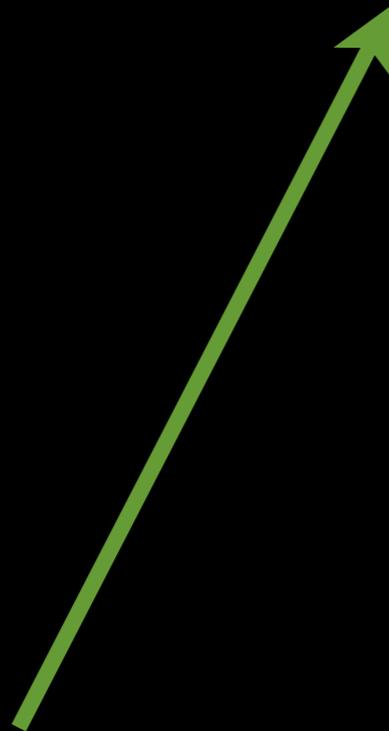
2. Experiences don't just happen to us.

We can and do create experiences.

So create some!

Identity Formation ~ Creating a Culture of Generosity

Cognitive/Narrative



Experiences



Habits & Practices

Creating a culture of generosity is entirely possible



But know this: Practice is everything!

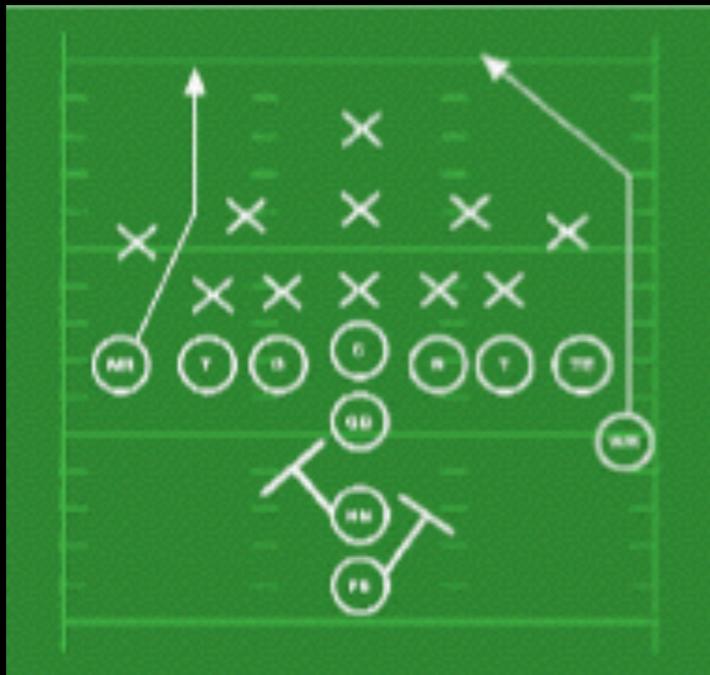
Good news & Bad news.

Bad news first:

There is no playbook.

Bad news first:

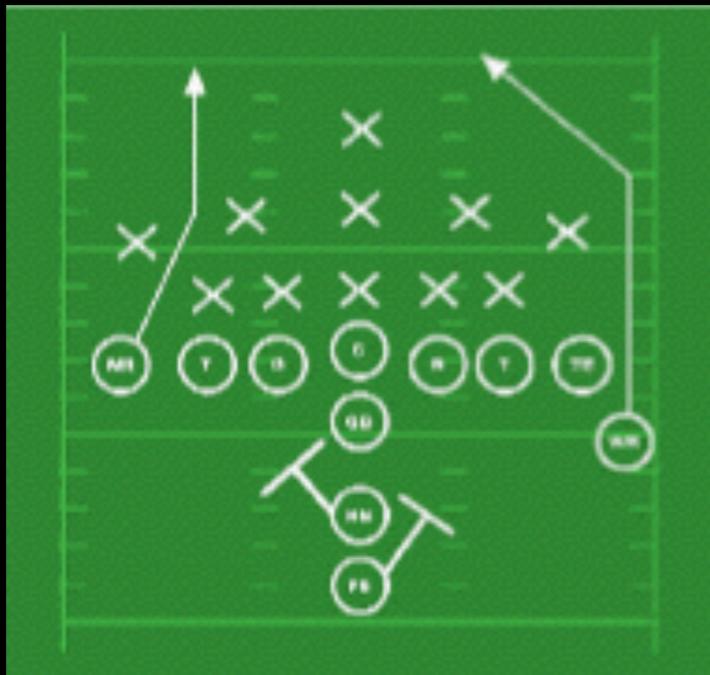
There is no playbook.



