

Contagious Generosity

Summary

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The book's focus is financial generosity and how our generosity relates to the church.

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What is Generosity?	1
01-Culture is Key	1
02-Good Strategy is Better than Good Intentions	1
03-Generosity is Contagious	2
04-Follow Me	2
05-Leverage the Weekend Experience	3
06-Embrace the Ministry of Asking	3
07-Disciple High-Capacity Givers.....	4
08-Measure Progress	5
09-You Accelerate When You Celebrate.....	6
10-Generosity is the New Evangelism	6
There is No Generosity Button.....	7

What is Generosity?

2Corinthians 9:11

Generosity = a lifestyle in which we share all that we have, are, and ever will become as a demonstration of God's love and a response to God's grace

Biblical stewardship:

- God owns everything.
- What we have, God gave us.
- God expects us to invest our resources in the kingdom.

As followers of Christ, we seek to imitate Him who gave Himself for us [**1The 1:6**].

PART 1: CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

01-Culture is Key

Luke 6:38

If a church isn't clear about what it believes about giving and stewardship, then its members can't be either. Culture sets the tone, defines the pace, and becomes the catalyst for vision, strategy, goals, and impact.

Culture Trumps Vision

Having the right vision for generosity isn't enough. Culture defines the path and possibility of realizing the vision. Our culture must inspire and support generous habits.

Focus on life change as the goal. Seek spiritual formation. Giving habits give us an indicator of how effective we are with discipleship.

- When and how do we talk about generosity at our church?
- In what ways does our church culture encourage or discourage generosity?

02-Good Strategy is Better than Good Intentions

People get frustrated when you tell them what to do without providing them tools to help with how to do it.

Without a strategy, our ability to put words into action will be hit or miss.

The key to a successful strategy is to establish a plan, then execute it. A plan should have specific, measurable steps with an accountable person for each step [**Luke 14:28-31**].

Do we have a strategy and plan for building a culture of generosity at our church?

Generosity should be systemic. It should be a value built into the fabric of our church.

Is each age group experiencing the freedom of stewardship and joy of generosity?

We can look at percent of giving by demographic to see if we have failed to capture the hearts of specific age groups.

Aspects of Developing a Comprehensive Strategy

- **INFORMATION:** Do an annual sermon series on stewardship and generosity. Provide small group studies that teach the biblical foundation of stewardship and generosity.
- **APPLICATION:** Give a biblically based call to action. Urge people to take the next small, manageable

step in stewardship and generosity. Provide ways for people to put what you teach them into action.

- **TRANSFORMATION:** Because transformation begins in the heart, you can't accurately predict when or how it will take place. Watch for changes in behavior. Encourage people to share their experiences.

03-Generosity is Contagious

When you are generous, it creates an experience that leaves you and the recipient changed.

Cure for Scarcity

While you shouldn't act foolishly in financial matters, take some steps of faith to respond to what God is calling you to do.

Not Giving to Receive

According to the Bible, giving in order to receive is not God's economy. We are to give out of appreciation for God's grace, not because we expect something in return. How God blesses our giving will vary. It may include things such as:

- freedom from our fears
- joy
- additional financial resources
- increased confidence in God's love

Make it Obvious

Make it clear how the church is generous with its resources. The decisions that a church makes corporately will have a direct impact on the spiritual formation of its members. The budget should reveal that church expenditures align with its mission.

Generosity is Exciting

Generosity is an opportunity for believers to be shaped into the image of Christ. Generous churches generate a positive energy for what God is calling us to do next.

PART 2: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

04-Follow Me

Generosity is a value molded at the top level. Pastors who share their journey toward generosity often see their congregations respond with a desire to follow suit. Pastors need to teach what the Bible says about financial resources and they need to model that in their own lives.

Partnering in Leadership

The senior pastor should be the "chief generosity officer" who partners with a stewardship pastor or core group of committed givers to cultivate a culture of generosity within the church. The pastor should hold staff and key leaders accountable for biblical stewardship.

Know and help others come to realize that generosity is about what God wants FOR people not FROM them.

05-Leverage the Weekend Experience

Power of the Pulpit

The lead pastor is the appropriate person to illuminate the biblical perspective on finances.

Tell Stories of Life Change

Consider all parts of the weekend experience and use a variety of means to show how giving impacts people's lives.

Home Field Advantage

During the weekend experience, you get to see people face-to-face. Use this as an opportunity to:

- Build trust.
- Cast and recast vision.
- Shape culture.
- Demonstrate impact (in both numbers and stories).
- Enhance relationships (with a range of people).
- Highlight stewardship (show how the church is responsible with its funds).

Your Worship Programming Strategy

Find ways to integrate generosity in all aspects of the weekend experience. Pay attention to:

- Frequency: Mention generosity regularly, not just when the church has a monetary need.

