

5 Commitments to Change Your Life Forever

The Commitment of Generosity

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 September 29, 2019 Bob Szoke

Illustration: I love this topic because it's a lot more popular than one might first think. Usually, most of us just go from paycheck to paycheck without even considering the possibility of being generous, but I think that might be a mistake. As we go through the text today, I want it to be understood that *there isn't a person in this room who could not change the rest of his/her life by being generous. And, let me add, being generous doesn't have to do with money, but with the heart, as you would well imagine.*



Let me share with you a moment in my life that changed a lot of my thinking. Many of you know that before coming to Impact, I worked in fundraising and development for a few years, helping to start new churches. There was an occasion when I was attending a seminar on mass mailings. (A mass mailing like what most of us receive from the Red Cross, banks wanting us to use their credit cards, advertisements that are typical with mass mailings, which most of us don't even bother opening. This seminar though was devoted to not-for-profit organizations). I was in Chicago, at the seminar seated with 7 other people at a table. The room was full of people from different walks of life, all here for the same reason, to learn. As we became acquainted with each other at the table, I described my role and work in helping to start new churches. (I was sure there was no more noble and worthy cause than that!) When it came time for the person setting next to me, she introduced herself as a representative from Planned Parenthood, abortion services. I will have to say this was a most difficult moment for me. *She and I were at the extreme opposites in our values.* She was as



passionate as I was that the causes in which we believed were the most important. She, like myself, was being trained in how to help and encourage people to be generous and promote what we thought were the important things to help change people's lives, forever.

That was a life changing moment for me as I came to understand the need for people to be generous and help in moving things forward with the Kingdom of God.

But, there was another moment that left an impression in my mind, and that was when I read about a resident in NW Indiana who died and left hundreds of thousands of dollars for cats in the region. This sort of angered me, because I couldn't believe that someone would honestly leave that kind of money to care for cats. I thought to myself, "Here's someone who is generous and leaves money knowing that he/she would never see the benefit, never enjoy the accomplishments these funds could make... yet somehow generosity sparked this person's heart. **It angered me that it was for cats, not people.**



Generosity is a great subject, especially for believers. I believe in generosity. I believe in helping other people to be generous. I'd like to encourage you to become committed to generosity as well. And, let me repeat this again: **being generous isn't about the money, but one's heart and desire to serve and honor God, and bless others.**

(This whole idea may sound a bit foolish for those who live paycheck to paycheck, and even then borrowing on future paychecks. It's not foolishness, but an opportunity for us to come before God and offer our hearts before we offer our gifts.)

An example of generosity from a least expected person.

In **Luke 21:1-4 is the story of the widow who gives her gift in the temple. Let's read the text: As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. 2 He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 3 "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. 4 All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."**

LESSONS FROM AN UNLIKELY EXAMPLE

- How do we read this account of giving? Do we even want to know? Maybe not, because her example might be embarrassing to us.
- Read this and grasp that she was sacrificial, even though the amount given was not a lot. By many standards, her gift amounted to literally pennies.
- But, reading this, and listening to the response of Jesus, we understand her heart, we understand her great love for the Lord.
- But, seeing how she gave, Jesus said that she gave more than the others. Listen to this kind of language, because this is the language of generosity as well as sacrifice.
- Generosity is one way to explain what's going on.
 - She didn't have to give it all, but she did.
 - She probably didn't have to give anything for who would have even encouraged her to do what she did? None would.

- There's a lot of things she could have done instead, but she didn't. We get a clear picture of her heart.
- **Generosity sometimes can only be explained as the heart's desire to give.**

Today, I want to talk about being committed to generosity and how that can change how you live the rest of your life. It's not really about how much you have, but how you hold it, how your heart deals with it, what you do with it and who you want to be.

Before I begin, let me share some things that will happen in our lives if we become committed to being generous, because of who God is in our lives. (Adapted from an article on Twitter, referenced by Scott Cochenaeur)

WHAT IF WE DO

- **You won't be super generous all at once,** but you'll begin with smaller things as you see God using you, your gifts, and others. You will become more and more generous.
- **You'll develop generosity goals.** You'll figure out how to go without something (and you probably won't call it sacrifice), but you'll be more excited to see how God can bless others because of your generosity.
- **You will be generous with more than just money.** You'll expand your concerns to other areas that concern who Christ is in you.
- **You will be wanting to honor God** not just by doing what you can but by what you see God wanting to do in your life.
- **You will be content with what you have,** but not with your generosity. You'll keep looking for more ways to be generous.
- **You will be thinking more about the Kingdom of God** and how you can bless it.
- **No one will be able to arm twist or guilt you into giving.** You will be able to make connections with your faith and how God can use you to bless others.
- **You won't be satisfied with your current level of generosity** but constantly looking for ways to do more.
- **You will be a more thankful person.**
- **You will understand that giving and generosity is a heart issue,** regardless of the amount.

