

HIGHER AIM WITH DR. CURT DODD

Practicing Great Generosity

Great Generosity | Part 1 | Matthew 6:1-4

INTRODUCTION

In the early 1800s, Ludwig van Beethoven was commissioned to compose his Ninth Symphony. It is considered by many to be the zenith of his life's work, a masterpiece of music. Yet, there is a stunning detail often missed in the story of its creation.

Beethoven wrote his greatest symphony when he was completely deaf. At its premiere performance on May 7, 1824, he could not hear the orchestra, the chorus, or the thunderous standing ovations from the crowd. He was so oblivious to the applause that a young soloist had to turn him around so he could see the audience's adoration.

Beethoven's story is a powerful picture of giving your greatest gift, not for the applause you might receive, but from a deeper motivation. It reminds us that no matter our condition, we have something to give. This is a core principle of the Christian life, one that Jesus addresses directly in the Sermon on the Mount. He knew we would struggle with the tension between wanting to honor God and wanting to be honored by people. In *Matthew 6*, He gives us the essential framework for practicing great generosity, a discipline that shapes our hearts to look more like His.

KEY POINTS

1. Generosity Must Be Guarded from Wrong Motives

Jesus begins His teaching on giving with a crucial warning: "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them." He is not discouraging public acts of kindness, but He is addressing the motivation of the heart. In that culture, some religious leaders would make a great show of their giving, sounding trumpets to draw attention to their charity. Jesus calls this hypocrisy. They were seeking the temporary honor of people, and He states plainly that this applause is the only reward they will receive. True, biblical generosity is a secret discipline between a believer and God. It flows not from a desire for recognition, but from a heart overflowing with gratitude to the Father who sees what is done in private.

The call to secret generosity is a call to heart examination. It forces us to ask: why do I give? Is it to build my own reputation or to honor God? Is it to feel good about myself or to genuinely meet a need? God is less concerned with the amount of our gift and more concerned with the posture of our heart. When we give quietly, without needing a plaque or a public thank you, we are demonstrating that God's approval is our ultimate reward. This is an act of worship that detaches our hearts from the love of money and the praise of people, anchoring our security in Christ alone. This quiet faithfulness is a powerful witness to a world that often values visibility over virtue.

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2. Generosity Can Be Hindered by Worldly Burdens

One of the greatest obstacles to a generous life is the weight of excessive debt. Many of us desire to give, but we have already overcommitted our resources elsewhere. The wisdom of Scripture encourages us to live with financial margin. *Proverbs 27:23* says, “Be sure to know the condition of your flocks.” This is a spiritual principle. God calls us to be good stewards, which requires us to be aware of our financial state. We cannot honor God with our resources if we do not know what they are. Living beyond our means not only brings pain to our families and ourselves but also robs us of the joy and ability to participate in God’s work through giving.

Overcoming financial burdens to become a generous giver requires a practical plan rooted in spiritual obedience. First, we must take ownership of our situation and confess any disobedience or poor stewardship that has led to excessive debt. Second, we must formulate a plan to honor our commitments while putting God first. Some may believe they cannot afford to give until their debt is gone. But we must ask, will God empower us to get out of debt more quickly through disobedience or through obedience? Trusting God with the “first fruits” of our income, even when it is costly, is an act of faith that declares our dependence on Him, not our own financial strategies. It is an invitation for His power to work in our lives in ways we cannot imagine.

3. Generosity Flows from the Character of God

At its core, our generosity is a reflection of God’s generosity. He is the greatest giver. He made the sun, and it gives light. He made the earth, and it gives sustenance. His very nature is to give, culminating in the ultimate gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. Paul describes this nature perfectly in *Ephesians 3:20–21*, writing, “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine... to Him be glory.” Our God is a God of immeasurable abundance. When we are generous with our time, our talents, and our finances, we are not just performing a religious duty. We are emulating the very character of our Creator. We are showing the world what He is like.

The key to becoming a truly generous person is to first receive God’s greatest gift: salvation through Jesus Christ. A heart transformed by grace cannot help but become a conduit of that same grace to others. God does not want something *from* you; He wants something *for* you. He wants you to experience the fulfillment that comes from a life given away for His purposes. This is about more than money. It is about investing your heart in the lives of others, stewarding your time and talents for His kingdom, and living with an open-handed trust in His provision. The legacy you leave will not be measured by what you kept for yourself, but by what you freely gave away in the name of Christ.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. In what areas of your life do you find it most difficult to give without seeking any recognition or applause in return?
2. What practical steps can you take this week to better “know the condition of your flocks” and create more financial margin for generosity?
3. Beyond finances, how can you more intentionally give of your time, your talents, or your presence to emulate God’s generous character to your family, your church, and your community?
