

Five Biblical Truths on Generosity

As Presented by Lisa Bishop

Air Dates: December 19-23, 2022

Day One

When you hear the word generosity, what comes to mind? We tend to think of generosity in terms of money or giving of our material blessings. And while that is true and as followers of Jesus, we are called to be generous with our finances, generosity has far greater meaning than money.

Consider this: Generosity is a mindset. Being generous is an attitude of heart. It's a way of being, a lifestyle from which your thoughts, words and your actions flow.

Are you living with a mind and heart set on being generous? Are you living a lifestyle of generosity?

It will be difficult to live a lifestyle of generosity if you have a scarcity mindset. When you don't think you have enough of something, the tendency will be to hold what you do have with a tight grip. I have often found myself living from scarcity rather than living from the truth that God is generous. He does not withhold anything good from me. He does not withhold anything good from you.

Psalm 84:11 says, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly" (ESV).

I love the reminder of the truth that God is a generous God. We see more evidence in Philippians 4:19 which says, "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (ESV).

Notice the apostle Paul's words "my God will supply *every need*." I know sometimes it doesn't feel like God is supplying your every need. You ask for things and pray for things that do not get answered in the way you want or the timing you anticipate and then you decide that God withholds good things.

But God doesn't withhold. He cannot go against his nature. You have to train your mind and heart to look for his provision in every circumstance and realize while it may be packaged differently than you would have imagined, God is always providing. He is always supplying for your every need because that is who he is.

Is there an area of your life that you feel God is withholding something good from you?

Take time to talk to Jesus. Share your disappointment. Rehearse what is true, that God doesn't withhold from you. Ask him to help you see and experience his generosity and all of the ways he is providing for you in this season.

Day Two

In Ephesians 3 Paul prayed the following prayer over Christ followers. These are familiar verses in the Bible but take these truths in and let Paul's prayer sink into your heart and soul.

I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God (Ephesians 3:16-19, NLT).

Do you know how wide, long, high, and deep God's love is for you? Paul goes to great measures to attempt to capture the vastness of Jesus's affection for his sons and daughters, for you. He wants your roots to grow down into God's love, to experience the magnitude of Christ's love so that you will take hold of the fullness of life and the power of God at work in you. I don't want to live thinking that God's love for me is lukewarm, or that in some way I am unlovable. Do you?

If you live from a place of being unlovable, if you buy into the lie that God does not really love you or that there is some way you have to earn his love, you are giving the enemy a foothold, a strategic position from which he can advance and multiply his lies. Satan's greatest attempt is to convince you that you aren't loveable. This leads to isolation, fear, anxiety, and addiction. When you are not fully convinced of God's love for you, you will go looking for love in all the wrong places.

When you feel unlovable, stand firm in truth. Remind yourself of Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3. And, recite these words to yourself, "I am convinced that Jesus's love for me is gigantic and generous. I trust in God's love for me and my roots are deeply grounded in his love. The love of Jesus gives me strength. My heart trusts in him."

Let this be a reminder to you to trust God's generous love for you.

Day Three

If you were to take inventory of your words over the past 24 hours, would they fall into the "generous" category? The dictionary definition of generous is, "Free from meanness or smallness of mind or character. Abundant. Characterized by a noble or kindly spirit." If you were to monitor your words, are they mean or kind? Are they generous?

Proverbs 16:24 says, "Kind words are like honey—sweet to the soul and healthy for the body."

Do your words bring health to others? Are they sweet to people's souls? Are the words you speak to yourself about yourself sweet and kind?

I was having dinner with a dear friend the other day. She was sharing all of the negative thoughts about herself that she has been ruminating on, the condemning and critical words about herself that are on repeat in her head. She made an interesting connection to the lies she believes about herself and how that impacts her words and actions towards others. It's so true when you think about it. If you have negative self-talk, it will impact the way you show up with and behave towards others. You may come across insecure, impatient, unforgiving and judgmental. What you say about yourself to yourself impacts the way you are with others. What are the unkind words you believe about yourself and speak to yourself?

