

She was sitting cross-legged on the floor crying in the lobby. After church one Sunday, there was my secretary sobbing her eyes out. Because it was just Connie, her and I in the foyer, she pulled an envelope out of her coat pocket. She showed me inside and it was filled with \$100 bills. She said, with huge tears in her eyes, 'not only is it a blessing; it is the exact amount.'

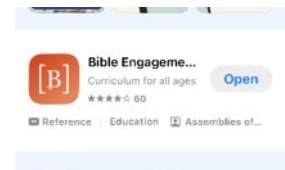
The next day, she had settled down enough to talk without crying. She told me that due to her husband's job change, there was a temporary gap in their income. They did not have enough money for their mortgage that month and she paid the bills. They were quietly trusting God.

I never found out who the giver was, but I was blessed with six people who loved to give like that – anonymously and generously. Someone gave her a gift equivalent to a month's mortgage, exactly to the dollar.

Sometimes **we are blessed** and sometimes we are **the ones who blesses**.

**Welcome to CIC!**

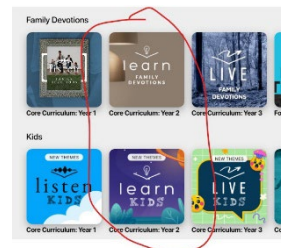
This **summer** we are doing sermons based on *The Bible Engagement Project*. This is the AG's **major discipleship program**. Nearly 1 million people are using it weekly. Given that there are five different preachers this summer, the Holy Spirit led us to the BEP to give **overall guidance** to the church.



There will be **four sermons** from Learn, Vol 5 ...

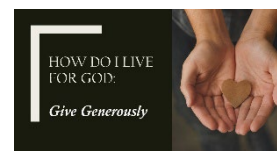
- *How Do I Live For God?* and **four from** Learn, Vol 7 ...
- *How Does God Help Me Overcome?*

There are daily devotions for adults and for kids on the BEP website and app. Just go to *Google Play* or the *App Store*.



Today, we are on session 3 of Learn: Give Generously.

**How Do I Live for God**  
*Give Generously*



When we scheduled the summer preaching schedule, and this subject was among the 8 topics on the BEP's schedule, I knew I had to preach on this subject.

- We **trust God** to meet CIC's needs, that *is not* my motivation.
- As *you will see*, generosity is about **what is in our heart**.

Let's jump right in.

If talking about **money** makes you nervous, you **wouldn't have enjoyed** being around Jesus.

- For a man who had **so few possessions** and wealth, he was straightforward and confrontational when discussing the issue.
- His focus on this topic shows us **God is interested** in our giving—*not* because He needs our resources—*but because* our giving indicates the condition of our heart.

**Nothing reveals the heart more than money. Christians should be radically generous with their time, talent, and treasure.**

**Today**, we will look at what Jesus' view of generosity was and discover the motivation behind true generosity.

### Watch video

On the **one hand**, I have seen money become a **distraction** in people's relationship with God. Either **their desire** for wealthy and security, or their jealousy of another's property, or their struggle with poverty makes them blind to their own heart.

- I had a couple of businessmen who foresaw the 2008 market crash. One of them had a boatload of (\$300,000) cash in his safe and asked me if that was enough to get through the next four years. He mounted a 50-caliber machine gun in his master bedroom from where he could sweep anyone approaching his home. All I could say was, 'at some point, you have to trust Jesus to take care of you and your family.' He was blind to his own heart.
- 'But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth (Dt 8:18 NIV).'

On the **other hand**, I have **seen** unscrupulous pastors and churches abuse the people they were called to lead and help. There **needs to be** both faith and guardrails.

**Nothing reveals the heart more than money. Christians should be radically generous with their time, talent, and treasure.**

The root of sin is selfishness; generosity is a piece of selflessness.

## 1. Giving Generously Costs Us Something

In the Bible passage we're going to read, **Jesus sat with His disciples** in the courtyard at the temple.

- Against **one wall nearby** was a row of collection boxes. Each had a **trumpet-shaped receptacle** made of metal on top.
- As people **dropped coins** into the collection boxes, the coins would rattle and clatter loudly down the mouth of the trumpet and *attract a lot of attention*.