But the good news is...

But the good news is...

There is no playbook.



But the good news is...

There is no playbook.



Experiment

But the good news is...

There is no playbook.



Experiment



Play

But the good news is...

There is no playbook.



Experiment



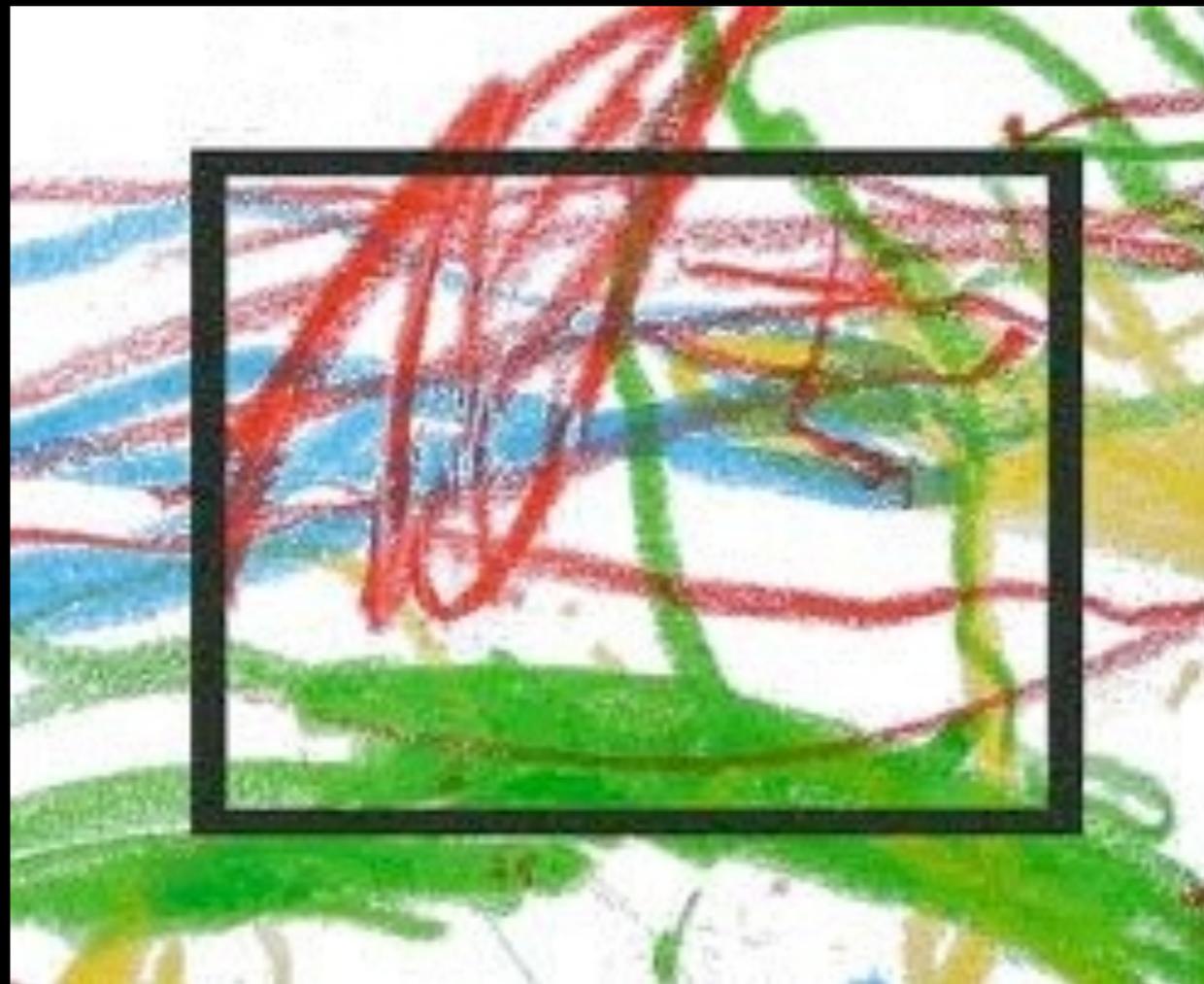
Play



Let go!