These are but some of the ways your life will change forever if you choose to become committed to generosity. But, there's a bit more that I need to add, this from Larry Alcorn.

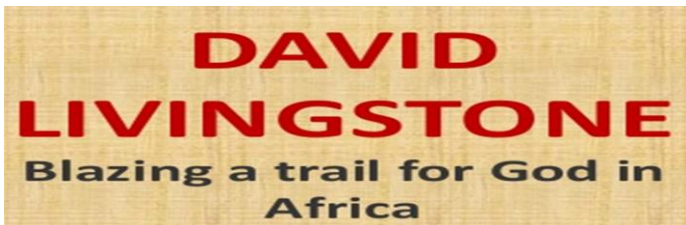
& MORE

- **We become more Christ-like.** ... Dixie Fraley told me, "We're most like God when we're giving." Our giving is a reflexive response to the grace of God in our lives. It doesn't come out of our altruism or philanthropy—it comes out of the transforming work of Christ in us.

- **We gain freedom from materialism.** How many wish they could be free from materialism and things? Isn't it safe to say that the woman in the temple who gave her small though generous offering was free from materialism? It's why she could do what she did.
- **We are infused with joy.** Something we will look at is **2 Corinthians 9:7**, where the verse says, **"God loves a cheerful giver."** There's a sense of joy as we realize how God can and does use us.

We store up eternal rewards in Heaven. Jesus told the rich young ruler in **Matthew 19:21** to go and sell all he had, give it to the poor, and he would then have treasure in heaven.

(David Livingstone quote): *"I place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the kingdom of God. If anything will advance the interests of the kingdom, it shall*



be given away or kept, only as by giving or keeping it I shall most promote the glory of Him to whom I owe all my hopes in time or eternity." Our job is to follow Christ and value that relationship higher than anything else we

do. Generosity is an explanation of how to use what God has given us, and as well to understand that generosity is an answer to how to keep our lives from being held captive by our possessions, money and things. <https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/explore-the-bible/4-ways-generosity-benefits-us.html>

The text for today is from **2 Corinthians 9:6-15**. As we read this text, I want us to **look for some specific things:**

- The **emphasis of giving and the heart.**
- **Where the seed we use comes from** and what's the proper use of it.
- **The planter's rule of thumb.** Sow sparingly, reap sparingly. Sow generously, reap generously.
- **What the heart of giving is all about, grace, love, mercy or \$\$\$.** I think it's obvious.

LOOK FOR

Background of this text

1. The background of this text begins with knowledge that a famine has spread through the land, and many in Jerusalem are suffering deeply. The year is about 40 AD and the church has been around now for about 8 years. The conversations that we read about in Galatians where Paul said he was **"eager to remember the poor"** is in direct reference to this famine..

2. **Acts 11:27-30** During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) 29 The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. 30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

- a. **Contributions** were being sent to Jerusalem from all over.

Paul's reference in **1 Corinthians 16:2-4** refers to this need and giving on the first day of the week. (This is how we also know that many Gentiles didn't worship on the Sabbath, Saturday. In fact, remember this if

entering a discussion about why we don't worship on the Sabbath. It's a New Testament precedent, and also because of all that Gentile Christians were doing, never once are they told or reprimanded for not worshiping on the Sabbath. It's why we can worship on Sunday, or Thursday, or ??). **2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. 3 Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. 4 If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.**

3. More of how this need was met is explained by what took place among the churches in Macedonia and how that offering would be handled. **2 Corinthians 8:1-5** And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.

- a. Paul calls it generosity. He will further discuss in the next chapter of 2 Corinthians.

4. This is the same line of thinking that then is behind the passage being studied today. The emphasis is to help other believers and to arrange for the gifts to be given ahead of time, before Paul arrives. **2 Corinthians 9:5-6** So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.