**For some**, dropping coins into the boxes wasn't so much about giving to God; it was more about **their offering being heard** by other people.

- As Jesus and His disciples watched, **a poor widow** paused at the collection box and took two copper mites—the smallest and least valuable coins of all—and dropped them into the box.

'Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. <sup>42</sup>Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins. <sup>43</sup>Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. <sup>44</sup>For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on (Mk 12:41-44 NLT)."'

- Her gift was a **radical act of generosity**—an offering so generous that *even Jesus* took notice!
- Jesus **drew His disciples' attention to it** to make sure they understood and appreciated what they had just witnessed.

This widow's true generosity moved the heart of Jesus.

*What does this story tell us about how Jesus viewed giving?*

In this **ancient society**, *widows* were sometimes marginalized, oppressed, and mistreated. Yet **this woman** gained the attention and approval of Jesus.

Jesus **dispelled many** of our preconceptions about giving.

- **Although large**, the offerings of the wealthy cost them little. Their lives were relatively unaffected by their giving.
- While the **widow gave less money** than the wealthy, her gift was more generous because it cost her everything.

- Her offering was an **amazing demonstration** of her trust in God.

King David was offered the gift of oxen for a sacrifice. He said, 'No, I insist on buying it, for I will not present burnt offerings to the Lord my God that have cost me nothing (2Sa 24:24 NLT).''

- That is a great principle: **generosity should be a sacrifice.**

**The Greek lepton**, the copper coin that has also been called the widow's mite, was the smallest form of currency in first-century Israel.

- Its estimated value was about **one-third of a penny**.
- The lepton **continued to be a part** of official Greek currency, serving continuously as the smallest denomination through the modern age until the euro cent replaced it in 2001.
- However, even today **the common term** for a single euro cent in Greece remains the lepto.

*What keeps us from being generous?*

- **Competition** – we want to win, to get rich in life's competition.
- **Fear** – we are afraid of not having enough when we need it later in life.
- **Lack** – we don't think we have anything to give.

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## 2. Giving Generously Starts in the Heart

Jesus **placed the emphasis on the motivation** of the giver, and less on the specific amount of their gift.

- **The wealthy** *may have* been more likely to make a show of their large offerings. To want to be seen, noticed, and valued for their contributions.
- While **the widow** also gave in public, her heart's desire was probably to avoid drawing attention to herself.

There's a **big difference between** doing good works to be seen by others versus doing them because you know only God matters.

*Why should be generous?*

Giving Generously ...

1. *Is an Act of Joy, 2Co 9:6-8.*

‘Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. <sup>7</sup> You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. “For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.” <sup>8</sup> And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others (2Co 9:6-8 NLT).’

**Motives** are so important. Paul was concerned not just with *what* we give, but *how* we give. He says that **generosity and joy** should go together. **That principle brings joy to the giver and to the receiver (2Co 9:12).**

- Earlier this year we found ourselves in a position to give what to Connie and I would be a generous offering. I looked forward to Sunday. I gave it via the app and was filled with such joy that I could give. All that week I had a deep-down joy. I found myself happy and smiling at random times.

Paul continues. ‘For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. <sup>11</sup> Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous (2Co 9:10-11 NLT).’

We see **two thoughts** repeated.

1. Everything comes from God, vv. 8, 10.
2. He gives it to us so that we can give it to others.
  - ‘And plenty left over to share with others (2Co 9:8).’
  - ‘Enriched in every way so that you can always be generous (2Co 9:11).’

These instructions **come with a promise**: When you’re generous toward God and others, **God will bless you in return**. God blesses the generous, so they can continue to give generously. ‘Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back (Lk 6:38 NLT).’

Giving Generously ...

1. *Is an Act of Joy, 2Co 9:6-8.*
2. *Helps Others*

It goes without saying that **those in need** will be blessed. **Generosity is economy of the Holy Spirit’s work**. I have been blessed by people willing to give of their time, talent, and treasure.