But the good news is...

There is no playbook.

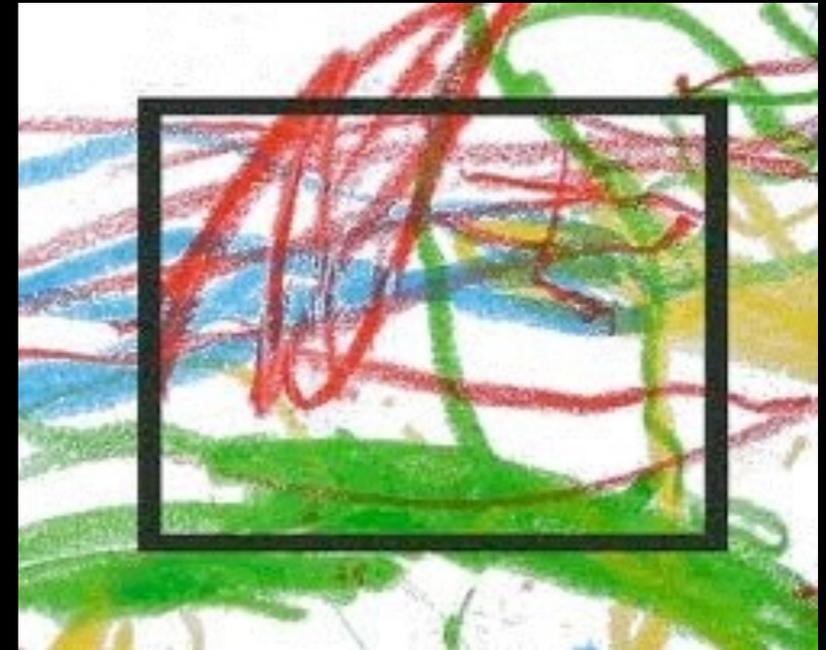


Exercises in Coloring Outside the Lines

I. Send people to
look for abundance.

“We have nothing here but five
loaves and two fish.” And he
said, “Bring them here to me.”

~Matthew 14:17-18



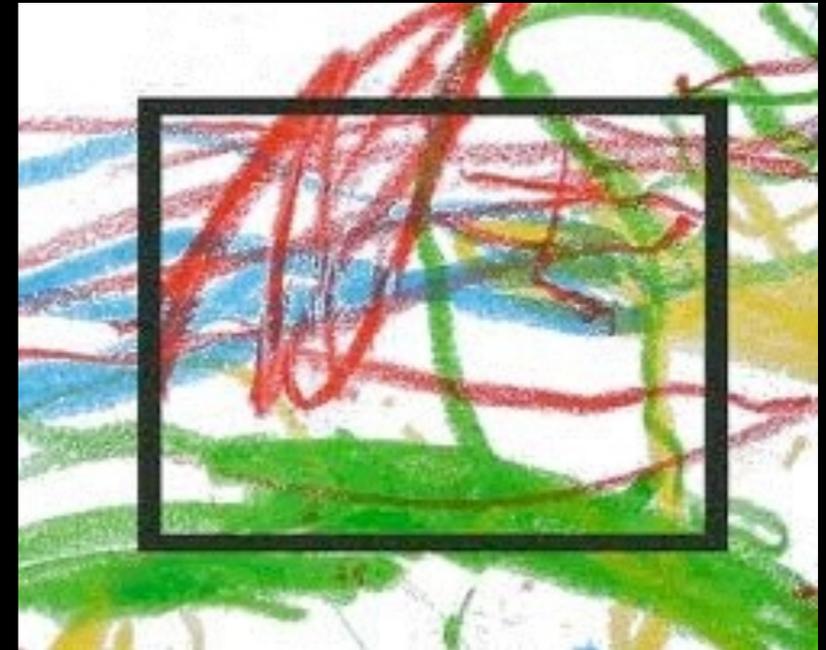
Have loaves and fishes plaster the walls.

Exercises in Coloring Outside the Lines

2. Cultivate Faithful Dependence.

You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for labourers deserve their food.

