

# Sermon: Disciples are extravagantly generous

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## 1. Introduction

We are being in a series of what a disciple looks like and today's topic is like: How should I describe it. Let me paint you a picture:

- It is a topic like when you turn your very nice hot shower to ice-cold and you just get this shivering cold tingling. You know a cold shower is healthy, but let's be honest who really enjoys a cold shower in the winter?
- It's the teaspoon full of medicine, which taste questionable, but you know after you swallowed it it makes you better.

I am really selling the sermon to you aren't I? Ok, enough of the picture illustrations. I want to talk this morning about generosity. A disciple of Jesus is generous!

We will talk about generosity and don't worry, we already taken our offering, so you don't have to worry about it me doing a big appeal in the end. My heart is that we catch the true meaning of generosity. So let's pray.

### 1.1 Prayer:

- Lord I ask this morning for a fresh and new perspective of generosity.
- Help your servant as he speaks and Holy Spirit I want to pray in faith that you will speak to people personally today!
- Father let great spiritual and natural fruit flow from today.

Generosity is used so broadly. Let me ask a few questions:

- Somebody steals a valuable piece of equipment from his work-place, sales it on Ebay, take some of the money and then makes a donation to charity. Technically is this generosity or fraud?
- Somebody is volunteering, but to his service, there are strings attached: He only serves, when he can, when he wants, when it is convenient for him, when he is not too tired, when no football game is on and if there is an appreciation gift at the end. Is this generosity or manipulation?
- Somebody who is close to failing his A'Levels making a big donation to his teacher. Is this generosity or strategic planning?

I don't have the answers, but these questions are sometimes what we need to wrestle with to push deeper. Generosity is not easy especially I the time we are living in. Or is it?

## 2. It is scary to be generous

The answer is yes, we can, because Money is only a very small part of generosity. There is so much more we should be generous about. Generosity is about changed lives. Whenever it becomes money-focused or money-based, generosity loses its purity. Generosity is so much more e.g.

- We should be generous with our love to each other,
- Generous with positive words and compliments,
- we should be generous with forgiveness,
- with acts of kindness,
- Generous with your hospitality,
- Generous with your talents,
- Generous with patience with each other,
- Generous with our time,
- Generous in our serving

## 3. Generosity in Acts

Let me proof this point to you in showing you how the early church was generous in various ways. Acts 2, 42

- 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

### 3.1 Generosity in Fellowship (v42):

The early church was generous about their time and fellowship together. **One of the most valuable things you can give a person is your time, why? Because you can't increase time. We all have the same amount of it and this is 24 hours.**

You can take my clothes, I can get new ones, you can take my car I can get another one, you can take my watch I can get another one, but what if you take my time, I can't get this back.

**There is many ways to give somebody time, here are some practical example within our home church:**

- I had a need to get rid of a tree stump in our garden and 2 young lads from our home church offered to help me. They spent over 6 hours to get this stump removed from our garden.
- Or another member who has an outstanding teaching gift is generous with his time is helping our son in his reading skills.
- Or somebody is good in building furniture and when somebody needed help in building it up, they spent their time to get the job done.

**There are so many ways to be generous with our fellowship with one another. Helping, serving, listening, using your skills, being present and so.**

- Hebrews 13:16: "And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

**A disciple of Jesus is generous with his fellowship.**

### 3.2 Generosity of breaking bread and giving

What are we remembering when we are breaking bread? Jesus death and what can we read in

- John 3,16: "For God so loved the world, that he "gave" his one and beloved son". God is the giver of his son. He gave first.

And for this reason, we are called to give what he has given us. We are called to give and share Jesus with people. We are generous to share the incredible gift of Jesus and salvation with the people in our life's, like colleagues, friends or family.

But also we are remembering with breaking bread his generous forgiveness. And we are called to forgive people. What would a world look like when we all would forgive each other. We would have improved relationships, reduced conflicts, reduced stress and anxiety.

- Billy Graham said he believed that 75% of patients in hospitals would be made whole if they would forgive

- Ephesians 4:32 "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

**A disciple of Jesus is generous with sharing Jesus and forgiveness.**

### 3.3 Generosity in prayer

The early church was generous with their prayer, but more specifically prayer for one another. How many relationships would be restored, when we start to pray for the other person. How many marriages could be saved, when we pray together. How many situations would be changed, when we pray.

It is a sacrifice, but encourage us all to intercede for one another. When was the last time you took not only a few sentences but a whole hour to pray for one person.

**Prayer changes lives, prayer changes relationship and prayer changes situation. I am encouraged and challenged by so many prayer warriors we have in this house and praying consistently!**

- "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-17).

