



Generosity
A BIBLE STUDY WITH
ANDREW NOLT

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WEEK 1

WHY GENEROSITY?



Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:7

In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said, “It is more blessed to give than receive.”

ACTS 20:35

“Generosity is a bi-product of understanding the value of God.” - Francis Chan

Is generosity a big deal? It often seems like we as humans, and unfortunately Christians, try to get by with giving as little as we can. It seems there is more effort given to make sure we have more than enough. Thankfully there are many exceptions. More often than not, though, it seems instead of asking: How much can we give to a situation? We ask: What is the least we can give, but still get the credit and attention we so desperately crave? On a daily basis, the war within us, as believers, can be quite something.

I like to think the church of today still does a pretty good job of taking care of needs we see around us, especially the ones within our own walls. It's not like we are ignoring obvious needs at every corner. I don't think anyone who had a need expressed would have that need ignored, but doesn't it seem like the early church had a better grasp on how to handle 'things' better than we do? It seems they had a better understanding that nothing was their own. They were a better example of living as Christ did when He shared the world with us. They understood that this life has nothing to do with houses, cars and bank accounts, and everything to do with living for others and making their life a little bit better. Acts 4 tells us the early church didn't consider any possessions their own. Some even sold their land and

homes to bring the money for a group cause. Did you catch the absurdity of those two sentences? The idea that we would live, as Christ did, with the needs of others at the forefront of our minds. I for one am intrigued by the idea of this early church way of living. We are living in a world where we are bombarded with the message that we must get 'ours' every minute of every day. How much of a cultural impact would it be if the church still went out of its way to supply the needs of the hurting world around us. Would the message of the gospel have more of an impact?

The more I look into and study the topic of generosity, it becomes more and more impossi-

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ble to separate it from our responsibility to steward. Kind of like walking a tightrope (something I won't be doing anytime soon), there is an incredible balance needed between the two. The foundational thing we need to understand about stewarding is this fact: we don't own anything. We love to think we do. We love to act like we do. Everything in our world even tells us that we do; yet as believers, we must have an understanding that 'it', whatever 'it' is, isn't mine. It is in my life for no other reason than to steward it and to steward it well. Kind of sobering isn't it? Kind of freeing isn't it?

An example of this in my own life was a job transition that took place. For 9 years I helped manage a very successful furniture store. For 9 years I found it extremely easy and found tremendous joy in being generous with customers - which was the example our owner had set for us. Whether it was a free delivery, a discount, or maybe another small free item - I loved giving to the customer. I thrived in pleasing them and making their experience a good one in their short time with us. Time after time we reaped the benefits of such actions with a tremendous customer base, fortified by repeat buyers.

I eventually decided to leave that job to start a small business endeavor from home. Just weeks after leaving, I felt God impress something on my heart. He asked me to start putting an extra item in the orders as I shipped them. We are talking about a piece that probably cost me between two to four dollars. It isn't like I am tossing in a blank check or anything; just a small token of appreciation saying, "Thank you for choosing this small business that you have never heard of!" I found it difficult to do, even though I consider myself to be a pretty generous person! It was conflicting. How could I be so generous at the furniture store, bless people without a second thought or hesitation; but now be wavering about giving away a three dollar cup? In a word - possession. One morning in my office, God set the record straight. Revealing quite clearly that I was treating this new little project as my own. This was something I had never even entertained at the furniture store, because it wasn't mine. Ownership was in someone else's hands. It was a lot easier to give someone else's 'things' away, but it became much more difficult when it was my own 'things' on the line. This lesson absolutely exposed areas in my life where I had not given up possession. Since then, God has given me the grace to take my deathgrip off things that I have held onto as my own. It has freed me to live life a bit more generously.

God has blessed me and you with gifts, talents, possessions, and life itself. When I wake up each morning with a solid understanding that these things aren't actually mine, it is then and only then that I can truly lead a life overflowing with generosity. A life like the one Christ exemplified. A life so centered on the needs of others, there is really no room for my wants to get in the way. This is the kind of life the world longs to see in us as believers. A life that is not caught up in the world's system of greed, trying to make our lives a

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So what do you think: Is generosity a big deal?

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THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

How do I view generosity? Is it something I even think about and try to practice?

Why make generosity a big deal? Is it really THAT important?

Do you think about generosity often? _____

Do we chalk it up as just another thing we should try to be good at as Christians?

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WEEK 2

GOD'S GENEROSITY TO US

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,
that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

JOHN 3:16

And my God will supply all your need according to
His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:19

Show me a person who isn't generous, and I will show you a person who doesn't truly comprehend what they have been given.

Have you ever worked for someone who has put in the work themselves? Have you ever worked for someone who hasn't? I have. It's a pretty big difference isn't it? It is much easier to follow after someone or their instruction, when you have seen them put the work in themselves. I can try to explain to you how to build a car; however, we wouldn't be two sentences in before it's evident that I have no idea what I am talking about. You would have no reason to seek my counsel on how to build the car you need to build; because you would want to follow the example of someone who has been through it. Someone who has set an example, rather than just hear someone talk about it.

