

COMMISSIONED

THE ART OF LIVING OUT THE WORDS, WAYS, & MISSION OF JESUS

6.2 Giving Generously Way of Action

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Hey everyone, my name is Joel Schmidgall and it's an honor to talk about generosity today.

My wife Nina and I spent years praying about a vision for our marriage. We went through a process of walking from values to vision to purpose. But here's where we landed after countless conversations, prayer, and working. Acts 20:35 - We want to "give more than we receive." Our deep desire is for our marriage to be driven by generosity. When you live generously, you live in gratitude. When you live generously, you are filled with joy. When you live generously, your focus is on opportunity instead of lack. When you live generously, you gain the heart of God.

Matthew 6:21 "For where your treasure is, **there your heart will be also.**"

I want to ask you a question today: How's your heart? If it's in a bad place today, I have a second question. Where's your treasure?

Here's how Churchill said it: "You make a living by what you get, you make a life by what you give." Jesus said, the greatest of all, is the servant of all.

To live generously is more than giving a large financial gift to something or someone. In fact, in DC, it's often easier to write a check than it is to invest your time. It's easier to drop a financial gift than it is to take the talent which you have learned to make a living off of, and use that for someone else. But can I remind us today: All we have is from God and all we have is for God! And God doesn't bless us to raise our standard of living, but He blesses us to raise our standard of giving.

We are called to live generously with our time, with our talent, with our treasure.

Time

God gave you a gift of 86,400 seconds today. You can sit back and say alright what do I feel like doing or you can stand up and say I have 86,400 chances to bring glory to God. Your gift of time is unique, because you are the only one who can give it. It's our most valuable asset.

Talent

1 Peter 4:10 says, *"Each one of you has received a special grace, so like good stewards responsible for all these different graces of God, put yourselves at the service of others."*

Treasure

There are somewhere around 500 verses in the Bible on prayer. But there are over 2,300 verses having to do with money & possessions. Jesus talked more about money than about any other subject. 10% of the new testament has to do with money. Where your treasure is, so your heart will be.

As followers of Christ we are challenged to live generously. So I want to dig into **FOUR LEVELS OF GENEROSITY:**

LEVEL ONE is giving SPONTANEOUSLY.

On a daily basis, we should find ourselves giving away our lives to those in our path. The story of the Good Samaritan is a story of inconvenience. The priest who came first had a great excuse not to help the man in need. The Levite who came second had a solid reason not to help. But God's call to love is a call to put your desires, your excuses, your schedule aside for the grace of giving towards your neighbor – whether friend or enemy. Do you know why I carry around cash in addition to a credit card? The one and only reason, is so that I am empowered to meet a need when the Lord prompts me to give. To give a Pentecostal handshake. To pay for someone's meal or coffee. But there was also a season where I felt called to carry no cash. Because I had become lazy in throwing a dollar at needs. So, the Lord told me to give my time, my prayer, my faith, to meet needs with more attentiveness. Live and give spontaneously to the needs of those around you. You will find yourself full of joy when you do!

LEVEL TWO is giving CONSISTENTLY.

Before we pay our bills, before we buy our groceries, before we buy our coffee, before we do anything, Nina and I consistently tithe every month. In fact, we have it on auto withdrawal with the church. We follow the scriptural challenge called a tithe. So the first thing we do is take a tithe of our income – which literally means 1/10th – and give it back to God. What we're doing is saying, "God, we trust you."

Malachi 3:8-10 says, *Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it."*

Nina and I have had the chance to invest in a lot of young married couples and we love to challenge young couple to tithe. Because it's a faith exercise that puts God first. God says, "Test me in this." And we have found ourselves to live in consistent blessing. Sometimes that blessing comes financially. Sometimes it comes relationally. Sometimes it comes as a blessing of someone's time or encouragement. But when you tithe, God...will...bless! Mark His Word!

And it's not just financially. Find a way to serve regularly. Hospitality is such a powerful form of Generosity. A great way to practice this is to join a Team at NCC. If you are not practicing service consistently, you know you can change that right now? Just go to ncc.re/serve and you'll see different opportunities that you can invest a couple hours of week in serving. Something powerful happens when you serve should to should with people of generosity.

LEVEL THREE is giving PROPORTIONATELY.

When Nina and I got married, Pastor Mark challenged us to do something. He said, instead of trying to pursue goals where you accumulate things (like everyone does), choose to pursue giving goals. So, one of our goals was to increase not just our giving each year, but to increase our percentage of giving each year. We don't want to give just 10%. We want to raise that percentage every year. As we have tried to practice this, we realized something. It is fun to give. No seriously. It brings JOY to our lives to give. We are happier, when we give more. That's why we call out Acts 20:35 all the time - *It is more blessed to give than to receive.* We say it at NCC this way: You can't outgive God. Anne Frank said it like this: "No one ever became poor because of giving." It's true! The word says, "*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*" Luke 6:38

I call it a boomerang blessing. The harder your throw out blessing towards God and towards others, the more forcefully blessing comes back to you.

LEVEL FOUR is giving RADICALLY.

There's a little story in Luke 21. Jesus looked up and saw the rich giving their large gifts at the temple. Then he saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. He proceeded to say that the poor widow had put in more than all the others. Because she didn't give out of her wealth, she gave out of her poverty. She put all she had to live on.

Have you ever emptied out your bank account to give? Have you ever given so much that it hurts? This woman gave radically! It's not how much you give. It's being generous with what God has entrusted to you. One of our friends at NCC who found Christ after some poor decisions of crime when he was younger, is one of our most faithful volunteers at Church and radically

generosity of service. He's one of the most complimented volunteers we have – because he is radical in his hospitality towards others. He doesn't have much to give, but what he has he gives in full.

Give Spontaneously, consistently, proportionately, radically. The way we do this is intentionally. In other words, what is your NEXT step on your Journey toward Generosity? What move are you going to make? A very practical step is to check out ways to give at ncc.re/generosity But find ways to begin to live a life of generosity.

Former Emory university professor Fred Craddock described living a kingdom life on earth like this. He said, “To give my life for Christ appears glorious. We think giving our all to the Lord is like a taking a \$1,000 bill & laying it on the table – *‘Here’s my life, Lord. I’m giving it all.’* But the reality for most of us is that God sends us to the bank and has us cash in the \$1,000 bill for quarters. We go through life putting out 25 cents here and 50 cents there. Listen to the neighbor kid’s troubles instead of saying, *‘Get lost.’* Go to a committee meeting. Give a cup of water to a shaky man in a nursing home. Usually giving our life to Christ isn’t glorious. It’s done in those little acts of love, 25 cents at a time. It would be easy to go out in a flash of glory; it’s harder to live the Christian life little by little over the long haul.”