**Disciples of Jesus are generous with their prayers.**

- 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

### 3.4 All believers were together

This is touching multiple parts of generosity, but when they were together they were generous with their hospitality.

Leading a home church for a few years or life-group, we learnt about the ups and downs of opening your home. Let's be honest, it is hard sometimes knowing your having people coming over, as you know you want your home to be welcoming and it takes effort to tidy, making sure you have enough tea bags available (or so I think this is never an issue in Britain) and then you have a big decision to make:

- **Do you hide the good biscuits and the nice, good snacks or do I put them out to share them. Can I get an Amen. I know, that sometimes the good drinks mysteriously disappear before home church and resurrect after home church.**

Being generous is hard, especially if you feel that it is not appreciated or even sometimes noticed. Sometimes you might feel that all your generous effort is taken for granted and you are so frustrated that you want to give up, but I encourage you every generous effort is seen by God. He knows, when all your good biscuits are all eaten and your good drinks are drunk. He knows. Let these sacrifices not stop you.

Also, can I ask for all Home church leaders who are opening their homes to stand up for a moment. I just want to take a moment to thank you for your generosity of opening your homes and looking after your people. Let's appreciate them.

We all can learn and grow in our hospitality.

If you are in a home church, appreciate the generosity and maybe bring yourself some biscuits or food next time.

- "When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality." Romans 12:13 NLT

### Disciples of Jesus are generous in their hospitality.

#### 3.5 Generous with selling their properties

The early church was generous with their finance. How can we be generous with our finance?

**It is a matter of perspective.** Let me demonstrate it. I was wondering if somebody here could give me right now and here £200 cash. I believe we are a generous church, so I thought there needs to be at least one generous giver to give me without strings attached giving me £200. Oh great, Andrew! Thank you Andrew, very kind of you to just give me £200.

What do I want to illustrate, that if you ask you receive and if you ask in faith even the impossible is possible. You all are looking shocked to me. As you might be thinking why Andrew would give Manuel just £200 for no reason. You might think, wow e.g., Andrew is very generous and blessed man to give Manuel 200. He clearly lives in the overflow.

**Well, your perspective might change, if I told you that I gave Andrew the £200 before the service. All he gave me is what already belongs to me. Why was it so easy for Andrew to give me the money because it wasn't his in the first place. He didn't have any attachments to it, as he knew this is Manuel's.**

- The same is with God, when we give, we only giving back to him what belongs to him in the first place. We shouldn't have any attachments to the money, as yes you might say, I earned it, but let me ask you this, who gave you life to go to work, who gave you the strength to do it, who gave you breath in your lungs? It's God.

**But you know, what I what I had to do? I had to trust Andrew that he is not running away and spending the money on something else. I trusted him, that he would return to me, what is mine and so is God trusting you to be good stewards with his money. In your giving, saving, investing and generosity.**

This means that we should think of every expenditure in a kingdom-advancing way, not just what we give away. It is all Christ's. Every single thing you spend and what you give, is ministry and should be designed to magnify and glorify Christ.

- "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose."—Missionary Jim Elliott

### Disciples of Jesus are generous in their giving.

## 4. Skittles illustration

Now you may ask: Manuel it is good and fine to share about it, but you haven't seen my finance. If you would look at my budget or account, you would see that I can't give or be generous.

I understand giving is tricky, but let me demonstrate something to you.

**I have two people here represented by the glass full of skittles. And these two people are different, how they live today. You have the first person tries to just live for themselves and taking care of himself:**

- He pays his mortgage (takes skittles out)
- He pays his car payment and he probably his spouse has a car (more skittles)
- Then kids who wants to go to university
- His food, entertainment and oh yes saving for his children and that's the whole thing...

And then he looks down and say I don't have any leftover for God. Sorry... my needs were bigger.

But then there is the other guy, his skittles is he obeys the word and act like it. So, he start with his skillet and gives them to God. So he starts and gives his tithe and even beyond and being generous. Then he realises, that he has.

- Mortgage payment
- Car to pay for
- University, food, entertainment

And he realises that his is empty. He is not sure what to do, but he knows he obeys God in his giving and generosity. He looks to God and God is starting to pour out his storehouse on him (big bucket). And God says it is ok, I have room enough for you. Listen my friend, his bucket is never empty. The issue of the hour is, what person will you be. The one who tries making it yourself or the one who obeys God and live a life of adventure and full of trust in God.

Believe me if you live like the 2<sup>nd</sup> person, you will see breakthroughs, which you are simply be on your knees to say: "Wow, how did this just happened"...

### 3.6 Generous to give to anyone.

Last point from the verse in Acts. A disciple of Jesus gives generously to everyone. Now this can be overwhelming.