~Matthew 11:9-10



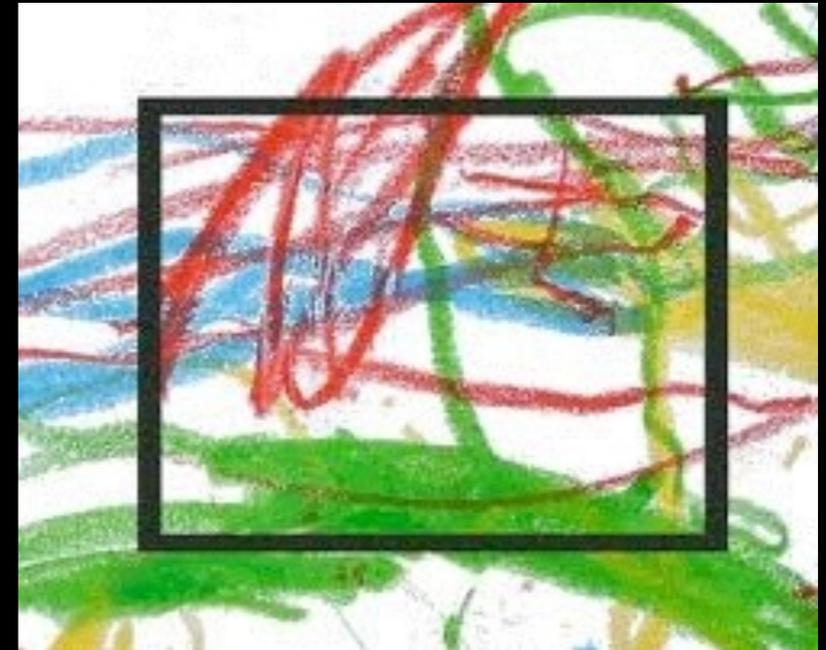
- a) Form “simply enough” small groups.
- b) Form “faithful finances” conversation groups.

Exercises in Coloring Outside the Lines

3. Create an experience of reflective abundance.

And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." But God said to him, "You fool!"

~Luke 12:19-20

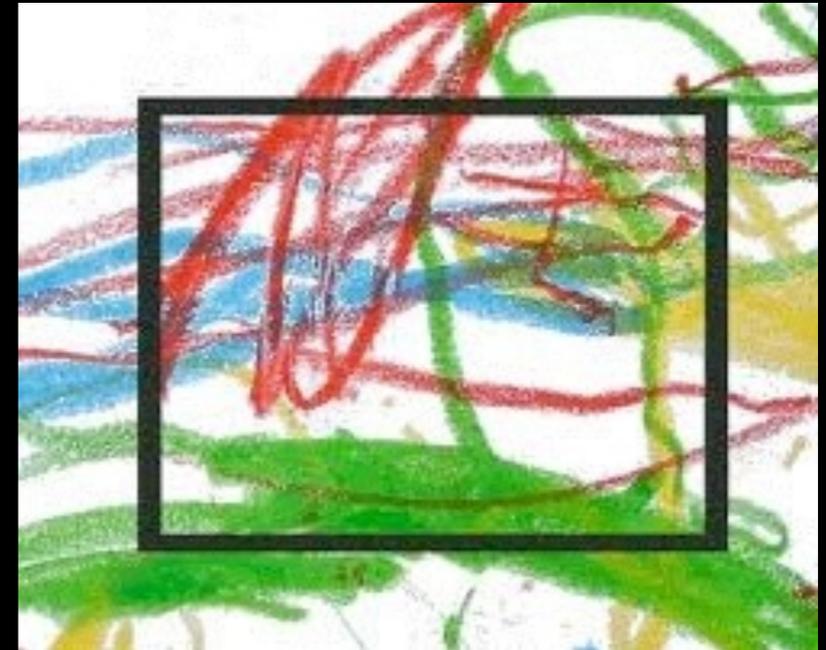


Share responsibility for generosity with others.

Exercises in Coloring Outside the Lines

4. Practice talking about abundance.

“Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” ~Phil. 4:6



Starting everything with conversations about blessing.

**THERE WILL BE OBSTACLES.
THERE WILL BE DOUBTERS.
THERE WILL BE MISTAKES.
BUT WITH HARD WORK,
THERE ARE NO LIMITS.**

I thank my God every time I remember you,
constantly praying with joy in every one of my
prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the
gospel from the first day until now.