- Time – a man who met us at 5 a.m. in his pajamas. He got up at 4:30 a.m. for several days to see if we were on the overnight ferry to pick us up.

- Talent – there was an electrician who donated nearly 1,000 hours of his time wiring the church.
- Treasure – numerous people have given us just what we needed, when we needed it.

Giving Generously ...

1. *Is an Act of Joy, 2Co 9:6-8.*
2. *Helps Others*
3. *Goes beyond the Tithe, Mal 3:8-10, Lk 11:42.*

To **tithe means to** consistently give 10 percent of our earnings. “Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me! “But you ask, ‘What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?’ “You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me ... <sup>10</sup> Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, “I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test (Mal 3:8, 10 NLT)!”

- In the time of **Malachi**, these earnings would have often been agricultural produce or livestock.

Some argue that the tithe is not applicable to Christians today. They believe the tithe was only an Old Testament standard.

- But from Jesus’ statement to His disciples in Luke 11:42, He was not abolishing the tithe. ‘What sorrow awaits you Pharisees! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore justice and the love of God. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things (Lk 11:42 NLT).’
- Instead, He challenged the legalism behind tithing without loving. Motive, motive, motive.
- I believe in tithing. God says, ‘try it! Put me to the test.’

Giving Generously ...

1. *Is an Act of Joy, 2Co 9:6-8.*
2. *Helps Others*
3. *Goes beyond the Tithe, Mal 3:8-10, Lk 11:42.*
4. *Makes Us More Like God, 1Pe 1:16.*

Because we are now **a part of God’s family**, he wants us to take **on family characteristics** such as love, forgiveness, and holiness. For example, Peter wrote, ‘But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. <sup>16</sup> For the Scriptures say, “You must be holy because I am holy (1Pe 1:16 NLT).”

- God forgives us and makes us his son or daughter, but he longs for us to become like him. To take on the family traits.

Most of us **know this verse**: 'We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose (Ro 8:28 NIV).' **God is working out** all the issues and circumstances of our lives. But we do not know the thought continues: 'For those God foreknew he also predestined *to be conformed to the image of his Son*, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.<sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified (Ro 8:29-30 NIV).'

In other words, **he is transforming us through the circumstances of our lives to be more like Jesus.**

**God is generous** and gives freely.

- God gave **owls** three eyelids (blinking, sleeping, cleaning).
- **Dogs** have 300 million olfactory receptors (we have 6 million).
- An **octopus** has three hearts
- **Hippopotami** secrete hipposudoric acid through the skin, which acts as natural sunscreen and antibiotic.<sup>1</sup>
- Think of the **great generosity we see in creation**. God could have created one kind of ant, instead there are between 20,000 to 22,000 species of ants.

*'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (Jn 3:16).'*

**Nothing reveals the heart more than money. Christians should be radically generous with their time, talent, and treasure.**

## **Conclusion - Let's Give Generously**

**Jesus unflinchingly addressed** the issue of money *because of the link* between our finances and our heart.

In Connecticut, I had **about six people** who had the gift of giving. Some of them were wealthy; they could easily drop a sizeable amount of money into someone's coat pocket. Others lived very simply off fixed income. Their gifts were not as large and were more of a sacrifice.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Batterson, *A Million Little Miracles* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2024), 88-89.

Caroline was one of the six and she was blind. She would tug at my sleeve and ask 'Pastor, are we alone?' If I answered yes, she would always ask me, 'what are the needs? I want to give.' **Generosity brought joy** to her heart.

If you want to see where your heart is, look for where your money is going.

- If you value having the latest and greatest tech gadget, your dollars might go to technology companies.
- If you love being out in the woods, you probably spend money on hunting or camping equipment.
- If you're in a romantic relationship, you spend on your beloved.

God values us and gives generously to us. Our value was determined by the high price God was willing to pay for us—the very life of His own Son. *'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (Jn 3:16).'*

God's **generosity toward us** *should prompt us* to give generously back to Him and to others.

If your heart is truly aligned with His, your giving will reflect a growing love for the people He loves and a deepening alignment with what He values.