**Think of concrete people and concrete needs as you live your life and see if your heart really loves people. In Luke 10:30–35 we read the story about the "The good Samaritan".**

"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup>A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup>So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup>But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. <sup>34</sup>He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup>The next

day he took out two denarii<sup>10</sup> and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

**We are blessed to be a blessing to others.** It is interesting, that Jesus didn't point to the possession of the good Samaritan.

Jesus didn't question him, saying, "Hey, why do you have a donkey? Why do you have wine? Why do you have money?"

**The good Samaritan has been blessed and he passed on the blessing to others. What blessings do you received from God and you should generously use it to bless others?**

**The other point was, Do you love the person in front of you at a cost to yourself? Are you willing to love the person just in front of you, even without a payback or sometimes even a thank you. We can get easily overwhelmed when we see need within our street or community, never mind to think about our city or county and if we think about our country or the globe, well why even bother.**

Let me tell you a story:

**thousands of starfish**

- Practical examples with being intentional at church

**A disciple of Jesus gives generously to everyone.**

## 5. Practical:

So let me land the plane and give you a few practical advises regarding generosity:

1. **Be intentional about it.** **We will never drift into generosity by accident.. If we are not intentional about our journey, easily days, weeks, months or years gone by without us moving a single step forward. So, wherever you are, first step make a decision and start somewhere.** Maybe you decide to ask the lord to show you what to give, help this person, being generous with your time and start disciple a person once a month's or whatever it might be. It's better to start somewhere than nowhere.

## 6. Generosity is uncomfortable

**But living like this is uncomfortable! But let me ask you this, who told you that being uncomfortable is not good. It is in the uncomfortable places, that things moving. For example: Your body needs to be in pain in order to develop muscles.**

I started with my son **Karate a few years ago**, as I thought why waste time and just watch him, get in the game and learn a new skill. So there is this Karate kick, which I dislike so much is the "Mahugaur kick" round-house kick.

In order to do the kick you need to lift your knee, twist your body and kick. You start with just knee height, but then it needs to be belt height und later even head height. The issue is, because I am sitting most of the time during the day, I am very inflexible. What do I need to do? I have to stretch regular and believe me one time a week doesn't make a change. I need to do it consistently. And stretching every time is unconformable.

If stretching is comfortable, then you do something wrong.

The same is with generosity, it probably will never feel fully comfortable, because there is always the feeling of uncomfortableness like the stretching. The fear of missing out, the worry that you will be worse off than before. But as it is in Karate you might start with knee height height, but then you stretch yourself to belt height and further. I want to release you from the pressure, that generosity needs to feel comfortable! It is rewarding, but doing it is uncomfortable.

2. **It will cost you something.** True generosity will cost you something, generosity always requires sacrifices. It may be sacrifices at your sleep, sacrifices your time or sacrifice energy. Also, generosity means to give the best to your fellow people. **But start small and grow.** Hannah and I weren't great in our hospitality and we recognised that, but then we started small and said we have somebody over every months. That's not too much and over time you learn and you get comfortable.
3. **Be obedient:** It's good to hear a message and agreeing, but we will never see any fruit or changes if we stay at the stage of hearing. If you feel God put something on your heart this morning, I encourage you to act on it. Sometimes the generosity is not purely for the other person, but that God can also bless your life.

A few years back, I brought the **blackberry playbook**, it costs a lot of money and I was excited for it, but within a year I felt the lord saying to me give it to this specific person I knew. I could sold the tablets for a few hundred, but just giving it away, really? Well, long story short I gave it to the person. That's it. I was generous in giving it away. But the story ends here. I felt I was obedient. I lost contact with the person and don't know what happened. Not every act of generosity has an happy ending, but obedience will always be blessed by our heavenly father.

## 7. Summary

If you were with us at Turn nations last month and **Ps. Lawrence spoke about the that from believe, we need to put it into practice.** We might believe and we are **all agree that a disciple of jesus should be generous, but if we don't put our believes into practice it will never happened.** So what practice has God put on your heart today? What aspect of generosity you need to put into practice, not just believe and but actively doing it.

Maybe this morning I just asked you if the Holy Spirit touched one area or you feel one prompting that in this area you want to be more generous, let's make a conscious decision and act on it.

Maybe to invite somebody over to your home and show hospitality.

Maybe to spend extra time to pray for somebody.

Maybe you know a need of somebody and you know you can meet it with your skills or talent and you will text this person.

Or it is being generous financially.

I also don't want to miss the opportunity to, if there is somebody here to haven't accepted jesus into their heart, but you realise as we read before, that God has sent his own and only son to give you salavation. And if you say this morning, I want this jesus, maybe show me by the show of hands, that you would like to receive jesus into your heart?