

A Culture of Generosity (Part 2)

As we talk about giving examine your heart and ask yourself, “What is thwarting my generosity?” Conduct that generosity audit on yourself. Is it fear of lack, past abuse, a judgmental mindset or just indecisiveness? What stops you from giving? What stops you from giving in the right manner?

6. Generous People Give for the Audience of One

Matthew 6:1-4

¹*“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. ²“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³“But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”*

The context here is not talking about tithing so that you do not put your name on your envelope but it is about giving to the needy. When you do something for someone else, you do not have to announce it to the whole world in order for people to respect you. Many people today are forfeiting their heavenly reward because they want the praise of man. I am not saying that you cannot tell someone when you are trying to teach them or explain what you did but it is important to make sure that your motives are right. When companies give so that their brand is put on display; that's the reward they want.

7. Generous People Give in times of Lack

The generous person gives even in their place of lack. It is not about how much they have but their heart condition.

Mark 12:41-44

⁴¹*“Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. ⁴²But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. ⁴³Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. ⁴⁴They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”*

Some people have been besieged in their minds by the enemy to think that they have little and they decide to wait to give until they have more money. What they do not realise is that God increases you from the little that you give. If you wait for that one day when you have money, that day is likely not going to come. If you decide to pray only, you are missing the other part where God looks at your giving. Jesus' perspective is interesting because in these passages, Jesus looked at the heart and not at the amount. Be careful of discouraging people from giving by saying things like, “What will you have left for yourself?” Jesus affirmed this type of giving. We have been called to love others as we love ourselves. What do you have in your hand? If it is two fishes and five loaves God can multiply it. Here is the interesting thing; we all have something.

8. Generous People Trust Church Leadership in the Allocation of their Resources after Giving

Acts 4:34-35

³⁴*that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.”*

It is foolish to be critical in this area when one doesn't know the details. Secondly it is often a sign of stinginess and conceit. Stingy people give expecting that they have now bought the rights to control church leaders. There are some people who do not trust church leadership such that they do not give offerings in church. They would rather give the money themselves to whatever cause they desire. When Warren Buffett gave \$1 Billion to The Gates Foundation he was asked why, and his response was that they can give it away better than me. That was humility and trust. The generous believer understands that there is blessing in bringing the whole tithe to the store house. When they give, they do not feel the need to control how the money will be used. People tend to want to be the ones to allocate the money wherever they so wish. The generous people being described in the book of Acts were giving considerable amounts of money and they were not afraid to handover their money. When some people give a considerable amount of money to the church, they feel that they now have to have a discussion with the pastor on how the money should be used.

9. Generous People Give in Proportion to their Increase

Deuteronomy 16:17 says; *"Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord your God has blessed you."*

Is this reflected in your giving? Many people are impressed with their giving as they begin to experience increase but their giving is not proportionate to their increase. Sometimes we have this mindset to give loose change to the church or to someone who is struggling. Examine where you were financially before and where you are now. If God has given you increase, it should also translate into your giving because each one must give in proportion to how much God has blessed them. A tithe literally means 10% of your income. The bible speaks in the book of Malachi chapter 3 of how the tithe goes to the store house which is the local church where you are fed. Offerings are over and above this as the Lord leads you. This is where it's important to have a spirit of generosity. Your offering can go to special projects including the poor. The poor can be your relatives or people you don't know. You are not responsible for everyone, but remember why God is prospering you.

"Lord may this giving break me into a new dimension of increase. I am tired of this stagnation. I am tired of this level. I have been here for too long."

10. Generous People Give Willingly and Cheerfully

1 Chronicles 29:9

"The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord. David the king also rejoiced greatly."

Ps 27:6

Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the Lord

When you give, are you giving based on coercion from someone else or are you giving from your heart willingly and with rejoicing? God is very interested in HOW we give.

11. Generous People Give to those to whom it is Due

If someone works for you, you need to pay them their wages. 1 Timothy 5:18 says *do not muzzle the ox and labourers are worthy for their wages.* 1 Peter 3:7 says *husbands honour your wife as the weaker vessel* meaning that there is an honour that is due to your spouse. There is also honour that is due to those that are over you in the Lord, *elders who direct the affairs of the church especially those who do the work of teaching and preaching (1 Timothy 5:17).* *It is important that we do not withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in our power to give (Proverbs*

3:27). The Bible in Exodus 20:12 says to honour your mother and father. The word used for honour in this verse means to place weight. Whether you like your parents or not, you need to place weight on them. Honour does not take place whether the person deserves it or not. How do you rank people in your life? It is interesting to see who people honour on special birthdays or weddings.

12. Generous People Give What is Left Over

Luke 3:11

“John answered, ‘Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.’ ”

It is important for us to also give when we have surplus. You might have cupboards full of shoes that you don't even wear. I normally fall in love with certain pairs of shoes that I stick to in a particular season. This means there can be so many shoes lying around without being worn and it is better to give them away. Instead of hoping to lose weight why don't you give away those clothes and later on buy new ones for yourself when you have lost the weight. At least your new clothes will be in fashion.

13. Generous People Give to those that Teach them

Giving is one of the ways to honour the pastors in your church. In Galatians 6:6, it says:

“Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.”

NLT: *“Those who are taught the word of God should provide for their teachers, sharing all good things with them.”*

Be generous towards those who teach you as the Bible instructs us. I am not writing this in order to coerce you and force you to engage in these principles, but rather to point out what the Word is saying. In 1 Corinthians 9:11, it says: *“If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?”*

1 Corinthians 9:14 reads: *“In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.”*

Often it is easier for people to give to an institution than to a person. Sometimes you can give to your spiritual leaders in creative ways like offering to babysit. Paul highlights this as a command from the Lord despite the fact that he did tent-making so as not to be a burden on the churches. I know that many church leaders have abused this but we should not have a reactionary theology. We should just preach what's in the Word.