

LOVING GENEROSITY

Life is not about things. It's about learning how to love. And one of the best ways to learn to love is through generosity—giving your time, money, effort, and energy. When you're generous, you're affirming that God and people matter most to you. In other words, what matters most is love.

Every time you give—whether that's giving your time, your money, your effort, or your energy—you reveal what matters to you.

When we spend our life building generously into people and relationships, we're living in the light of heaven. We're living in love.

Think about the people you're most grateful for from your own life. Most of those are probably people who have invested time, money, effort, or energy in you. You earn a living by what you make, but you earn the respect and gratitude of others by what you give out of a loving heart (Philippians 4:14-18).

Generous Like Jesus

An amazing transformation takes place when we live generously in every area of our life. The grip of materialism and selfishness starts to break, and our hearts grow bigger. But something even greater happens: we become like Jesus.

What is Jesus like? One of His characteristics is His outrageous, lavish, and radical generosity (2 Corinthians 8:9; John 3:16). Everything we have—the air and water, our brain and heartbeat—is a total gift of God's generosity. In fact, without God's generosity, we'd have nothing.

So why does God want us to live generously? Because He wants us to be like Him, and that means He wants us to be generous!

God didn't put us on Earth to live for ourselves. Instead, He put us here to learn how to be unselfish and focused on others. He made us to reflect Him (Ephesians 5:1-2).

Always Generous

"You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion" 2 Corinthians 9:11 (NIV).

What does it look like to "be generous on every occasion"?

It means being generous with our time, praise, sympathy, forgiveness, love, compliments, and kindness. It means being generous with our listening so that we can seek to understand others. And it means being generous with our attention so that we can be aware of the needs of people. (Rick Warren)

God cares about the motivation of our generosity – our heart. When we give our life to Christ, our hearts will be with Him (Matthew 6:21).

A generosity that reflects our relationship with God is an attitude, not an amount (2 Corinthians 8:12, Colossians 3:17).

Generosity with Joy

You know God has done a great work in your heart; you know you are becoming more Christlike when you give joyfully. The Bible says, *"There is more happiness in giving than in receiving"* (Acts 20:35).

The New Testament insists that we belong completely to God, and we are not our own, for we were bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Everything we have belongs to God, and we are to be generous stewards of all that we have temporarily been given (Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 12:42-48, 16:1-13, 19:11-27).

When we become generous people, God will be honoured, and others will be blessed and we'll be blessed (Acts 2:35). God values giving over receiving. So, we don't give to receive, we give generously because that's who God is and what He values and what He values He blesses!

Generosity Encouraged - 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

- + *Delight in Giving*
- + *Don't Give Out of Duty*
- + *Giving is a Considered Decision*
- + *Giving becomes Spiritually Enriching*

Because of His grace, generosity ought to be a way of life for us. Rivers of resources should flow through every church simply because of our response to God's grace (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

Can you imagine the day when our church has more than enough to fulfil every vision and dream God gives us to reach the lost and the least? Can you imagine a day when we become one of the largest ways our city is blessed because of what we generously give? I believe it's possible when God touches our hearts and we live with loving generosity.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss what it looks like to be generous. Share examples of recent generosity that have been shown to you.
2. Discuss how being like Jesus (a disciple or follower of Jesus), should then be reflected by being generous.
3. Does being generous and giving result in joy for you? Why or why not?
4. We live in a consumerist world that works on a 'fee for service' mentality. Are we in danger that this attitude has crept into the church? "I give my offering therefore I am entitled to..." Reflect on 2 Corinthians 9:6-7.
5. How is it that God through the Holy Spirit has gifted you to be a generous blessing to others?
6. How can you increase in being generous towards others and thereby reflect the nature of a generous God?
7. What is it that you need to surrender to Jesus to allow you to be a generous person?