

Generosity is Cultivating!

2 Corinthians 9:6, 10-15

Lordship Generosity Sermon Plot

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Introduction



Here is one statement we are using to define generosity: ***Generosity is offering up something you genuinely love or value for someone you choose to love and value more!***

In the previous message, we learned that **Generosity is Contagious**. Your generosity is spread from God's love for us and then shared with others. Now we learn that **Generosity is Cultivating!** In other words, once generosity gets planted into our hearts and minds, like seeds planted in the ground, it begins to grow, multiply, and produce a harvest of generosity in others. It is the law of the harvest. We can see this in scripture. Paul speaks to the believers at the church in Corinth about their generosity. He had used them as an example to other churches and believers of how to be generous. Then Paul reminded them of the spiritual truth clearly taught to us in the **law of the harvest**. Let's read this and see how generosity can be cultivated in our lives! (READ Passage.)

Let's think for a moment about the law of the harvest. Generosity is like a farmer that has seed he can sow into the ground to produce a great harvest. There are four clear principles we learn about the law of the harvest:

- 1. Seed that is stored up in a barn or kept in a bucket produces nothing.***
- 2. Seed that is taken out, spread and sown into the ground produces a harvest.***
- 3. Seeds that are sown and come to harvest multiply into many more seeds to be sown in the future.***
- 4. You always reap more than you sow.***

A farmer never gets more seeds until he generously sows the seeds that he has. What we learn here is that when the farmer sows many seeds or sows generously, then that farmer **will produce a large crop or harvest**. If the farmer hoards up his seeds and only sows them sparingly, he will produce a small crop, if any crop at all.

Where this is practical for our lives as believers, in relationship to generosity, is this: So many of God's people genuinely want God to or are literally expecting **God to pour into their lives all of His seeds of blessings and benefits**. But at the same time, **they are not willing** to generously sow the

seeds of their time, treasures and talents into the lives of others or for the glory of God. We take our seed and rather than be generous with it, we bury it in the ground and then we get mad at God when He does not give to us what we want or give to us when we want it.

In other words, we are really good at totally ignoring the Bible's Law of the Harvest when it comes to generosity. We want God to sow much seed into our lives and in turn, we want to hold onto and hoard our seed and use it for ourselves rather than ***offering up something you genuinely love for someone you choose to love more!***

You always reap more than you sow. (One kernel of corn yields hundreds of kernels.) For example, if you need more time, you get more time by generously giving away and properly using your time for others. Do you want more resources than you have now? To obtain more and better resources, you must generously use the resources you have now in a way that God will honor your sacrifice. Do you want to develop greater abilities or talents? Then you must generously use the talents/abilities you have now for the good of others and for the glory of God. In turn, ***your generosity reaps a harvest of generosity.***

So let me tell you five key things that happen when we sow the seeds of generosity:

1. GENEROSITY DEVELOPS CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

Look at this: When we are generous, it makes us more and more like God. I told you this last Sunday, when I spoke with you about how **God is the one who initiates generosity.** God is a generous God. The Bible speaks about God's generosity and how we are to be generous more than anything else.

In the Bible, the word "**Believe**" is used 272 times and we know we are to believe! The word "**pray**" is used 371 times and not one of us disputes the fact that we are to pray. The word "**love**" is used 714 times and again we all know that we are love because God is love and God demonstrates His love for us in Jesus. Did you know that the word "**give**" which speaks of generosity is **used 2,162 times?** Do you know why? Because God wants us to learn to be generous, so much so that Jesus talked more about being generous than He even talked about Heaven or Hell.

In *40 Days of Community*, Rick Warren writes: "***You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.***" You see, if we are to be more like God...if people are to better see Jesus exemplified in our lives, then we must become generous. When we practice generosity, what is produced into harvest within our lives is the development of our Christian character.

2. GENEROSITY DICTATES CLOSENESS IN COMMUNITY.

Another way of saying this is that when we practice generosity toward others, it deepens our personal relationships with them and strengthens our community with others, especially among those in God's family. Generosity brings us closer to one another.

Let me give you some examples. Wouldn't you feel closer to someone if they....

- walked up to you and handed you a \$100 bill and said, they just wanted to help you meet an important need in your life?
- came and prayed with you about a real need in your life?
- came and volunteered to keep you children for free so you could spend time with your spouse, with a parent, or finishing a task at work?
- helped pay your way to go on an international mission trip this summer?
- came to the hospital and sat with you while a loved one had major surgery?

Likewise, if you are the one who is offering such generosity to others in showing them love, giving of your time, offering them your treasures, and providing ministry for them, **would you not feel closer to those people** to whom you were showing generosity?

