

# SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

## LESSON 6: GENEROSITY

**THE TARGET:** Generosity is a much-debated subject. Before starting this study, talk to your pastor about his feelings and thoughts about generosity. The intention of Men's Ministries is not to start any arguments between your pastor and you but rather to encourage you to submit to your pastor. The study is built upon the premise that everything a believer owns has been given by God. Generosity of time, talent, and finances is a by-product of deepening spiritual formation. You will learn why and how to grow in the spiritual discipline of generosity. It is not about giving so you can "earn" blessings. Rather, it is about the power of obedience and how the Lordship of Christ intervenes in your life as you follow His teaching on giving. This lesson seeks to bring clear understanding of what God's Word says about giving tithes and offerings to the local church. This lesson also seeks to create a desire within you to give cheerfully and extravagantly.



### SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

As you grow more spiritually mature, your generosity will come to include acts of giving, acts of kindness, words of encouragement, and time committed to family, friends and neighbors, as well as to prayer.



Generosity is a **heart** issue (Matthew 6:19–21). Jesus said in verse 21, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” This verse could be expanded to say: “Show me your checkbook, show me your credit card statements, show me your bank statement, show me your receipts, and I will show you where your heart is.” The **priority** of your money always determines the **path** of your heart.

**Generosity is a spiritual practice** (2 Corinthians 8:6–7). If you are going to practice generosity as a discipline, here are a few guidelines as you practice this habit.

**First**, learn to **see what and whom God sees** (Proverbs 29:18). As you look at others, can you see their potential? As you look at places, can you see His kingdom expanding?

**Second**, learn to **love what and whom God loves**. Jesus showed love for the lost (Luke 19:10), His people (John 21:15–17), and His bride (Ephesians 5:25).

**Finally**, if you are going to grow in this discipline, you must **learn to give as God gives**. God gives wholeheartedly, sacrificially, and without regret (John 3:16).





## CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

What does the term “tithe” mean to you? What does “offering” mean? Examining these two terms is a good place to begin. A tithe is a tenth of our income, whereas an offering is a gift over and above the tithe and is voluntary. Sometimes the offering has an intended target, i.e. missions, a building program, benevolence, or a special assignment.

The **first step** in the development of generosity is **becoming a consistent giver**. The purpose of tithing is to allow you to develop the mindset that God is first in your life (Luke 14:33; Deuteronomy 14:23). A biblical understanding of this spiritual discipline helps to keep this habit in focus. And tithing is biblical (Leviticus 27:30–32; Numbers 18:21,24–32; 35:2–3). A review of **Appendix I** will give you a visual description on the steps of generosity.

There are **six biblical reasons to develop this discipline**.

**First, God is pleased by your obedience** (Malachi 3:10; Leviticus 27:32; Proverbs 3:9). The tithe must be complete. In other words, it must be a tenth. The tithe is holy, which means it is set apart for God. The entire tithe belongs to the Lord. God asks for obedience more than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22).

**Second, tithing teaches you to always put God first in your life** (Deuteronomy 14:23). Remember, generosity is a heart issue (Matthew 6:21).

**Third**, when you develop the discipline of generosity and tithing becomes consistent in your life, **God’s blessings are promised to you** (Malachi 3:10–11; Proverbs 3:9–10).

**Fourth**, tithing and generosity helps to **guard you from materialism**. God wants you to learn to trust Him for all you need (1 Timothy 6:17–18).

**Fifth**, you should develop generosity because it helps **meet the needs of God’s people and the local church** (1 Corinthians 16:1–2).

**Sixth**, when you learn the spiritual discipline of generosity, you **remind yourself that God is the owner of everything** you have, and you have been entrusted to steward what He has given to your care (Deuteronomy 8:18).



**Jesus spoke more about generosity and money than any other subject.**

Don't misunderstand this statement—Jesus wasn't all about the money; He was all about your heart. And where your treasure is, that's where your heart will be (Matthew 6:21). Jesus knew the pressures of daily life. He watched how finances could control some people and how some people controlled their finances. His wisdom to believers in Scripture was to prepare them for this tension of the heart and to teach them to allow love of God to ultimately control their hearts. As you grow in this spiritual discipline, you will notice your heart become more connected to the power behind the teaching, and you'll begin to find it easier to follow.





## **BULLSEYE: Hit Your Target**

As a Christ follower, your biblical financial strategy is *God first*. It takes faith to put God first, rather than last in our generosity.

- Read 1 Kings 17:10-16.
  - » What can you learn about putting God first?
  
- Read Malachi 3:10-11.
  - » What two things are promised when you put God first?
  
- Read Genesis 4:1-7.
  - » What can happen as a result of not doing things in God's order?

How does this study affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers below or in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?
- Write down a thought from this study that you experienced this week.
- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate what you experienced to your family and to others around you?

## Next Step:

- ☐ **Courage:** If you have never developed the spiritual discipline of tithing, commit to ninety days of faithful tithing. After ninety days, evaluate how God has blessed you.
- ☐ **Strength:** If you already tithe, commit to a year's worth of random acts of kindness either weekly, monthly, or quarterly. Make sure to journal your blessings, impressions, and any miracles that occur.



- ❑ **Endurance:** Look at the giving ladder in **Appendix I**. Where are you currently on the ladder? Write out a plan to move up one rung on the ladder this next year.

## ***FireBible:***

- Read the *FireBible* note on Leviticus 27:30.
  - » Who was the tithe supposed to support?
  
- Read the *FireBible* note on Malachi 3:8.
  - » Summarize the two thoughts from this verse about tithing.
  
  - » What can you glean from this?
  
- Read the *FireBible* note on Matthew 6:24.
  - » Write out in your own words the two points about serving money.
  
  - » What steps have you taken to ensure you serve God more than money?



- Read the *FireBible* note on 2 Corinthians 8:2.
  - » Which of the eight principles and promises of giving resonated with you most? Why?
  
- Read the *FireBible* note on 2 Corinthians 8:7.
  - » Why should you excel in the spiritual discipline of generosity?
  
  - » On a scale of 1–4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not as well, rate yourself on how well you excel in generosity. Write out a plan to improve.
  
- Read the *FireBible* article, “Tithes and Offering.”
  - » Write out five aspects of what tithes and offerings are.





- » How does knowing this help you develop a heart of generosity?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- » From the seven reasons listed on how and why we should give, with which reason do you most identify? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- » From the seven reasons listed on how and why we should give, with which reason do you least identify? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- » After reading the section “Are Christians Today Obligated to Tithe?,” what did you learn?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- » What did you ascertain from the “Why and Where Do We Tithe?” section?



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