

## Living Generously

In Luke 6:38 (NIV) Jesus said:

*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*

The Message translation puts Luke 6:38 this way:

*Give away your life; you'll find life given back, but not merely given back—given back with bonus and blessing. **Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity.***

When you think about generosity, what comes to mind? – Discuss with one another.

**Generosity** is the quality of being kind and unselfish. A generous person is concerned about the well-being of others.

We generally think of generosity as it pertains to sharing money and other valuables with others. In reality, generosity is much broader than that – as many have commented. On the screen we see just a few examples of what living generously entails.

The Bible has a lot to say about generosity as a desirable character trait.

God is generous, and He expects us, his children, to follow His example!

God's generosity is evidenced all around us. God created this planet that is especially suited to sustain us and provide for our needs and pleasures. He supplies us with light, colour, sound, air, the ability to taste and enjoy, smell the fresh ocean spray and the perfume of roses, hear and appreciate the sounds of nature – be it the roar of the ocean or a symphony, touch and be intrigued or satisfied.

Of course, the same five senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing and sight also afford us protection from events or situations which might harm us.

In His generosity, God doesn't differentiate between those whom you, or I, might deem worthy or unworthy in His supply of life's necessities:

In Matthew 5:43-48 Jesus says:

<sup>43</sup> *"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' <sup>44</sup> But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

Above all, God demonstrated His generosity when He offered His Son as a sacrifice to atone for our sin. In the face of such generosity, we can only echo the apostle Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 9:15  
**"Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"**

God the Father's gift of His son, Jesus, to deal with my sin and yours, was the ultimate act of generosity.

In John 3:16 we read...

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

And 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us...

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

By God's grace, we are not only forgiven but, as we read in Luke 11:13, God our Father has yet another special gift for us:

*If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*

God Himself has set the standard of what it means to be generous. And as we see God being generous, He calls us to be generous.

The Bible teaches the general principle that those who are generous will find favour.

In Proverbs 11:24–25 we read:

*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.*

Or, as paraphrased in the Message version:

*The world of the generous gets larger and larger; the world of the stingy gets smaller and smaller. The one who blesses others is abundantly blessed; those who help others are helped.*

God challenges us to be generous because He **wants** us to receive the blessing that comes from living generously. God's Word is clear that the generous are remembered and rewarded, whether in this life or the next...or both!

In Luke 6:29, 34–35 we are instructed to show generosity even to our enemies:

*"If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. . . . If you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? . . . But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked."*

**God is seeking people who will reflect His character and model His generosity. He delights to bless those who are generous, and show Himself strong on their behalf.**

Paul praises the Philippian Christians for being generous to him in his work as a missionary and evangelist. He assures them that they will be blessed because of their generosity.

In Philippians 4:16-19 we read:

*... when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. <sup>17</sup>Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. <sup>18</sup>I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. <sup>19</sup>**And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.***

Note that this promise that Paul made to the Philippian church...

***And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.***

...was a promise based on their generosity, supplying his needs as a missionary!

**Bottom line:** Supporting missionary work will not impoverish a church, it will enrich it!

In Matthew 6:19-21 our Lord Jesus says:

*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

And in Luke 6:38 Jesus says:

*Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.*

And we need to remember that, as we all discussed earlier, generosity is not confined to money!

In Acts 20:35 the apostle Paul says:

*In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, **“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”***

Now that phrase: **“It is more blessed to give than to receive”** may be hard for some of us, especially a child, to accept or believe!

Here are a few excerpts from an article in the Washington Post.

A six-year study out of Cornell University in the USA adds to some already compelling evidence that the most efficient route to human flourishing may be a lot simpler than we’ve been making it.

The most efficient path to living a contented life may be to put ourselves through the simple exercise of **thinking about our purpose**, and then taking a step - even a modest one - toward fulfilling it. The surest path to happiness could be as simple as this: **Stop trying to be happy - and start figuring out how to make other people happy.**

Basically, **people need to be outward-focused**. What do you want to do with your limited time today, this week, this month?

Social science is confirming what the philosophers knew. Aristotle believed that the good life required **living with purpose**.

Nietzsche wrote that “he who has a **why** to live can bear almost any **how**.”

