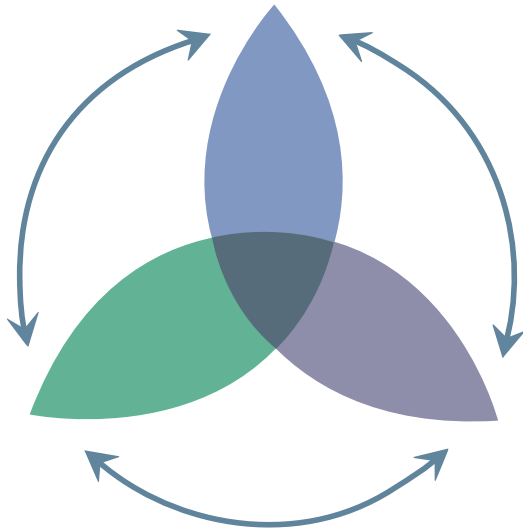


# Shaping a Culture of Generosity

## OUR GENEROUS GOD

The eternal nature of God is generosity. Before the world was created, God was perfect – and infinite – in generosity. In eternity, the Father gave Himself fully to the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Son gave Himself fully to the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gave Himself fully to the Father and the Son.

This incredible self-giving love is the very nature of God. Generosity is not just something God *does*; it's what the Triune Godhead *is*. Moreover, generosity for God does not mean giving a small part; He gives *everything*. Finally, generosity for God is not limited to what He has; He gives *Himself*. For eternity, our God is a generous God!

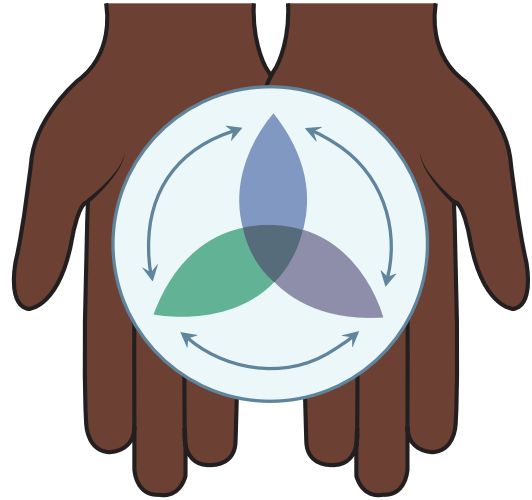


But God did not keep this love – this generosity – to Himself. It's the very nature of love to give. So God created us and invites us now into the experience of this eternal fellowship of love within the Godhead. This is the Source and Nature of generosity.

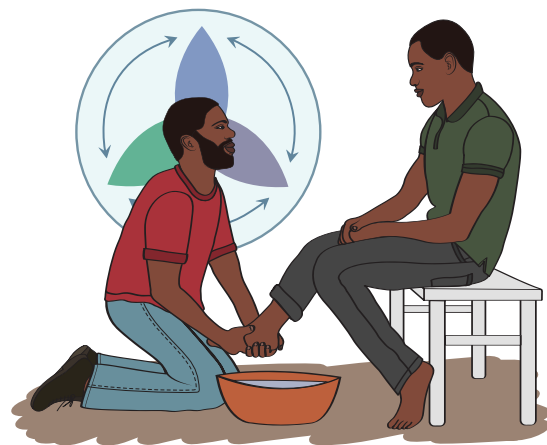
## GENEROUS DISCIPLES

Because God is our generous Father and Provider, we don't have to be controlled by fear and anxiety. Instead of worrying if there is enough, we can trust Him that He will faithfully provide for us. Through Him, we can live with a mindset of abundance and not scarcity. And we can be generous as He is generous!

Generosity comes from the indwelling life of Christ. Every disciple is connected directly to the self-giving life of Christ. As a result of our union with Christ, this is the life God has invited us to share – a life of self-giving, of generosity toward others.



This divine life in us is continually looking outside of our own needs and desires, wanting to bless, to love, to serve, to give. Because God gave Himself generously to us, we should be generous to others.



Thus, generosity is more than an act of giving; it is an entire lifestyle of generous actions toward others (1 Tim. 6:17-19; 2 Cor. 9:8). God calls us to be rich in good deeds and willing to share, and to abound in every good work. Biblical generosity is not what God wants *from* us. It's what He wants *for* us.

