



# gracefellowship

Series: Core Values  
Date: February 12, 2023  
36:1-7

Title: Generosity  
Passage: Exodus

Scripture Reading: Psalm

Tell the story of Moses and the Israelites having to be restrained from giving to the building of the Tabernacle because of their extreme generosity.

:: Exodus 36:1-7

- A man was Pastoring and Shepherding a large congregation in the Middle East when he felt God strongly urging him to build a new facility for worship.
- He hired contractors to do the work, but again felt impressed by God that the people he was shepherding should provide all the resources for the new worship facility before the contractors could begin the work.
- Not knowing how long it might take to gather all the needed materials and come up with the resources for this major project they were amazed to find the people jump into the work of generously giving anything and everything they had to come up with the needed resources and construction was able to begin more quickly than they imagined.
- But that's when they actually ran into a problem. One day the foreman for the project came to the Pastor and said, " Even though the work has begun and we have enough to complete the build, the people keep bringing more! We can't even work at this point because our crew is busy receiving items all day from the people. We are going to have to put a stop to their generous giving!"
- The leader of the people was astonished! "You want me to tell people to stop giving? Has that ever happened with a group of God following people? What am I supposed to do? Put a lock on the giving boxes?"
- The foreman said, "I'm not sure that will even do it! I think we have take the collection centers down altogether!"
- So a memo went out to all the people that they were stop giving! In fact, it read: "No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering to the sanctuary."

- In a few cases they had to physically restrain people from giving to the project because they had more than enough to do all the work!

Have you ever heard of a group of people being told to stop giving because they were being too generous? That's crazy, right? But that story is lifted straight out of Scripture. You can read about Moses having to restrain people from giving to the work of the Tabernacle in Exodus 36.

These were not gifts given under compulsion- they were freewill offerings to the Lord. The work of God prompted extreme generosity.

In fact, generosity is a hallmark of faith in God.

**Generosity is a hallmark of faith for God's people in the Old and New Testaments.**

We are going to talk about another example of that in the New Testament in just a little while. We are in a series right now on the Core Values our church holds and why we believe these are vitally important to be a disciple-making church.

**Our Core Values:**

**Real Relationships / Authenticity**

**Generosity**

**Team and Collaboration**

**Externally Focused**

**Multiplication**

These values move us away from status quo Christianity and toward a biblical view of discipleship. When it comes to generosity we have seen incredible growth in this aspect of our fellowship over the past 9 years. Our church truly has a heart to give in incredibly generous ways. This week one of the ways we want to encourage generosity is by taking every penny that is given in our offerings this week and we are going to turn around and give that money away to bless other people.

But it isn't just about being generous with our money. In fact, if you go to our website and look at our statement about generosity, here's what you'll find:

**Generosity:**

**We desire to be a people who give willingly, cheerfully and liberally of our time, talents and resources (treasures).**

Why should we desire to be generous? The Psalms and Proverbs are a great place to go for understanding on this topic:

**:: Psalm 112:5**

**5 Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice.**

**:: Psalm 24:1**

**1 The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;**

**:: Proverbs 23:5**

**5 Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.**

I've been to a lot of funerals in my lifetime. Do you know what I've never seen attached to the back of a hearse? A UHaul Trailer! When they go to put you in the ground you will not be taking your stuff with you! The Pharaoh's of Egypt tried that, they buried vast fortunes in their tombs expecting the treasure would make it into the afterlife with them. But now thousands of years later we are still digging up those treasures and displaying them in museums. You can't take your stuff with you!

Jesus told a story to help us understand how God feels about collecting wealth for ourselves and not having a generous heart.

**:: Luke 12:16-21**

**16 And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest.**

**17 He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'**

**18 "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain.**

**19 And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." '**

**20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'**

**21 "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."**

Let me illustrate it this way, I need two volunteers from the audience who has pretty large hands.

Person One: Take your hands and reach in this bucket of sand, picking up as much sand as you can hold and keep it in tightly closed fists.

Person Two: Hold your hands open and I'm going to pour sand onto your hands.

Ask: Open your closed fists- is there more sand in the tightly clinched fists, or the open hands?

More sand is in the open hands- even though sand is running out of those hands as I pour more on. When we live with open hands, God can add more to us, but he also allows His generous blessings to us flow to other people.

**“Too often we assume that God has increased our income to increase our standard of living, when his stated purpose is to increase our standard of giving.**

**- Randy Alcorn**

We want to learn to be generous people- and so much of this flies in the face of our culture with the American dream and capitalism surrounding our daily lives. But you can learn to be generous. In fact, I had a great illustration of generosity hit me right in the face this week! I love to eat out. Probably more than I should. But I went to a few fast food joints lately and discovered something about generosity.

Illustration:

Pull out a small French fries bag from Wendy's

Pull out a small French fries bag from Pal's

Pull out a small French fries bag from Five Guys Burgers

Five Guys knows how to be generous! In fact, when we ordered they told me and my friend to split the fries because there was enough for two people! Actually, the two of us didn't finish all the fries!

We need to learn to be generous like Five Guys! Now remember, we are talking primarily about finances, but we are also meant to be generous in other aspects of our lives. God has blessed us with time to use for His glory. Be generous in how you give of yourself where your time is concerned.