Psychologist Kendall Cotton Bronk of Claremont Graduate University writes: “So much of the pop psychology stuff is ‘focus on yourself, focus on your own personal growth, focus on your needs, focus on your self-care, focus on you, you, you.’”

Instead, she argued, “the real path to happiness is **focusing on others**, on how you can contribute to others and their well-being. ... What we need to be focusing on is contributing in meaningful ways, and often that will lead to the happiness that you’re seeking.”

The 20th-century psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, who believed that his sense of purpose helped him to survive Nazi concentration camps, wrote that happiness “cannot be pursued; it must ensue, and it only does so as the **unintended** side effect of one’s personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the **by-product** of one’s surrender to a person other than oneself.”

As to the idea of focusing on others, Jesus simply said:

**“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”**

In our generosity, we are not to expect repayment in kind. Our reward will come from the Lord, in His way and in His time.

As we all discussed at the beginning of this message, generosity can be manifested in many ways.

Living generously includes: not only money, but time – food – resources – skills – knowledge – life experience – hospitality – friendship, and forgiveness.

This list by no means covers all the ways we can be generous, but I think it is a stimulating start.

Of these 10 facets of generosity in this list, let’s look with a little more depth at just 5 of the ways to live generously.

**Living generously can be giving of our time in friendship.**

Galatians 6:2 says:

*Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

Here the apostle Paul is encouraging us to be generous with our time. This could be simply being there for someone, listening to the heartache or difficulties they are going through.

**Living generously can be sharing our resources as was common in the early church:**

In Acts 4:32-34 we read

*<sup>32</sup>All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. <sup>33</sup>With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all <sup>34</sup>that there was no needy person among them.*

And the apostle John writes in 1 John 3:16-18:

*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.*

**Living generously can be sharing with someone else a skill you have.**

When we went out to San Pedro Sochiapam in Mexico in 1970, we went with the express purpose of learning the Chinantec language and translating the NT for them. A few months after our arrival a mestizo (part Spanish /part Indian) named Rojelio began to visit us 2-3 times a week. Rojelio could not speak Chinantec. He would sit and talk with us for 1-2 hours in Spanish, which we had minimal skills in. One day he said: "I know you are here to learn the Chinantec language, but you will need Spanish to talk to Govt. officials, and whenever you go to the city to buy supplies. I want to help you." We were grateful for his input, but didn't fully realise just what a commitment he was making. One day I went with him to his cornfield. It took us an hour walking steep downhill to the river, then uphill on the other side. After spending the day doing weeding we returned home. I could hardly make it up the hill! I had a fresh appreciation for Rojelio's generosity of time, that after a full day in his field he would come to our place at night and tutor us in Spanish.

**Living generously can be sharing from your life experiences.**

As parents, of course, we try to do this with our children. But as adults you may have insights into finances, child-rearing, gardening, art, music, etc. that you can share with other adults or young people.

Have a chat with Christine about the way some Māori ladies generously shared their time and musical skill with Christine when she was a child, and taught her how to harmonise.

Hebrews 13:16 says:

*And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

**Living generously can also include a willingness to forgive.**

In Ephesians 4:32 the apostle Paul wrote:

*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Or, as the Message version puts it:

*Be gentle with one another, sensitive. Forgive one another as quickly and thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you.*

In the story that Jesus told about the good Samaritan in Luke 10:33-37 we see illustrated generosity of both time and money. But this story is not only about time and money to help a bruised and beaten stranger. If we think about the cultural setting in which this story takes place, we will realise that the Samaritan, when he reached out to help this Jewish victim, was also generous with his forgiveness of the cultural slights, insults and slurs directed at Samaritan people by the Jews.

**As God has so generously forgiven us, so we are to forgive.**

**Living generously is voluntary!  
And it is without prejudice.**

The apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 9:10-15:

*Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.*

*Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!*

In summary...

**Living generously can be giving of our time and friendship.**

**Living generously can be sharing our resources as was common in the early church**

**Living generously can be sharing with someone else a skill you have.**

**Living generously can be sharing from your life experiences.**

**Living generously can include a willingness to forgive.**

Let us embrace these encouragements in our own lives to **LIVE GENEROUSLY.**