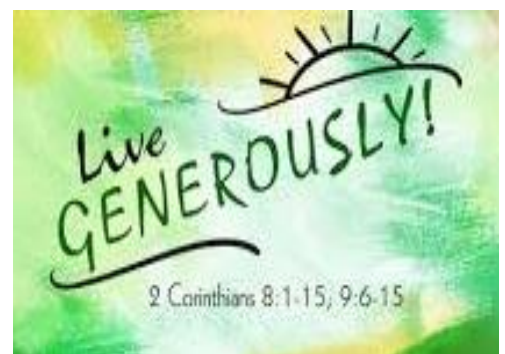
5. The background of this text has all to do with human need, but specifically human need among brothers and sisters in Christ. In this context generosity finds its roots, finds it meaning.
- a. Generosity has all to do with sharing the love of Christ, which in this case includes helping to meet the needs of others. Giving, as we will see, was from the heart, and not scripted, commanded, or anything that would deter it from being a gift given which demonstrates the love and honor of Christ.

The Text

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9 As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." 10 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. 11 You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. 12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. 13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. 14 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. 15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Principles of Generosity

Illustration: The Seed Grain Paul is reminding them of the work of the farmer, how he has to plough up the soil and harrow it, and fertilize it, and prepare it for the seed and then sow his crop. The more he works on his land the more he anticipates the harvest. He looks at the sky, and he irrigates, and he sets up some scarecrows to drive the birds away, and he gets up early each day with his shotgun and guards his crops. The more energy he invests, the more involved he becomes in the harvest. **In whatever you invest your time and energy and money and emotions then those things will become very important to you. If you invest your money in an expensive car then you will**



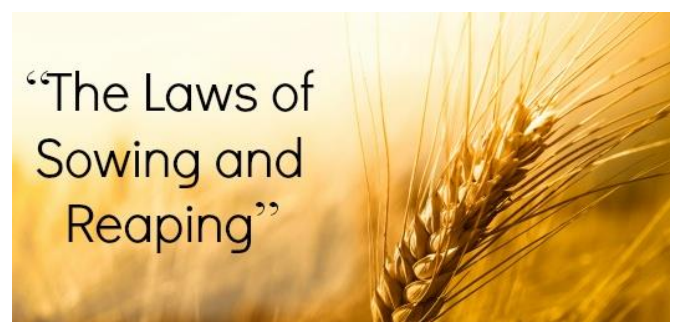
garage it each night and keep it polished. If you buy stock in Amazon.com you will start watching the stocks and shares figures to see how the company is doing. If you buy a building and rent it out then you will ensure that it is well maintained. If you invest time and money in your marriage you are motivated to keep working on it and maintain your love. The more you put into something the more you hope to get out of it.

There is a story of a sailor who was shipwrecked on a South Sea island. He was seized by the inhabitants and carried shoulder high to a throne and proclaimed their king. He was given everything he asked which they were able to provide him. Then he learned that their king ruled for one year only. “What happens to him then?” he asked. They told him that every king was abandoned on a lonely island to starve to death. There was no escape for this man; that was his fate, and so this is what he decided to do. In that year he issued royal decrees week after week sending carpenters and builders and farmers to that island. Boats and a fine house were built. He learned how to fish. Groves of fruit trees were planted, animals were taken across there and put in pens. When his reign was ended he was exiled not to a barren rock but to a paradise of plenty. **Each one of us is like that sailor king.** Our entire life is like a year, and then death banishes us away from all our contacts in this world. **In the short time at our disposal we have opportunity to prepare ahead of time by sowing generously so that we will reap generously in the land to which we are going.**

<http://www.alfredplacechurch.org.uk/index.php/sermons/2-corinthians/91-7-sowing-and-reaping-generously/> What we invest in, just like the grain is where we will reap, and where we have not invested, we will not reap. That’s the Law of the Harvest.

Principle of the Planting/Harvesting. (At least that’s what I’m calling it). **Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.**

1. The Law of planting and harvesting is an obvious way to understand giving and generosity. Plant 1 tomato and all one gets is the amount of tomatoes one plant can produce. Plant 1 potato and all one gets is the amount of potatoes that one plant can produce.



a. **The law is this: sowing sparingly meets minimal needs, for there is much need which yet remains unmet. Sowing generously produces more results and meets more needs, and also will produce more generosity.**

i. By the way, did you know that generosity is contagious? Here’s a quote from an independent study on generosity affirming that it is contagious.

ii. Through a lab simulated “public-goods game,”... researchers showed that when one person gives money to help others, a domino effect of kindness is created... One person's generosity spreads first to three people and then to the nine people that those three people interact with in the future, and then to still other individuals in subsequent waves of the experiment. This pattern seems remarkably similar to the dynamic at play in online social networks. One person positively experiencing the benefits of sharing for themselves and for the group further increases the ability and motivation of others to share beyond their immediate connections. <https://www.shareable.net/is-sharing-contagious/>

2. **Giving generously stems from the heart**, a heart where it's not about the percentages, or giving from wrong motives. It's a simple principle.

a. Giving should rest on the principle that God bountifully blesses us and it's our turn for our gifts to bless others. Generosity says, “Yes, I will.”