- Plug for Children and Student Ministries volunteers (*Kids ministry: Parents, I understand when you have had your child all week and then come to church and think, "This is a time for me to get a break!" But guess what? Every parent feels like that- so very few of our parents actually serve in our Kids Ministry. We really need you to consider volunteering with our Kids Ministry. If enough people jump on as leaders for that team you still may only need to serve every 4 or 6 or even 8 weeks! It's a great investment in the life of our church. Ashley would love to talk with you about just being a supportive presence in that ministry area on Sunday mornings with the leaders and teachers she has in place.*)

The second way we talked about being generous is with your talents. How do you use the gifts and talents God has given you to serve others in our church and in our community? God has gifted you to give back to others! Find your unique way to take the talents you have been blessed with and have developed over the years to benefit other people.

Then thirdly, we want to understand that God has given us financial resources to steward for His glory.

How do we learn to be good stewards of our finances?  
Let's start with the basics when it comes to Scripture.

**:: Proverbs 3:9**

**9 Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops;**

First fruits just means right off the top, the first and best of what you have, bring to God.

**Give the first and best of what you have to God.**

Sometimes we like to give God the left overs and think we are being generous. Illustration: When I was doing youth ministry I would often be approached by someone in our church who was getting new furniture at their house and they would ask me if they could donate their old stuff to the youth group. More times than I care to admit we had stuff given to us that was in awful shape! The cat had scratched up all the fabric, it was dirty and smelled awful- but it was good enough for the teenagers! This isn't generosity, this is trying to offload your garbage...and hoping to get a tax write off for it!

Give God your first and your best and give it out of a willing heart

**:: 1 Corinthians 16:2**

**2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.**

**When Paul is writing to the young church in Corinth he tells them to give systematically and regularly.**

Paul tells the believers to set aside something that is consistent with their income- you're not trying to keep up with the Joneses- and to do it on a regular basis. If you get paid weekly, set aside a gift to God that is generous weekly. If you get paid monthly, give monthly. But the goal is to be generous more than one a year when we have generosity Sunday. Learn to be generous with the things God has given to you consistently.

In Mark 12 we read that Jesus one day took his disciples to the Temple in Jerusalem and they sat in a place where they could watch people who were bringing their gifts to the temple treasury. Many people were giving large gifts. But then a woman came by and put in two small coins. Jesus got so excited that he called His disciples over and made sure they paid attention to the gift she gave. Jesus wasn't impressed by huge gifts that were given without faith. He got super excited over a woman who threw in two coins- she didn't give out of her

wealth, she gave out of her poverty. Hers was a gift of faith. Love for God brought personal sacrifice as she was saying in that moment, "I'm going to give God everything I have and trust that He is going to meet my needs and provide for me."

### **Generosity is a hallmark of faith for God's people.**

One of the things that made the early church so attractive to people in the Roman Empire was how they cared for each other. In Acts 4 you can read about the generosity that was part of the church in taking care of the needs of others within the church. Occasionally people would look around and notice that there were needs within the church so they would go sell a house or a piece of land and bring the money to the Apostles to use to help take care of people. They shared their possessions with one another to make sure no one was hungry or unclothed.

Today is generosity Sunday, and we will use funds that are given today to show God's love to people within our church, within our community and with ministries and areas of need outside our community and around the world.

But maybe later this Spring you need to have a yard sale and instead of using the money to help pay for a vacation or a house renovation, you need to look around our church and see if there are needs you could help meet so that no one is going without. We need to take care of one another. We are not just a weekly gathering of like-minded people, we are a family. Let's show the world what a family who takes care of one another sacrificially looks like!

Did you know that right now statistics show the average Christian in America gives 2.5% of their income to Kingdom ministry? Why? Generosity feels risky! If I'm barely making it while living on 100% of my income, how could I possibly live off 90%?

Did you know this is one of the few areas in the Bible God gives us permission to test Him? In the book of Malachi God has been angry with His people because they have been robbing him. When they ask how they've been robbing God, He says it's because they are not giving tithes and offerings. Then He tells the people this:

#### **:: Malachi 3:10**

**10 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.**

God basically says, "I give you permission to put me to the test. Bring your tithes and offerings on a regular, consistent basis and just see what I'll do in your life! I

will open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing on the community that there won't be room enough to receive it all!"

Here's the final word:

**You can't out give God!**

Trust Him as you learn to live in generosity and watch how generously He also blesses you. And oh, by the way, this isn't a way of manipulating God! The blessing may not be financial. The blessing may be intimacy with Him. The blessing will absolutely be eternal. The things we give on earth are multiplied in heaven. You can't take anything from here with you, but you can store up treasures for yourself in heaven that will last eternally.

- Pray

God, move us from thinking of ourselves as owners to thinking of ourselves as stewards.

Help us to learn to be generous with our time, our talent and our resources.

Give us a heart that desires to meet needs and show your grace to those who need to see your love in action.

- Worship (Closing Song)

Announce: If you want someone to pray with you this morning for something going on in your life or in regards to the message today, we would be honored to do that. Some of our leadership will be by the baptism area and would love to pray with you this morning!

Life Group Discussion Guide: