

GENEROSITY IS CONTAGIOUS!

1 Timothy 6:17-19

Lordship Generosity Sermon Plot

Dr. Clay Halmak

Introduction



Let's take a little test. Ok...think with me about this: You have just been told that you will receive a tax-free gift of one million dollars. Think about that now...one million tax free dollars. Pretty great huh? Now here is what I want you to do this morning. Take your pen and draw three blanks on your scrap paper and do this: Think about receiving the one million tax free dollars this afternoon. Then, ask yourself this question: ***“What are the first three things I would do with one million dollars?”*** Write the first things that pop into your mind on your paper now. Don't spend much time. Write down the first three things that come into your mind.



Now look in your Bible at 1 Timothy 6:17-19. The Apostle Paul is writing to his son in the ministry, Timothy, preparing him for ministry, encouraging him, and investing in Timothy his wisdom, experience and education. In this passage Paul tells Timothy that as a leader of God's people, he has an important task to perform. He is to share God's will with the followers of Jesus in all the churches where he serves. This is important because beginning today and over the next three Sundays, I am going to follow this pattern with you here, in our church.

Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19

When I say the **word “generosity,”** what definition comes to mind that comes into most people's mind is **giving...or more specifically, giving money.** In fact, generosity is often times totally mistaken for giving. Now understand, giving can be a part of generosity, but giving is not generosity. Why? You can give begrudgingly, with wrongful motives, or without love. Generosity is the opposite of this. **Love is**

the source and foundation of generosity. For a follower of Jesus, generosity is always motivated and initiated by love because God is love.

So, what is generosity?

GENEROSITY is offering up something you genuinely love or value for someone you choose to love and value more!

Let's go back and look again at the three things you wrote down. What we have done is taken a test on generosity today. Here is what I want you to see. Look at the first thing you wrote down, that you would do with one million tax free dollars and ask yourself this question: ***Did I use this gift first for the good of someone else or did I use this gift for my own benefit, to meet my own needs, or to fulfill my own desires?*** The answer to that question demonstrates your heart's instinctive bent toward generosity. For those of you who were honest today and wrote down and did not scribble out and change what you wrote, statistics prove that eight out of 10 regular church attendees wrote down something or some way you would spend the money on yourself first. In fact, statistics also prove that the majority of people in the room wrote down at least two out of three things they would do to use the money for themselves first.

Go back to the words of Paul to Timothy and **read again verses 18-19.** You see...not much has changed among God's people, has it?

So, let's learn how to be generous! Let's learn how to create an environment of generosity in our lives, homes and church that is contagious! Let's learn how to move our hearts instinctively to become generous so that it is normal, natural, and the easy thing for us ***to offer up something we genuinely love or value for someone we choose to love and to love more.***

Take note of two key thoughts:

I. GOD INITIATED BEING GENEROUS!

Who does Paul say provides everything for our enjoyment? Who makes us rich in His blessings? The answer is God! You know the verse...you've heard it or read it or have seen it many times: “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life (John 3:16).”

If we are to truly develop a heart, a perspective, and a motivation to take action and become generous people like God, then we must not only know God's one and only Son personally, but we must follow His example! God is not asking us to do something He has not already done. God is not asking us to ***offer up something we genuinely love or value for someone we choose to love and value more*** without first setting the precedent, supplying the model, and being the example of this very thing!

God gave us His one and only Son. When He did this, He taught us a couple of important things about Generosity:

A) Generosity has the right Beginning.

The motivation for being generous with all we have and all we are is love. God gave us His one and only Son because He loves us. We did absolutely nothing to deserve His love or His generosity. Yet, because of His love for us and His generosity, every single person in this room today can have a personal, life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ. Because of His love and generosity, your sins can be forever forgiven. Your life can have hope and purpose and you can possess the certainty of an eternal life in heaven!

Perhaps the reason we are not very generous toward others is because we do not choose to love others. Now, we are very generous to ourselves. Remember your list? Why? Because we just love... love...love ourselves! **But what about others?** God shows us, through Jesus, that generosity begins in a heart of love. If you are not generous today with who you are and all you have, then maybe you need to examine two things:

- 1. Do you really have a personal relationship with Jesus?*
- 2. Do you really have a heart of love toward others, or just toward yourself?*

B) Generosity offers the very Best.

God is not a “leftover” God! God does not give to you out of His leftovers! God gave us Jesus. His very Best! His only Son! A generous believer is one that offers God and others their very best! We offer others that which is valuable to us.

C) Generosity allows others to Believe.

When God’s people are generous with their resources, experiences and abilities, we lay the foundation for others to believe in Jesus and find eternal life. Generosity allows us to invest our lives and our resources in the Kingdom of God. However, we make it possible for others to know Jesus and experience His love and forgiveness. (Give examples.)

II. GOD INVITES US TO BECOME GENEROUS! (18-19)

Here is the question: Do I think that God may have blessed “me” so much just so “I” could be more generous? What about you? **Do you not think God has blessed “you” so much so that “you” could be more generous?**

I truly believe that right now, God is challenging each of us to become people who are characterized by **hearts, perspectives, motives, and actions** of generosity toward others. Did you notice how Paul tells Timothy that this is a command? Generosity is really a **Divine Directive** for our lives as believers. We like to say it this way, “God is inviting you to become generous!”