- Language: Emphasize opportunity vs. obligation. Teach that giving is a part of worshiping and shows our appreciation for God's grace.
- Function: Give a clear ask and state how the church will use the money.

Don't Just Give the Sermon on the Amount

If you preach about generosity only when you want to raise funds, you convey that it's about what we want FROM you rather than what we want FOR you. The core narrative of the Bible centers on the generous activity of God. In any series you preach, the topic of generosity should flow naturally from the Scriptures. Ask yourself:

1. What does this passage teach us about God's generosity toward human beings?
2. What can we learn about generosity from this text?
3. How should this influence our decision making so we become less attached to the things of the world and more able to share with others?

Consider Other Ways to Communicate

Occasionally, have someone share how an act of generosity has led to a changed life.

Use email, blogs, or social media to share additional stories about generosity.

06-Embrace the Ministry of Asking

Hebrews 10:24

You Have Not Because You Ask Not

Rejecting the ministry of asking will stunt the spiritual growth of your congregation. A pastor is responsible for the way he teaches others to pursue spiritual disciplines, including giving. Failing to ask can also cause a prospective giver to miss out on the joy of giving.

What We Want FOR You

Help people understand that being generous is about following God. Help people recognize and respond to God's call in their lives. Before asking a person directly, be sure you have established an ongoing relationship with that person. Know the person's dreams and desires.

What steps are we taking to listen to the needs and passions of people in our church?

The Ask: Information, Inspiration, Invitation

- **INFORMATION:** Be sure you have a solid plan with clear objectives that you can state succinctly to the person.
- **INSPIRATION:** Next, draw connections between the giving opportunity and the giver's personal dreams and desires.
- **INVITATION:** Provide a place for the giver to step in and offer a gift.

You Can Do It, We Can Help

Show that what the giver wants to accomplish in God's name with the resources He gave them is something that the church can help them achieve.

Abundance or Scarcity

If we believe in a God without limits, we must accept that the resources we need to fulfill what he wants us to accomplish are also unlimited.

07-Disciple High-Capacity Givers

Matthew 19:24

Many high-capacity givers aren't living up to their potential. Our aim should be to help each person recognize and develop his spiritual gifts. We sometimes treat the spiritual gift of giving differently by focusing too much on how that gift can benefit us.

Church Vision

Make your church vision clear and compelling. Show accountability for the funds. Emphasize future ministry returns, not simply solving immediate problems.

Pastor's Vision

High-capacity givers want to know that you have carefully processed the opportunities and that you are committed to the long-term sustainability of the church.

Wealth Brings Complexity

The more money a person has, the more likely they are to become targets for people who want something from them. Don't become just another person wanting their money. Focus on their spiritual well-being. See them as people needing a Savior.

Discipleship is the Goal

Before you can effectively disciple them, you must establish a relationship with them. Interact with them in small groups. Listen to them. Your role is not to

spend their money. Your role is to provide tools, advice, and opportunities for them to make informed decisions.

Have we ever gathered small groups of high-capacity givers to share their passions, hopes, and desires for the ministries of our church?

Identify Opportunities, Not Needs

High-capacity givers usually prefer to give to opportunities rather than immediate or ongoing needs. Because needs tend to be reactive, repetitive, and degenerative, they lack appeal. Always have a list of key ministry initiatives you would pursue if you had the funds.

What tools, advice, and opportunities do we provide our high-capacity givers?

Different Perspective and Vocabulary

High-capacity givers tend to be pragmatists. They want details, access, and a voice. They want access to key leaders because they want to be good stewards of the resources God gave them. To expect them to give and not be involved does them a disservice. When they participate, they become investors rather than just givers.

Treat Difference Makers as Stakeholders

Difference makers should be involved in key decisions because they have a vested interest in seeing the ministry of the church flourish.

Note: The most proven way to protect the integrity of the relationship between the pastor and high-capacity giver is to report project results privately to them and to process the results together, even if a project is a failure.

Not About the Money but All About the Difference

Pastors should **not** give favoritism to high-capacity givers. They should disciple and value them as they

do the prayer champions, children's ministry champions, spiritual development champions, and leadership champions. The goal is to disciple all of them and equip them to be good stewards of all God has given them.

A pastor may not be able to give the best advice on wealth management, but he does bear the responsibility for discipling the congregation, including high-capacity givers.

PART 3: IMPACT

08-Measure Progress

You can't manage what you don't measure.

Show Me the Data, Tell Me a Story

The giver wants to know how the church is investing his money and the results it is producing. Making the budget available is not enough. You need to present meaningful data.

mROI = ministry return on investment
View givers as investors in the work of ministry. They need to see evidence that their gifts are making a difference.

