

Introduction:

- Generosity is a pathway to Thanksgiving. "*But generous people plan to do what is generous, and they stand firm in their generosity.*" (Isaiah 32:8, NLT)
- The Bible has a lot to say about generosity because it is the record of a generous God reaching out to an impoverished and lost humanity. It begins in Gen. with God clothing man and ends in Rev. with God giving us a lavish eternity simply because we received His gift of salvation.
- Howard Hughes died as one of the richest men in the world. But he also died as one of the loneliest men in the world. Sixteen people attended his graveside service. He was remembered at one of the casinos that he frequented in Las Vegas with a moment of silence. When that moment was over, the owner of the casino said, "*He had his moment, let's roll the dice.*" Isn't that a sad way to be remembered? "*He had his moment, let's get on with life.*" But this life pushes us to live like Howard Hughes. Get all you can get. Can all you get. And sit on the can. But where does that leave us in life and at the end of life? How do you want to be remembered? He drove a cool car. He lived in a high-end neighborhood. She always had the latest in fashion. Wouldn't you regret it if that was the way people summarized your life? God wants to work so we don't finish our lives full of regret. How does that happen? Let's explore that subject today.

I. Understanding Generosity

A. What is generosity?

1. Merriam Webster:
 - a) the quality of being kind, understanding, and not selfish: it is the willingness to give money and other valuable things to others.
2. Free Dictionary:
 - a) Liberality in giving or willingness to give: *a philanthropist's generosity.*
 - b) Kindness or magnanimity (generous in forgiving an insult or injury; free from petty resentment or vindictiveness): spoke of his rival with generosity.
3. Thesaurus (five synonyms)
 - a) charitable - generosity as manifested by practicing charity (as for the poor or unfortunate)
 - b) bounteousness- generosity evidenced by a willingness to give freely
 - c) liberality- the trait of being generous in behavior and temperament (attitude)
 - d) unselfishness - the quality of not putting yourself first but being willing to give your time or money or effort etc. for others;
 - e) kindness- the quality of being warmhearted and considerate and humane and sympathetic
4. Scriptures - both OT and NT.
 - a) OT - generous.
 - (1) That portion of the arm connected to the hand. Ezra...*"The Hand of the Lord was upon me."* It had to do with expressed favor. *"The generosity of the king."* Esther-favor of the king. Kindness of the king.
 - (2) The word for generous also was used in 'Freewill offering' had to do with the generosity of the worshipper.

- (3) 'Blessing' is the word generous - Heb. *beraka* it is used countless times throughout the OT.
- b) NT-generous
- (1) Eulogy - to speak well of, to bless...it had to do with kindness, unselfish
5. Generosity is the willingness (kindness, liberality, unselfishly) to give something of value (What exactly generosity gives can be various things: money, possessions, time, attention, aid, encouragement, emotional availability, and more.) to you to someone else without expecting anything in return. Generosity is the desire to make others lives easier and more pleasant.
- B. Generosity begins with God
1. John 3:16 "*God first loved us...*" First=Proton - Gr. for first in rank, position.
 2. God seems to always make the first move in restoration. God revealed His kindness while we were still sinners. "*But-When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy...He generously poured out the Spirit ...*" (Titus 3:4-6, NLT)
 3. For Paul, this love is exemplified by Christ who, "*though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor*" (2 Corinth. 8.9).
 4. Generous is who God is. It describes how He interacts with us. Giving us what we do not deserve and giving beyond what we could think ask or imagine.
- C. Generosity begins in the heart
1. Being generous begins with a "heart attitude" of treating each person as though they have already achieved the potential for greatness that is in every one of us.
 2. To be generous is the opposite of being selfishness. Generosity and selfishness are issues of the heart. Gal 5:20 vs 5:22. "*Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.*" (Philippians 2:3, NLT) We don't give to get and neither do we give out of compulsion or because we have to. We do not give to impress or to gain position. We give because in our heart we want too! It is how God gave to us and treats us.
 3. Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit "*But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*" (Galatians 5:22, NLT)
 4. "*warm friendliness, and generous love, each dimension fitting into and developing the others.*" (2 Peter 1:7, The Message)
 5. Generous people invite God's love to flow through them thereby touching other people's hearts.