This "whole-life generosity" involves some profound changes of thinking for us:

# Whole-Life Generosity

## From:

### Giving is difficult

*I'm not very wealthy so I find giving difficult but I choose to do it because I know it pleases God. To me, giving is an obligation.*

### Giving is about me

*I enjoy the good feeling I get when I give, and I like to show others that I'm a good and generous person.*

### Giving to causes that personally appeal to me

*When I see a need that I can personally relate to or that interests me then I'll give.*

### An act of giving

*Once a week, and on special occasions, I give to God.*

### What God wants from us

*God requires me to give. I give out of obedience and if I don't give, I'm afraid it will displease Him. Giving is an obligation.*

### A mindset of scarcity

*I must protect what I have; therefore, I must be cautious and measured in my giving. This mindset of scarcity is one of the biggest obstacles for generosity.*

### God is merely the Owner and we are merely stewards

*God owns everything and He expects me to wisely steward what He entrusts to me.*

### We give money

*Money is the main way that I give.*

## To:

### Generosity flows from the life of Jesus

*I was created in the image of the ultimate Generous Giver and by His indwelling Presence I am empowered to live a joyfully generous life. To me, giving is an opportunity!*

### Generosity is about God

*He created me to be generous and when I'm generous I know Him more deeply and reveal Him more fully.*

### Generosity focused on those causes close to God's heart

*The Scripture clearly shows God's heart for the poor, the widow, the orphan, the immigrant and the local church. My generosity should reflect God's heart in where and how I give.*

### A way of living

*I am continually looking for opportunities to be generous.*

### What God wants for us

*God has freely poured out His grace upon me, and now He desires me to experience the personal joy, blessing and fulfillment of a generous lifestyle. Giving is an opportunity.*

### A mindset of abundance

*God will always provide abundantly for me; therefore, I can be extravagantly generous.*

### God is our loving Father and Provider and we are sowers

*God is an extravagant Giver and He wants me to be an extravagant giver (as well as a wise steward).*

### We give our whole lives

*I'm always looking for opportunities to be generous with everything I have – my time, my prayer, my encouragement, my hospitality, my service, and also my possessions. Generosity includes money but it is much bigger than money.*

### **We give a percentage**

*When I've given 10% to God, I've fulfilled my duty. The other 90% is mine.*

### **Giving is a program**

*My church has special giving campaigns that I should respond to.*

### **Certain people have the "gift" of giving**

*I'm not particularly called to be a giver beyond giving my tithe and some occasional special giving. Generosity is mainly the responsibility of wealthy people.*

### **We give everything**

*I'm a generous giver, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It's all God's!*

### **Generosity is a lifestyle**

*Giving is so much the normal culture of my church, special giving campaigns are unnecessary.*

### **We are all called to be generous**

*There certainly are particular people with extraordinary gifts and abilities to give, but it is my joy to embrace a continual lifestyle of generosity. God wants us all to excel in the grace of giving (2 Cor. 8:7). What has God put in my hands to give?*

Every believer is called to set his heart upon God, seeking the true, eternal riches. Then from his love for God, every believer is called to love, to serve, to give. This is the generous life of the follower of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 9:6-11).

## **GENEROUS CHURCHES**

The Early Church was marked profoundly by an extraordinary generosity (Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37). These new believers had deeply experienced the grace and Presence of God and one of the first practical results was generosity. This will be the same today in our churches.

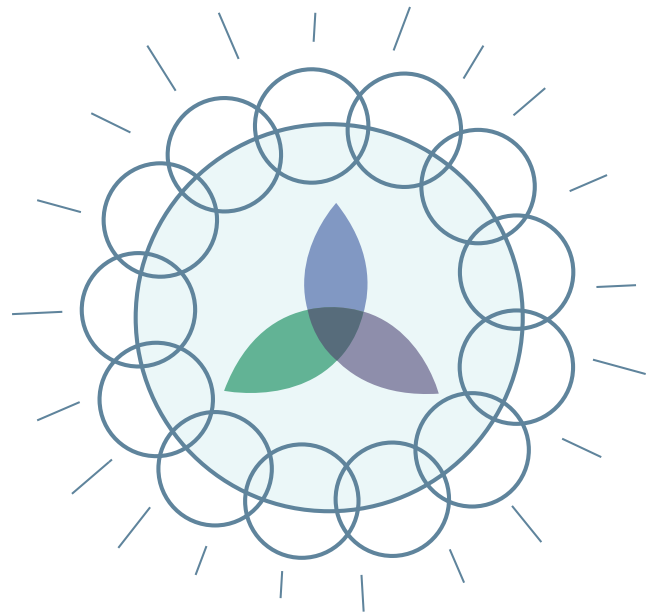
We can observe at least five key characteristics of generous churches:

### **1. A passionate corporate vision of generosity coming from union with Christ and expressed as love and worship toward Him.**

A Christ-centered church will be a generous one – it will be natural, unforced and alive. In many churches, the big question is, "How do we get more people to give?" In reality, the question should be, "How do we build leaders and disciples who know and follow Christ?"

### **2. Generous leaders who teach generosity and personally set a strong example.**

"Leaders build leaders" and generous leaders build generous leaders, generous disciples and generous churches – through their own examples, through their teaching, through their prayer, and through their affirmations and encouragement. Without leaders who are personally and spontaneously generous, giving or stewardship can only be just another program in a church. Generosity is more caught than taught!



### **3. Generosity as a culture, not just a program.**

As the leaders build leaders and disciples and nurture a culture of people building people across the life of the church, then out of that culture will naturally come generosity, and it will be alive! It will be the daily reality of everyone's lives and relationships – true generosity. This is the Healthy Church.

### **4. An outward focus.**

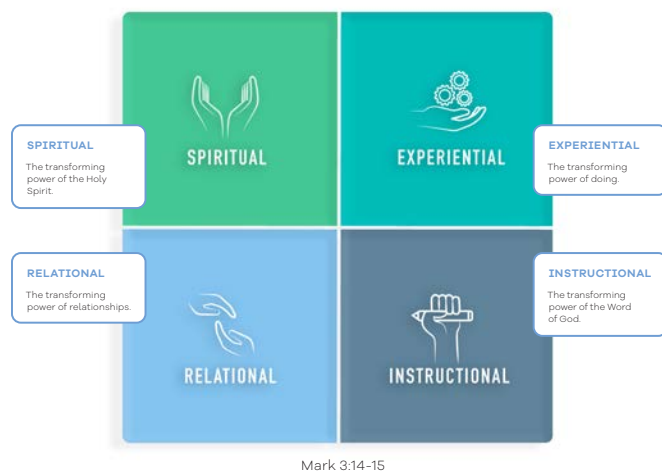
A generous church is not only concerned with its own needs but has a passionate vision to give and to serve its own community and the nations. God has given so generously to us that we may give generously to others!

## 5. Wise stewardship as the foundation for ongoing generosity.

Whether given little or much, a generous church will steward all of its resources with integrity, faithfulness and wisdom (Luke 16:10-12). Such a church will be trusted both by God and by man. Stewardship and generosity work hand-in-hand.

### NURTURING GENEROSITY IN OUR CHURCHES

How can we intentionally shape a culture of generosity in our churches? **Through the Four Dynamics!**



Jesus built His disciples through the Four Dynamics – and they turned the world upside down (Mark 3:13-15)! The early apostles built the vibrant first church in Jerusalem through the Four Dynamics (Acts 2:42-47).

Paul built healthy and effective churches through the Four Dynamics (1 Thess. 1:5-8).

Many churches approach giving through constant appeals for the people to tithe and give. Sadly, sometimes these appeals become manipulative. Often they are ineffective. In contrast, when church leaders use the Four Dynamics, they can build a healthy and generous culture in the church where giving is natural, unforced and joyful.

As Christian leaders personally embrace generosity in their own lives and as they shape vibrant cultures of generosity in the churches and ministries they lead, that will release a great movement of whole-life generosity in the Bride of Christ around the world! This will beautifully reveal the life, grace and generosity of God to the nations. May they be drawn to Him!

#### Further Information

For more information on generosity, please see: *Shaping a Culture of Generosity* by Malcolm Webber. We have developed this teaching based on the work of Patrick Johnson from *GenerousChurch*.

For more information on the Healthy Church Model, please see: *Building Healthy Churches* by Malcolm Webber.

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