I believe this is exemplified for us in scripture and was modeled by the early church. In Acts 4:32-35, we read these words about the early church: ***“All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.*** (This is not talking about being in a commune. This is talking about how each was generous with all he or she had.) ***With great power, the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.*** (Because of the generosity of the people, the leaders of the church were able to focus on spreading the good news of Jesus, creating ministries, and expanding the work of the church throughout the region.) ***There were no needy persons among them.***” The heart perspective of love is what defined these Christian people to the rest of the world and what explains the productivity and growth of the early church.

Here is what you need to know: In a heartless, self-centered, materialistic world, when Christian people accept God’s invitation, follow His example, and practice generosity and ministry out of a heart of love, people everywhere take notice! In fact, I would be willing to go as far as to say that generosity showed by Christian people to their neighbors, friends and co-workers throughout the world has **won more people to personal faith in Jesus Christ** than thousands of sermons.

Because God had given these followers of Jesus so much, by richly blessing their lives despite Roman occupation and persecution, these Christian people, just like you and me, could do **nothing more than respond in love with generosity by giving back to God and to others!**

We somehow get the **wrong impression** about generosity because we live in a very materialistic, selfish world. We are even taught by our government, **through redistribution of wealth**, that generosity is something only the government-defined “**rich**” are to provide for those who are “**not rich**.” The reality is that God’s Word says that as children of God, we are **all rich in God’s blessings**. Generosity is not about one’s income, socio-economic portfolio, ethnic or racial background, level of abilities, personal achievements, the amount of one’s talents, the level of your education, the degree of your wisdom, or the abundance of your experiences.

God commands generosity for each and every one of us! God has provided the pattern of generosity that each of us needs to adopt into our lives today. **We are to be generous, first to God, then to one another. We are to be generous to the one in need, the one who is weak, and the one who is hurting.** Not because they beg us to do so. Not because they promise to praise us for being generous. Not so we will get something in return. Not because we expect immediate results. We are generous because we love God and choose to love others!

We choose to love, and we choose to be generous because God is generous and because He has commanded us and given us a divine directive to be generous out of love for Him. What it requires of us is the acceptance of His invitation to become generous and obedient to His command!

► What will our choice to become generous people involve? Generosity will involve at least **three things from us: It involves our time, our treasures and our talents**. Generous people offer all three of these things (time, treasures and talents) while neglecting none of them. To withhold even one of these three things is to cease to be generous!

APPLICATION

So, let's get really practical:

- Each of us understands that it is **God's will and purpose for our lives** that we are to be a generous people out of love for Him and love for others.
- Each of us understands that God is our example, and He is the one who initiated being generous. He has blessed us and made us rich in spiritual blessings and daily resources.
- Each of us also understands that it is God who inviting us and really divinely directing us to respond to His love by being generous toward Him and others.
- Finally, each of us understands what it requires from us is to **offer up something we genuinely love (from all three: our time, treasures and talents) for someone we choose to love more** than these things.

Now, the practical part. Are you really generous? I am not asking you if you try to **appear** to others to be generous. I am not asking you if you **pretend** to be generous for your own personal gain or recognition. And I am not asking you if you **feel guilty** or embarrassed at how you answered our little test earlier and discovered that you perhaps lean a little more toward **greed** than generosity. I am asking you to be honest about the issue of generosity. Are you really generous?

If you answered that question in your heart and mind with **a “no” or “I am not sure” or “maybe”** then you will be able to answer that question with a resounding **“yes”** at the end of this study, as you experience the joy, blessings and excitement of becoming generous as a child of God.

But what about today? If God is calling for you to be generous, then you may wonder where you can begin. Maybe today you will begin by giving **your time** to help another person, or by being generous with your **forgiveness** toward someone else. You may begin by being generous with **words and actions** of encouragement toward another person or maybe you need to start making time to be in a **Sunday School class** studying God's Word regularly and faithfully. You can begin by investing your time serving in one of the many **ministries** of the church. Maybe you need to give some time to **prayer** for real needs in our church, in our community, or in the lives of others who have needs today.

Maybe you will begin by being generous with **your treasures** by giving God His tithes and offerings in obedience and love. Maybe over and above your tithe you want to give a **special offering** today just to

thank God for His blessings and love in your life. Or maybe you want to help a student or child go to camp this summer or to help one of many people in our church who are going on an overseas mission trip.

Maybe God has gifted you with some talents that need to be used to praise and worship God or to help another person meet a need they have but cannot meet. Maybe you have some talents and abilities which are needed to provide ministry to others in and through this church. Maybe you have some personal experiences today that can be used to help and minister to someone else who is going through a difficult time.

Once you learn to become generous, then that generosity is contagious! Others all around you will follow your lead and they too will become generous!

Together, your lives become a blessing to many people, not only for their good, but for your good and the glory of God.