People respond to stories, so always include stories of life change.

Which Benchmarks Matter

Don't compare yourself to other churches. We should measure ourselves against ourselves.

Focus on performance over time.

- Track giving per household and report the trend for the past 12-24 months.
- Track percentage of attendees who give and report the trend.
- Estimate giving potential. Use census figures for average household income by zip code. Take 10% of that number and compare it to your average giving per household. The difference is your giving potential. (Note: Most congregations give less than 3% of average household income in their area.)

Challenge attendees to give 1% more. Create a video that illustrates what we would have been unable to

do if giving had been 1% less the previous year and what we could have done had it been 1% more.

Pastors Should Know

Many pastors are opposed to knowing what individuals give because they don't want to be tempted to show favoritism.

Some reasons it may be helpful to know of changes in individual giving patterns are:

- Changes in individual giving patterns indicate spiritual issues (**Mat 6:21**).
- Changes in individual giving patterns are relevant when selecting leaders.

Giving is Personal, Not Private

Though we should be careful not to favor those who give generously, it's difficult to help people grow in the spiritual discipline of giving if we don't know their habits.

Indicators:

- First-time gift indicates a new spiritual commitment.
- Large onetime gift indicates a spiritual response to a specific opportunity.
- Consistent giving that increases over time indicates commitment to faith and to the church.

How do we measure giving at our church?

Who is responsible for interpreting the giving data?

09-You Accelerate When You Celebrate

"I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver." -Maya Angelou

If we believe that being generous is a joy and a privilege, then it makes sense to celebrate whenever we have the opportunity to give.

Celebration Changes Expectation

What you choose to celebrate most often becomes what you value most.

When we acknowledge and celebrate the giving and generous habits of people, others see that such behavior is a good thing, something they want to emulate ([Heb 10:24](#)).

Other Kinds of Celebration

We celebrate baptisms, baby dedications, and appointments of deacons, but do we celebrate giving?

Bringing offerings to the Lord is a spiritual practice - a visible way of celebrating the Lord's goodness.

How are we using offering time as a means of spiritual formation?

Consider using offering time to celebrate changed lives and spiritual growth. Help people see the connection between these life changes and giving.

Taking Givers for Granted

It is essential to build a system that ensures that the church expresses thanks for gifts. People want to know that someone noticed the gift. A thank you note affirms the desire that led them to give. Your strategy should include thanks to:

- first-time gifts (thank you for taking this important step of faith, thank you for trusting the leadership of this church to use this money wisely)
- special onetime gifts (contact the person to celebrate with him/her, ask, "What is the Lord doing in your life that has caused you to give such a generous gift?" Honor the giver's desire to remain anonymous if that is the case.
- an increase in giving habits (thank you for your faithfulness)

Effectiveness vs. Faithfulness

Celebrate the specific results that come from a gift(s). Also celebrate consistent giving. All givers, no matter the size of the gifts, want to know that their generosity made a difference.

Don't Be Afraid to Share the News

Churches that celebrate the generous giving of their members will accelerate the practice of generous living.

10-Generosity is the New Evangelism

God doesn't need our money but He knows that our orientation toward money reflects our obedience to the lordship of Christ and how well we grasp that He is the source of all we have.

Everyone talks about money. The question becomes how we will use this as an opportunity to connect people with Christ.

Common Ground and a Common Experience

There is something about our ability to help an individual in need that sparks a light in our eyes and opens the person's heart to what we have to share. People around us notice how we respond to trying times. Generosity reveals our faith is genuine and true ([Mat 5:14](#)).

The Great Commandment Meets the Great Commission

When our faith shapes our money habits, we are affirming our love for God. What if we call our people to use the resources God gives them to make a difference in the lives of those around them?

Gain the World, Lose Your Soul

Mark 8:36

“The practice of generosity is God’s gift to us; it helps us resist the snare of consumption and the idol of greed.”

The church will be irrelevant to the world if we fail to live out what Christ has done for us. Spontaneous acts of generosity demonstrate authentic spiritual growth. Generosity is the place where the Great Commandment meets the Great Commission.

In what ways do we consider generosity to be part of our outreach strategy?

“Our perspective must be grounded in a willingness to allow the resources we possess to flow through us to change the lives of people around us.”

There is No Generosity Button

- Hoping that your church will develop a strong culture of generosity is not enough.
- Evaluate your own habits related to generosity.
- Assess the current culture of generosity in your church.
- Generosity is intentional. You need a plan and a champion to lead the plan.
- Effects will be cumulative rather than immediate.
- Your focus should always be spiritual formation rather than funding.
- Your discipleship plan should reinforce the habits of generosity.
- Celebrate life changes and generosity.

Generosity is a paradox. We gain by giving.
Generosity changes everything.