3. But, before I leave this first principle let me clarify something.

a. This teaching is not about us giving away lots of money and then thinking God will repay you with lots more money. **Proverbs 19:17 He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done.** This verse has been misapplied, misinterpreted and misused by some to create what's known as the “wealth gospel.”

b. The “**wealth gospel**” would have one think that financial abundance is the mark of a true believer, and poverty is the lack of faith.

Whatever you gave away, God will multiply and give it back. (Often referred to as the “seed.” The idea is that if one sows his seed with a certain televangelist, God will reward that one greatly. I know a preacher who took this to heart and wrote one of the



televangelist and shared his ministry and said, “If you send me money, from your thinking, just imagine how much God can give back to you and your ministry! Send me \$1000 of your seed money and then see. He never received anything.) Here's what one commentator says to that kind of thinking: God is watching everything that you do. He is taking note of it and will not forget it. When you have reached out and met a need of someone else, God will reward you. The methods of rewarding you may be different each time. There are times God will abundantly meet your needs. You will end up with a surplus. Other times God will fill you with His joy and peace at being able to help meet another person's needs.

Ultimately you will be rewarded in heaven for all the good things you have done.

<https://insightsfromtom.com/2017/05/30/proverbs-1917-lending-to-the-lord/>

- c. Generosity isn't about giving away your possessions/wealth and believing then that God will make you rich. That's not at all what generosity is about. The trouble is we live in a selfish culture and if the Scripture is twisted a bit, it's easy to believe that if I give someone my last \$10, then God is going to give me back \$20. Again, it's an issue of the heart. Am I being generous or looking out for myself, thinking how I can get rich? Why did I give the \$10? Was it in hopes I'd get \$20? Or is my heart concerned about the poor and how I can bless them?

The Law of Giving 7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

1. **Illustration:** When I was in high school, I worked in a grocery store and every year the annual United Way campaign targeted all the employees.

I decided, after doing some research into the organizations which United Way supports, that I would not be participating. The store manager approached me with a stern look on his face and pointed me to the plaque that stood at the entrance to the store which indicated that for the past several years, 100% of his employees had participated. I was going to break that



tradition and he wouldn't receive his plaque. I didn't change my mind, for at that time, the United Way in the community in which I worked was actively supporting Planned Parenthood, and I in no way could be a part of that. What you may find interesting is that a few months after my decline to participate, he had a new plaque on the wall stating 100% employee participation. ***I didn't say anything but apparently I wasn't the only one who felt like I did. I wasn't going to be strong armed or made to feel guilty because I chose not to participate.***

2. This verse details the law of giving as it relates to generosity.
 - a. Literally this verse says that one should not give out of grief or sorrow, or the need pressed by compulsion. I'll call that arm twisting, guilt instilling, giving as if one is under the gun, being pressured.
3. Another way in which people are encouraged to give is through what is known as the "cry wolf" method of obtaining money.
 - a. This is the situation where the wolf is at the door, the situation is so bad that the doors may close! The listener is made to "feel a sense of guilt" if this great work goes down. The truth is, we will give when we hear that cry, and we will do it once, maybe twice, but probably that's the scope of it.

- b. **Sadly most believe that churches ask for money that way, that is the wolf is at the door, the cry is that “we aren’t meeting budget, the building payment is overdue, payrolls aren’t going to be met, the flood is outside the door and ready to come in and shut us down.”** We’ve all heard of situations like this, and probably we’ve responded to some. Nothing wrong in responding.
 - c. What’s happened is that generosity has been couched in a “rescue” kind of thinking. Sadly, we become tired of hearing these kind of appeals for giving.
4. **The kind of giver God desires is the cheerful giver, not someone driven by fears, guilt, or pressures.** Literally this verse reads, **“God loves a hilarious giver.”**



- a. The word picture is that our word for cheerful is the word for hilarious.
 - b. Think for a moment. **Who is the one person who is known for being a most hilarious giver? Santa Claus.** In the minds of kids, he holds no grudges, he holds nothing back, is extravagant, and ever surprising. (I’m not holding Santa Claus up as the model for generosity, but I use him to get the idea, the visual illustration of what generosity can look like.)
 - c. Cheerful giving avoids a lot of things: guilt, complaints, anger, lack of trust. In its place though is the heart, which is open to display itself.
 - d. Cheerful giving is about being gracious, finding and experiencing joy, and giving that is from the heart.
5. **The Law of giving is about the heart, and why it gives. God’s preference: a cheerful, hilarious heart.**

The Law of Contentment 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9 As it is written: “He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” 10 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.