There is obviously no greater example of generosity than God the Father Himself. God Himself sets the table, and we are invited to come take part. That is it. Nothing is needed from our side. He is throwing the party, every last detail is taken care of, and there is nothing you need to worry about - food aplenty, drinks aplenty. We just need to show up and enjoy the company, but then we overhear a conversation out by the pool. It's not long before we discover that there actually isn't enough food and soon we will probably run out.

Rather than plenty, there is actually a scarcity. We probably should be careful, and 'wise,' to start stockpiling our own food to make sure there is at least enough for ourselves. We see Linda shove 13 dinner rolls in her backpack. Then Jim put a steak in his back pocket - not wrapped up or anything - talk about messed up. We came to the dinner as royal guests of honor, now just 90 minutes later we are all running around like panicked savages only worried about 'ours' and what we can get. All because of just a little unbelief. We change the way we operate based on a small rumor that our party host (God Himself) may not be worth trusting when he says, "There is enough".

Are you following along or did I lose you? At creation God created a masterpiece. Then He does the most incredible thing ever by creating two humans to take care of it. That's like my wife and I tediously cleaning the house right before letting our two kids in, who run through it like a tornado. They are gonna screw it up! It's what we as humans seem to do best sometimes- particularly in this illustration of a garden party. A garden party unlike anything the world has ever seen. A place where worry and doubt do not need to exist. Even the thought of "there is not enough" does not need to exist. Then, we overheard that

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that God is enough.

conversation by the pool. We ask ourselves, "Is that really what God said?" Suddenly, thoughts and doubts we never knew existed creep in, and we find ourselves in the corner planning how to take matters into our own hands to make sure me and my crew are taken care of.

Again, looking at the only example I have, my own walk. It is easy to 'talk the talk' that God is enough. We sing it in songs, we read it in books, we say we believe it, and maybe, even on a preliminary level, we do. Unfortunately, when push comes to shove, I often find myself living in a way that doesn't seem to line up with the songs I just sang on Sunday. In

the blink of an eye, I am exhausting myself by striving to 'get mine'. All the while, getting distracted from the daily opportunities life brings to bless others around me, but what is the most annoying thing? This fact: when I am trying to be the provider, I never get to the point of enough. The thirst is never quenched. The drive, fueled by the belief that 'God isn't enough', is never satisfied. It's unattainable. Remember, we were invited to a party where we didn't need to bring anything. Everything was taken care of, always has been, always will be.

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ple of generosity
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It's evident God has 'put in the work'. He provides us with the perfect example of generosity through the giving of His son. As His adopted children, this generosity must become a part of our very own DNA. May we steward this gift well.

**WHEN I AM TRYING TO BE THE PROVIDER,
I NEVER GET TO THE POINT OF ENOUGH.**

THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

With all God has given and supplied in my life, does my life reflect the gratitude it should?

Does my focus dwell more on what I am still 'missing', or what I have already been given?





WEEK 3

**BEING
GENEROUS
WITH GOD**

But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You.

1 CHRONICLES 29:14

Living generously requires trust in God, rooted in a conviction that God has given us all we need.

Oh boy, here it comes. The part where the author yells at you because you haven't been tithing or giving to your local church. It's possible you may be sitting there reading this and saying to yourself "Well, I don't have much to give in the financial areas of life, so I guess I am off the hook." Don't worry, I'll try to keep my voice down when we get to that tithing part; but for starters, let's look at a different angle.

What giftings do you have? What talents can you bring to the table that are uniquely given to you by a God who gives them generously? We love to channel all talk of generosity to strictly financial aspects, but we do ourselves a tremendous disservice when we limit it to just money. We often let ourselves off the hook by talking ourselves into the lie that we don't have much to give in that regard. There isn't a person on this earth that can rightfully hold the excuse that they have nothing to give. The widow's offering of two coins in Mark 12 comes to mind. Jesus praises her as the one who gave the most that day. Although, to us judging bystanders, it would appear that hers was the smallest gift given that day. The parable of the talents in Matthew 25 reminds us to steward well. Whether it is our possessions, finances, giftings, or talents, we have things to bring, give, and steward.

1 Chronicles 29 gives us one of the best Biblical examples of generosity towards God that we have. As King David is nearing the end of his life, he has the task of helping his son,

Solomon, build the temple. As one would imagine, this is about as elaborate as it gets for a manmade structure. We've got silver, gold, bronze, onyx, and turquoise to name a few of the materials used to construct the temple. I think it is safe to say that this place was looking just fine, but David shares a very generous donation of his own. He even gives others an opportunity to contribute, and they did. Thousands and thousands of items were donated, all because of their leader's example. This gives us a glimpse into David's understanding of who holds the ownership of these blessings in his life. I Chronicles 29: 14 says: "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand".

This is David we're talking about, literally one of the most famous people in the history of the world. Asking, "Who am I that I get to be so generous with this stuff that isn't mine?"

It isn't hard to give something back to God, when you have the understanding that it is already His in the first place.

