

GENEROSITY

* The definition of “generosity” is:

- The quality of being kind and generous.
- The quality of being plentiful and large.
- Happy to give food, time, money and kindness to people in need.
- The virtue of not being tied down by concerns of one’s possessions.

* Since Jesus is our example and the exact representation of the Father notice what He says about generosity!

Matthew 6:1-4, 19-21 (NIV)

1 “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. **3** But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4** so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. **19** “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

* The point Jesus seems to be making here is: Have a **generous lifestyle!** Have a **giving spirit** in life! Don’t make an issue of practicing your faith by the **selfish need to be seen or noticed!** Wherever you **direct your resources**, will be what has **your heart and attention!**

I. The first thing to know about generosity and giving is that this principle is NOT about legalistic demands of law, but rather living in the image of God! Generosity is part of the character of God!!

A. We MUST learn how to **live God's ways!**

Isaiah 55:8-11 (NIV)

“For **my thoughts are not your thoughts,**
neither are your ways my ways,”
declares the Lord.

9

“As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10

As the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,
and do not return to it
without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,

11

so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

B. We see something very interesting from Paul as he encouraged and exhorted the Elders in Ephesus!

Acts 20:35 (NIV)

35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”

1. What is interesting here is that you will not find this quote from Jesus anywhere in the gospels!
2. Theologians believe that this must have happened “along the way of everyday ministry”.

3. What this seems to mean is that this “attitude” is simply a “principle of life” and a “way of living” for the christian!

II. Notice the heart of the Lord from the scripture!!

Leviticus 19:9-10 (NIV)

9 “When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. **10** Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 23:22 (NIV)

22 “When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the Lord your God.”

Deuteronomy 24:19 (NIV)

19 When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

A. It is SO important for us to realize that **generosity** is not some demand of the Lord, something to do with the Old Testament Law, it is simply a **lifestyle of a person created in God’s image!!**

1. Giving is simply an overflow of your life!
2. Giving is a lifestyle!
3. Giving is a practice of my faith!
4. Giving is how I express that I am created in God’s image!

B. Generosity and giving have been a part of God’s people’s life under the Old and New Covenants!

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 (NIV)

16 Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. **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.

1. Giving is not a legalistic demand!
2. It's not merely a command of old or new covenants! **It's lifestyle!**

C. Remember, we are considering from scripture what is the **"heart of the Lord"**!

2 Corinthians 8:9-15 (NIV)

9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

10 And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter.

Last year you were the first not only to give but also to **have the desire** to do so. **11** Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. **12 For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.**

13 Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. **14** At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, **15 as it is written:** "The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little." (See Exodus 16:18)

1. Unless you **read this in context**, you will go in the wrong direction!
2. The context: **The collection for the Saints!**
3. Famine, persecution and double taxation was crippling the saints in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas!
4. Paul encouraged the Church in other regions to help support those brothers and sisters in Jerusalem.

Romans 15:26 (NIV)

26 For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem.

III. A summary of what generosity and giving is:

- A. Giving is an act of worship.
- B. Giving is part of me being created in God's image.
- C. I give according to my ability.
- D. My giving is freely from the heart.
- E. I should be cheerful in my giving.

* Remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: **'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'** ”