II. Generosity A Pathway to Thanksgiving

- A. Not everyone gives thanks for generosity shown to them.
1. Just because you are generous to someone does not mean that they will be grateful. T
 2. 10 Lepers - Luke 17:11-19. Only one returned to thank Jesus and glorify God. The passage reads that only one 'perceived' or understood what had happened. Some just do not perceive what generosity towards them is.
 3. We can not stop being generous because some are not grateful.
- B. Generosity is a pathway to Thanksgiving.
1. It is the kindness of God that leads to repentance.

2. Generosity opens the heart because it makes people feel valued and appreciated.
3. When we feel valued and appreciate it leads to thanksgiving and gratitude.

III. **Growing in Generosity** Eight practical applications.

- A. Ask God to give you the desire to be generous to other people rather than resenting the time, energy, money, and inconveniences that can be involved.
- B. To grow in generosity you must practice being generous. Like most things in life, to get good at something takes practice. At first it may feel awkward, but as you practice the action it become easier and easier until it is muscle memory and you do not even have to think about it. IE. *Computer games with the boys. They developed muscle memory with the games. Star wars I opened it and played until I had the same.*
- C. To grow in generosity you must plan to be generous. *"But generous people plan to do what is generous, and they stand firm in their generosity."* (Isaiah 32:8, NLT)
 1. You can put it in your growth plan.
 2. You can schedule it on your calendar.
 3. You can be creative with your family and or spouse in being generous. This is a great way to teach generosity to your children. Let them see how you plan to be generous.
- D. To grow in generosity consider the benefits of being generous. *"The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed."* (Proverbs 11:25, NLT) Generous people report being happier, healthier, and more satisfied with life than those who don't give. Generosity gives us a sense that we are making a difference in the world. Counting the benefits of generosity can be a motivator to start being generous.
 1. You yourself will prosper. Meaning to increase in resources and in health. The OT uses a word for prosper that is translated "fat". (Before you go fill up on carbs today...the word 'fat' has to do with healthy animals that are sacrificed. *"For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer/sower 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."* (2 Corinthians 9:10, NLT) Being generous helps people feel more compassionate towards others, gives a stronger sense of community, and establishes a higher self-image.
 2. You will be refreshed. Heb rawa - to water. To satisfy the thirst. IE. The picture is a wilting plant that is given water. It straightens up, become filled with life. Same of a person. *"The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed."* (Proverbs 11:25, NLT) *"Blessed are those who are generous, because they feed the poor."* (Proverbs 22:9, NLT)
 3. You will grow in honor and influence. And your deeds will be remembered forever. *"They share freely and give generously to those in need. Their good deeds will be remembered forever. They will have influence and honor."* (Psalm 112:9, NLT)
- E. To grow in generosity start small if you are new to this. Remember, God looks at the measure not the amount. Small might mean being kind to your waiter/waitress when it is obvious they are having a challenging day or table next to yours. Kindness and patience are huge in the realm of generosity. It is sharing who you are with others.
- F. To grow in generosity spend time with:

1. A generous person. By spending time with a generous person you learn how they think, act, and have grown in generosity. Ask questions: "Have you always been generous?" "When did you become so generous? How did it start? How do you decide where to give? What advice would you give someone who wants to get started in being generous?" It will be life-changing.
2. A person in need. Note I did not say a 'needy' person, there is a difference. It is a very small step to go from knowing somebody in need to helping somebody in need. It could be a soup kitchen locally. Or it could be as simple as keeping your eyes open to those around you. IE. In the church you have single parents, widows, disabled people, and those who are in 'temporary set backs' (lost job, prolonged illness, etc.) Generosity always intends to enhance the true wellbeing of those to whom it gives.
- G. To grow in generosity be grateful for what you have. Make a list of at least five things/people you're grateful for, and take the time to appreciate them. Think of all the good things people have done for you and never forget to thank them. Being more grateful will put you in the mind-set to be a more generous person. And as you experience God's generosity to you, you can be inspired to become more generous to others.
- H. To grow in generosity think of others:
 1. Celebrate people. Celebrate the people in your life. Make a person feel loved and celebrated. People love to be celebrated.
 2. Be kind to strangers-say "hi", hold a door open, etc.
 3. Give time to a friend. In our busy lives we often get driven by schedules and forget the people who are important to us in our lives.

Conclusion:

- Generosity rarely happens by chance. Instead, it is an intentional decision that we make in our lives. But it does not need to be as difficult as many people think.
- "You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you." — John Bunyan - Pilgrims Progress
- Experience the generous love of God.