We are talking about one of the most popular men that will ever walk the earth. A man whose life we still talk about and learn from 3,000+ years after his death. He is the one asking "Who am I that I get to give such lavish things?" He clearly seems to know: it isn't hard to give something back to God, when you have the understanding that it is already His in the first place. A man who has given us a great example of what it means to lay his own life on the altar, and ask God to do as He pleases. It is in this posture where we will have

no trouble with the trappings of selfishness. Instead, we are blessed with an overflow of generosity that the world can't help but notice. A life much more aligned with how Christ walked the earth, and the generosity that runs deeply through the DNA of the God we serve.

So I have to at least comment on tithing before we wrap this up. All that really needs to be said is this: if you aren't tithing now, start. As we have already discussed, we have come to the understanding that everything we possess is actually the Lord's, and we are merely stewards of what we have been blessed with. So, when we don't bring our tithes we are actually robbing God of what is already His, but don't let me tell you, let Malachi 3:8-9 do the talking: "What man will rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, "how have we robbed you?" In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you."

Ultimately we must
rely on Him to
supply our needs.

It seems like tithing may be a big deal to God. This seems like something we should care about, because He cares about it. The Word has a lot to say about tithing. Proverbs talks about it a good bit including: giving your 'firstfruits'. I am certainly guilty of not doing this. I find it a lot easier to tithe whatever is in the leftover pile instead of prioritizing tithing into the first thing I do as God requests, but why do we have to tithe? God doesn't need our tithes does He? So why 'make' us do it? Believe it or not, I think it is for our benefit. As an opportunity for us to bless him with 'our' finances, it gives us the chance to learn not to cling to 'our' money too tightly. It reminds us that ultimately we must rely on Him to supply our needs. In my own life, practicing giving only leads to wanting to give even more. It creates within us a grateful spirit that can help us keep our focus on seeing others needs around us and not centered on what I 'want.'

**LIVING GENEROUSLY REQUIRES TRUST IN GOD, ROOTED IN
A CONVICTION THAT GOD HAS GIVEN US ALL WE NEED.**

THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

If and when I have needed one, what has been the excuse not to tithe?

Do I view my gifts and talents as a gift from God or more as something I take credit for as “my own”?



WEEK 4

BEING
GENEROUS
WITH
OTHERS



But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

1 JOHN 3:17

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

HEBREWS 13:16

“No one has ever become poor from giving.” - Anne Frank

How would the people closest to you describe you? Are you a giver or a taker? Are you bringing something to your relationships, or are you the one who sucks the life out of any given situation? Dare I say, any group of people ever assembled has a mixture of both. Shoot, maybe that is even what makes our world go round, but for a minute, seriously think about it. Think of your relationships or circle of friends. What do you have to offer? If you are over the age of four, you have life advice to give. There are things you have been through, grown, and learned from. You've had victories and failures. Have you gone through these things asking God how to use these situations for good in some way? Or have you instead shut down and become embittered at God for letting you experience difficulty at all? As an introverted person myself, I thoroughly enjoy being alone. In my opinion, a day at home talking to no one but my own family is a good day, but all this life has given me - both good and bad - wasn't given for me to hold for myself. The enemy loves to convince us that we are the only ones in the history of mankind going through the struggle we are in, but we aren't alone. Others have walked and are walking similar roads. What an opportunity to be generous, to have the opportunity to come alongside a friend and help

walk them through something, to be able to share and use the lessons life has taught us - what a gift from the Father!

We are telling ourselves to get out of the situation, when God has potentially placed us there.

It is so easy to buy into the enemy's lie that we don't have much to give. I do it all the time. It doesn't take much to talk myself into believing the thoughts: "I don't know how to do that, so I can't help", or "I don't have the time" or "I don't have the money to help in that situation". At the end of the day, we must realize that these are nothing more than lame excuses. We are telling ourselves to get out of the situation, when God has potentially placed us there.

As we close this series out, I want to at least comment on our own needs. If there was a professional league for hiding or acting like there is no need in my life, I would be in the Hall of Fame. I'd be one of the 'GOATS' as the kids say. If we are being honest, I think a lot of us would probably fall into that line. A lot of us aren't very good at expressing need. We buy into the lie that it shows weakness, it's humiliating and it's shameful. We have thoughts like: "I shouldn't still be dealing with this", "nobody will even care if they do know about it," or any other lie you want to insert here to try to make yourself feel better about covering it up. The fact is, we do have needs. Whether they are physical, emotional or spiritual. More often than not, we are going through something hard that could be made easier with a little help from someone.

This is a beautiful thing to understand about generosity. While we serve the God who is enough, He wants to let us be a part of the gift. Often, when God chooses to be generous to us, He wants to send it through someone. Generosity isn't about me. It's about what God can do through me.

So, may we be the ones humble enough to raise our hand when we have a need; and also, in turn, be the one who can't wait to lend a helping hand to another who is in need.

May God find us willing and ready to bring His example of generosity to everything we see and touch.

While we serve the
God who is enough,
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a part of the gift.

**GENEROSITY ISN'T ABOUT ME.
IT'S ABOUT WHAT GOD CAN DO THROUGH ME.**

THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

What keeps me from being generous with others? _____

Am I a giver? _____

How has this study changed how I think of generosity? _____

How can I start being more generous today?



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