Look again at 2 Corinthians 9:11-12. Paul is saying that generosity draws us to others and to God and results in thanksgiving.

In Matthew 6:21, Jesus teaches us this important principle: "**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**" Jesus teaches us that your heart is always where you are being generous! Wherever you are being generous with **your time, your money, resources, talents, and abilities**, that is where your heart will be. If you give lots of time to your business, then your heart will belong to your business. If you give lots of time and resources to your hunting club, then that is where your heart will be. If you spend lots of focus on your friends, then your heart will be with your friends. Wherever you choose to put your time, treasure, and talents that **place is a magnet to your heart!**

Perhaps the reason God seems so far off from us, or why God seems disinterested in our lives, or why it seems we have little to no communication with God and do not seem to hear from Him, is because that is just not where our heart is. When everyone and everything else gets the best of our time, treasures, and talents, and we are not generous toward God or in serving Him with those things, then we are allowing ourselves to be drawn away from God and not drawn to God.

Today through being generous with all that you are and all that you have, you can draw closer to others in a relationship and in community with them. More importantly, you can draw close once again to God simply through generosity.

3. GENEROSITY DELIVERS A CURE FOR COVETOUSNESS.

One of the 10 Commandments is choosing not to covet that which belongs to others. We live in a very materialist world filled with covetousness. We are told that the only way to be happy **is to be unhappy with and get rid of what you have now in order to obtain something you do not have.** SATAN LIES TO US, and we are told to **get more, keep more for yourself, expand more, and spend more.** This mindset is selfish, self-centered, and unspiritual. Yet it is one of the most prevalent mindsets among God's people who are regular church attendees. **Remember the test we took last week?**

The truth is that in our hearts we are misers and not generous. All I have to do is say the word ***“tithe” or “offering”*** and that makes some church folks so upset that they can't see straight. Why? Our focus is to be generous to me, but not be generous to others. No wonder the word **“miser” and the word “miserable”** come from the same root word. We read in Proverbs 1:19 (NLT), **“Such is the fate of all who are greedy for money; it robs them of life.”** We rob ourselves of real, meaningful life when we are not generous according to the truth of God's Word.

There is only one antidote in this world for materialism, greed, covetousness, and stinginess, and that is **Generosity**. It is only when you ***offer up something you genuinely love for someone you choose to love more*** that you overcome materialism and selfishness.

► **A PRACTICAL THOUGHT:** If your children do not learn how to be generous with their time, treasures and talents by **watching you** as their parent or grandparent, then please tell me where they will learn to be generous. Not from their friends! Not from the government! Not from television, books, video games, movies, or print media. Through His church, you get the unique once in a lifetime opportunity to teach your children how to be generous with themselves and with all they have, just to show love for God and to show His love to others!

4. GENEROSITY DEEPENS & CONFIRMS OUR CONVICTIONS.

Generosity toward God and others stretches and strengthens our faith in God. Whether or not we will be generous and ***offer up something you genuinely love and value for someone you choose to love and value more*** is a direct test of our faith. Look again at our Scripture today in 2 Corinthians 9:13. What Paul is saying is that our generosity proves the reality of our faith in God! We will either choose to serve God generously with an **open hand or a clenched fist**.

We will serve God with an open calendar, or we will close our time to Him. We will open our hearts to others, or we will live for ourselves. The issue is our faith in God. We forget the law of the harvest which says in verse 6, **“Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”** If by faith you sow your time into a ministry in this church or into the life of another person, you will actually reap more time. If you generously sow your resources into the work of the Kingdom of God, you will get more valuable use out of your resources. Our faith can be strengthened through our generosity because it deepens & confirms our convictions in the Lord.

5. GENEROSITY DEMONSTRATES OUR CREATOR'S COMPASSION.

The more generous we are with the right heart and motives toward God and others, the more generous God is in blessing our lives. God's Word teaches us this truth over and over again. God blesses those who are generous!

Listen to this great verse in Deuteronomy 15:10: **“Give generously...and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to.”** You should circle the words **“all” and “everything.”** God says that when we are openly generous toward Him and others, He will bless us in all we do and everything we put our hands to.

How many of you would like to see that happen in your life? If you do, then you must become a generous person. I wonder, do you really believe God when He says that your generosity will lead to His bountiful blessings? You see, if we cannot trust God with our time, treasures and talents that we offer generously, what makes us think we can trust Him with our eternal salvation and Heaven?

This is why Jesus was quoted in Acts 20:35, "***It is more blessed to give than to receive.***" The happiest and most fulfilled people you will ever meet are those who are the most generous!