

Generosity

Message 1 of 2 in the series: "Generosity & Gratitude"

A. Generosity and gratitude are linked together in the lives of believers. As the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to all that God has done for us and given us, He also gives us the desire and the power to share God's blessings with others.

"Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies. **He fills my life with good things.**" Psalm 103:2-5a (NLT)

"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, **let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.**" 1 John 3:16-18 (NIV)

"Freely you have received; freely give." Matthew 10:8b (NIV)

B. While instructing Christians in ancient Corinth about collecting an offering to help suffering believers in Jerusalem, Paul outlined some helpful principles regarding Christian giving/generosity.

"I really don't need to write to you about this ministry of giving for the believers in Jerusalem. For I know how eager you are to help, and I have been boasting to the churches in Macedonia that you in Greece were ready to send an offering a year ago. In fact, it was your enthusiasm that stirred up many of the Macedonian believers to begin giving. But I am sending these brothers to be sure you really are ready, as I have been telling them, and that your money is all collected. I don't want to be wrong in my boasting about you. We would be embarrassed—not to mention your own embarrassment—if some Macedonian believers came with me and found that you weren't ready after all I had told them! So I thought I should send these brothers ahead of me to make sure the gift you promised is ready." 2 Corinthians 9:1-5a (NLT)

1. We should each decide how much we want to give so we can give willingly/cheerfully.

"But I want it to be a willing gift, not one given grudgingly... **You must each decide in your heart how much to give.** And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. 'For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.'" 2 Corinthians 9:5b & 7 (NLT)

"Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And **give according to what you have, not what you don't have.**" 2 Corinthians 8:12 (NLT)

"Each of you must bring a gift **in proportion to the way the Lord your God has blessed you.**"
Deuteronomy 16:17 (NIV)

2. If we give generously, God promises to reward us generously.

"Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But **the one who plants generously will get a generous crop.**" 2 Corinthians 9:6 (NLT)

"Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. **The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.**" Luke 6:38 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! Motives matter! "Watch out! **Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven.** When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you." Matthew 6:1-4 (NLT)

"Teach those who are rich in this world **not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.** Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life." 1 Timothy 6:17-19 (NLT)

3. God promises to provide enough for us to meet our needs with plenty left over so we can be generous.

“And God will generously provide all you need. Then **you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.** As the Scriptures say, ‘They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever.’” 2 Corinthians 9:8-9 (NLT)

“The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor.” Proverbs 22:9 (NIV)

“One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. **A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.**”

Proverbs 11:24-25 (NIV)

IMPORTANT! Giving generously is an act of faith. “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**” Matthew 6:31-33 (NIV)

4. God entrusts us with some of His resources to help us become generous people.

“For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, **he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you.** Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous.” 2 Corinthians 9:10-11a (NLT)

“Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I **want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving.**”

2 Corinthians 8:7 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! As we grow in generosity, we become more like Jesus. “For God knew his people in advance, and **he chose them to become like his Son**, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.” Romans 8:29 (NLT)

“You know the **generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ**. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.” 2 Corinthians 8:9 (NLT)

5. Generous giving meets needs AND brings glory to God.

“And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God. So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—**the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met**, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God. **As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God.** For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the **overflowing grace** God has given to you. Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!” 2 Corinthians 9:11b-15 (NLT)

C. The Generosity Ladder:

Step 1: Give for the first time.

Step 2: Give on a regular basis.

Step 3: Give a budgeted amount each week/month.

Step 4: Give 10% (tithe).

Step 5: Give beyond the tithe.

“If you need wisdom, **ask our generous God**, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.”

James 1:5 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions:

Read 2 Corinthians 9, and then discuss the following questions:

1. How would you explain the relationship between generosity and gratitude to a child? Why do you think we sometimes forget this relationship as adults? (Psalm 103:1-5, 1 John 3:16-18, Matthew 10:8)
2. Read 2 Corinthians 8:9 & 9:10-11 & Romans 8:29. How does it make you feel to learn that God entrusts some of His resources to us so we can become generous people like Jesus?
3. Discuss the following generosity/giving principles:
 - We should each decide how much we want to give so we can give willingly/cheerfully. (Deuteronomy 16:17, 2 Corinthians 8:12 & 9:5 & 7)
 - If we give generously, God promises to reward us generously. (2 Corinthians 9:6, Luke 6:38)

- God promises to provide enough for us to meet our needs with plenty left over so we can be generous. (2 Corinthians 9:8-9, Proverbs 11:24-25 & 22:9, Matthew 6:31-33)
 - Generous giving meets needs AND brings glory to God. (2 Corinthians 9:11-15)
4. Why do our motives matter when we give? (Matthew 6:1-4, 1 Timothy 6:17-19)
 5. The generosity ladder is an illustration that challenges us to keep growing in our generosity. How has God grown you in giving/generosity? (2 Corinthians 8:7)
 6. Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35) Why do you think many people in our society would disagree?