- 1. **This is about being content with what you have and where you are in life, but the amazing thing is, wherever that is, one has the ability to be content, and also be**



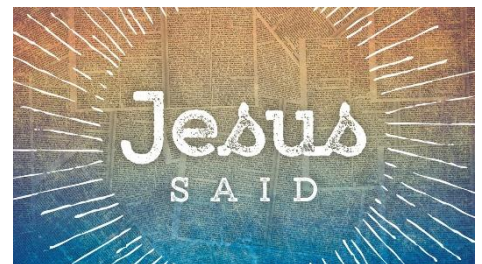
generous. It’s not a contradiction. One may say, “How can I be generous when I can’t even get by?” The answer is in this text where God’s word says, “You will abound in every good work.”

- a. **Generosity is about what God can do through us, not what we think we can do alone!** Remember the widow in the temple who gave her two small copper coins? She gave more than the others, from Jesus perspective. Isn't that what matters?
- 2. **God's abundance is not so that we can live adequately, but so that we can be generous in every good work.**

- a. Here's the truth: contentment gives us the freedom to be generous. There's the freedom from worry and hoarding. There's freedom that one doesn't have to hold onto things, because as Jesus says, **Matthew 6:19-21 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

- b. It's the freedom not to let things possess us, the freedom, as Jesus says, **"Matthew 6:25-34 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.**

29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.



- 3. **Contentment is about being at peace with God, and that contentment allows one to then be generous with what one has.** It's about the heart and how one trusts God, but yet can use what God puts in one's hands.

- a. Paul, in referring to the Macedonian churches and their people, says that their generosity didn't come from their wealth... they weren't wealthy! **2 Corinthians 8:2-6 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty**

welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. Contentment where they were in life, though living in poverty, did not keep them from being generous. Nor should it keep us from being generous.

b. As one author says, **“God’s provision means we will have enough to live, and enough to give and share in every good work.”**

c. **One church put together what they considered as a way to learn contentment. Here’s 4 principles they shared:**

i. **Refuse to compare yourself with others.**

Exodus 20:17 “You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

ii. **Enjoy what you have, Ecclesiastes 5:9 “If God gives a man wealth and property... he should be grateful and enjoy what he has... it is a gift from God.**

iii. **Remember that life is not about things. Jesus said, ‘Watch out and guard yourselves from every kind of greed; because your true life is not made up of the things you own, no matter how rich you may be.’” Luke 12:15 (GN)**

iv. **Focus on what will last forever. We fix our attention, not on the things that are seen, but on things that are unseen. What can be seen lasts only for a time; but what cannot be seen lasts forever.” 2 Cor. 4:18**

<http://www.livinghopebc.ca/message-series/2018/4/16/the-law-of-contentment>

v. **In contentment one finds himself able to become generous!**

4. The Law of Contentment is this:

a. To receive with gratitude and gladness what we receive, to share generously, and to find joy and contentment in what we have.

b. The abundance of receiving God’s blessings is not a green light to the accumulation of riches based on giving and receiving.

5. Nurturing generosity is the standard for New Testament giving, because it is based on receiving God’s grace, and His riches to us, and our gratitude for all He does and will do.



We need An Action Plan to become Committed to Generosity and change the rest of our lives? Here's a suggestion:



Illustration: MOTHER TERESA STORY: Mother Teresa visited Australia. A new recruit to the monastery in Australia was assigned to be her guide and “gofer” during her stay. The young man was so thrilled and excited at the prospect of being so close to this woman. He dreamed of how much he would learn from her and what they would talk about. But during her visit, he became frustrated. Although he was constantly near her, he never had the opportunity to say one word to Mother Teresa. There were always other people for her to meet. Finally, her tour was over, and she was due to fly to New Guinea. In desperation, the friar had his opportunity to speak to Mother Teresa. **He said to her, “If I pay my own fare to New Guinea, can I sit next to you on the plane so I can talk to you and learn from you?”** Mother Teresa looked at him. **“You have enough money to pay airfare to New Guinea?”** she asked. **“Oh, yes,”** he replied eagerly. **“Then give that money to the poor,”** she said. **“You’ll learn more from that than anything I can tell you.”** **The problem was the young man wanted to experience a feeling when he needed to simply learn by doing.**

<http://www.kluth.org/church/illustrations.htm>

It's time to learn by doing. Here's a plan to get you started, or to help you along your way in developing the kind of giving that Scripture talks about. We can be unlike so many who see the offering time as a dredge, a low point in church, a time where people would rather go somewhere and stay until it's time for the sermon. Today is a great day to become a generous giver, no matter what the amount. After all, it's not about the money, but one's heart.

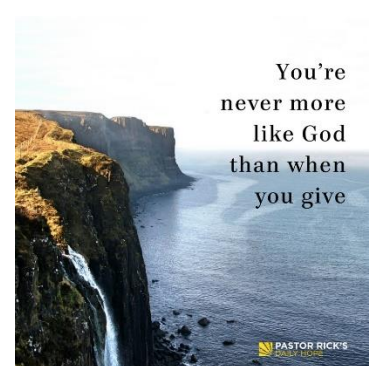


1. The place to begin in adopting the generous kind of biblical thinking is by recognizing that it's not like an on/off switch. That is, **it begins in the heart before it begins anywhere else. Any commitment to Christ, any commitment that is going to change the rest of your life must begin here!**
 - a. **Make the decision that your giving isn't going to be boring, isn't going to be humdrum, isn't going to be about giving a certain %, but rather going to come from a heart that is searching for joy, a heart full of gratitude.**
 - b. Make the commitment about being free from the love of money, and that you are now free to be generous.
 - c. Make the commitment that trusting God by what He's provided is as important as what we do with it.

2. **Check to make sure your generosity comes from your heart, love for God, His people, His church, His ministry among people, and not the \$\$ you are giving.**
 - a. Heart check: Do I really care? Am I a thankful person and responding first with gratitude? Am I doing this to impress people? (You may want to know that our Back to School Block Party is greatly funded by people who “don’t want others to know what they’ve done. In fact, many of those who give to Impact don’t want it known who they are, for fear it might be misinterpreted). **See their hearts though?**
 - b. One more heart check: that my giving is not motivated by guilt, but by love.
3. **Am I learning to sow generously?**
 - a. Please beware of this kind of talk: “If God gives me a raise, I’ll start giving.” I’ve heard people say this, as if they really mean it. It’s as if God will gain if the person gets more money. It just doesn’t work like that!
 - b. **It’s not about the money, but about using what’s already available to you... remember the talk about being content?**
 - c. Gratitude is how we learn to sow generously, and reap a huge harvest of blessings from God.

Conclusion: The Orphan and the Soldier

Shortly after World War II came to a close, Europe began picking up the pieces. Much of the Old Country had been ravaged by war and was in ruins. Perhaps the saddest sight of all was that of little orphaned children starving in the streets of those war-torn cities. Early on a chilly morning, an American soldier was making his way back to the barracks in London. As he turned the corner in his Jeep, he spotted a little lad with his nose pressed to the window of a pastry shop. Inside the cook was kneading dough for a fresh batch of doughnuts. The hungry boy stared in silence, watching every move. The soldier pulled his Jeep to the curb, stopped, got out and walked quietly over to where the little fellow was standing. Through the steamed-up window he could see the mouth-watering morsels as they were being pulled from the oven, piping hot. The boy salivated and released a slight groan as he watched the cook place them onto the glass-enclosed counter, ever so carefully. The soldier's heart went out to the nameless orphan as he stood beside him. **"Son...would you like some of those?"** The boy was startled. **"Oh, yeah...I would!"** The American stepped inside and bought a dozen, put them in a bag, and walked back to where the lad was standing in the foggy cold of the London morning. He smiled, held out the bag, and said simply, **"Here you are."** As he turned to walk away, he felt a tug on his coat. He looked back and heard the child ask quietly, **"Mister...are you God?"** **We are never more like God than when we give.** "God so loved the world, that he gave ..." <https://www.generouschurch.com/illustrations-on-generosity>



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Questions:

1. What have I learned today about my giving? What are some things Scripture teaches me that I either didn't know, want to know, or now understand?
2. What are the obstacles in my life keeping me from being generous, or obstacles I've overcome that have helped me to be generous with what God has given me to use?
3. Will this topic become a matter of prayer so that I am convinced, "it's not about the money, but my heart?"
4. What do I need to do because Jesus is Lord, and it's time for me to change the rest of my life and become committed to being a generous follower of Jesus?

GENEROSITY Questions