What mean words do you find yourself thinking about or saying to others? Proverbs 18:21 is a familiar verse. I think it is one most of us can rehearse yet are we heeding these words of wisdom? Are you practicing these truths daily? "Words kill, words give life; they're either poison or fruit—you choose" (Proverbs 18:21, MSG).

Your self talk will either lead to you poisoning yourself or believing truth about who you are and bring you life. Your speech towards others will either kill them and cut them down to size, or give life to those in your midst.

Do people experience God's grace because you avoid being harsh with your words? Do people experience God's kindness because of the tone of your voice? Your words and the way you communicate them is important. You get to choose your words. Choose wisely. Be generous with your words and bring health and life to those around you.

Day Four

When was the last time you encouraged someone? I mean, more than a "good job," or a pat on the back. Not to say those are not meaningful. But when was the last time you told someone what you valued about them and showed them genuine appreciation?

Not too long ago I was feeling a bit discouraged in my ministry. I was really questioning if my life and my work in that season was making an impact.

Have you ever wondered if what you are doing is making a difference, adding value for others? As those questions were stirring in my head I just so happened to head to the mailbox, and to my surprise there was an envelope addressed to me. I eagerly opened it to find a handwritten note from a woman specifically sharing how her life had been impacted by my ministry. Now I am not saying this to boast about myself. I am sharing this as a reminder that we all need a boost of encouragement from time to time.

First Thessalonians 5:11 says, "Encourage one another and build one another up, just as in fact you are doing." The definition of encourage is, to inspire with hope, courage, or confidence. Paul is talking about encouraging one another in our faith yet this idea of encouragement can be applied to various people and various circumstances in life. When I was asking God about my ministry and questioning if I was in the right place, I felt like that handwritten note was an answered prayer and a reminder that God sees me. The reality is, God uses people. He uses you to encourage others and spur them on. As followers of Jesus, we have the privilege and the responsibility to build each other up.

Who can you share an encouraging word with? Maybe it's a co-worker and you can point out what you value about working with her. One interesting statistic is that 75% of employees who quit their jobs cite lack of appreciation as a key factor in their leaving. So maybe it's encouraging a co-worker. Or, maybe it's your spouse. Perhaps you have been taking what they do for granted and you want to share what you appreciate. It can be a friend, a parent, a neighbor, or pastor. To whom will you take the time to write a handwritten note, stop by the office or make a phone call to encourage?

I have a plant on a shelf in my living room that I often forget to water. Sometimes it can look a little wilted but when I water it, it perks right up. Consider that your encouragement is like that watering can. A bit of encouragement poured out can nourish a soul.

Day Five

Are you a generous person?

Proverbs 11:24-25 tells us, "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. Be generous, your world expands. Be stingy, your world shrinks. Bless others and be blessed, help others and receive help."

It's the concept of reaping and sowing.

God challenges us to be generous because he wants us to receive the blessing that comes from it. We are generous because God is generous. Generosity is really a mindset. It's an attitude of heart, a way of being, a lifestyle from which your thoughts, words and your actions flow.

In Luke 6:38 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."

When you are generous it flows from a faith and trust in God's provision and his generosity towards you. When you are being generous you push past the barriers of your comfort zone and go above and beyond, whether you are giving of your time, your service, your hospitality, your financial resources. You don't live from fear of not having enough.

Our culture today feeds our individualistic and consumer mindset and tries to get us to believe that we always need more, we will never have enough; and that can keep us gripping tightly to what we do have. As followers of Jesus, we live in light of biblical principles and God's economy and from the truth that we have a generous God who calls us to imitate him.

Where have you been stingy? How have you been holding back? How is God calling you to live a lifestyle of generosity?

What are the serving needs in your church and how can you be generous with your time? How can you generously give of your financial resources to support ministries in and outside of the church? Who is a friend, family member, or neighbor that has a need you can graciously meet?

Remember that God will supply all of your needs and that you get to be the hands and feet of Jesus by supplying the needs of others. So, let's be like Jesus and live generously.