

# GENEROUS

## WEEK 1 – GENEROUS GOD

### LEAD OFF

An older lady named Betty was determined to be prepared if someday she felt threatened. Then one day she finished shopping and returned to her car. She found four men inside the car. Betty dropped her shopping bags, drew her handgun, and screamed, "I have a gun, and I know how to use it! Get out of the car." The men got out and ran like crazy.

Somewhat shaken, she loaded her bags and got in the car. But she could not get her key into the ignition. Then it dawned on her: her similar car was parked four or five spaces away! So she did what she had to do. Betty loaded her bags into her own car and drove to the police station to turn herself in. The desk sergeant nearly fell off his chair laughing. He pointed to the other end of the counter, where four men were reporting a carjacking by an old woman with thick glasses and curly white hair, less than five feet tall, and carrying a large handgun. No charges were filed.

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### GETTING MIXED UP

When we get mixed up on who owns what it gets a little ugly. When we try to take over something we don't own, that when the system gets messed up.

This is the key foundational piece to understanding our role when it comes to the things God has given to us.

Whether that be:

- Money
- Resources
- Time
- Talents
- Knowledge

In reality these things are a gift from God... they are simply resources that we are allowed to manage in this lifetime to accomplish what God wants with them.

**GOD = OWNER**

**US = MANAGER**

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### 3 REASONS

God gives us these resources for 3 reasons:

1. For us to be a conduit to bless others
2. For God to be a conduit to bless us
3. And to test our heart and obedience by how we handle or mishandle these things

The tension is introduced when we believe it's our position that once we obtain these things, it's our job to consume them.

**GOD = OWNER**

**US = OWNER**

- We don't have ownership over them, we are just allowed to manage them
- And how we manage them either gives us freedom or brings us into captivity

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### CONVEYOR BELT

The picture here is we are line operators at a factory and the blessings of God are going by on a conveyor belt.

- The stuff is not ours, but it's our job to do with them what the owners wants.
- We create a mess when we break from the system and we start pocketing stuff that isn't ours.

These are things we are temporary managers of... not owners... they don't belong to us. They belong to God. As quickly as they were given to us, they can be taken away.

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### NOTHING BELONGS TO US

- None of these things are truly ours

- You may be thinking... that's not true... I worked for my money therefore I own it.
- So let me prove that to you...

**What happens to your money when you die?**

- It goes to someone else

**What happens to your stuff when you die?**

- Someone else has to come into your house and clean it out

**What happens to your time when you die?**

- It's a worthless commodity because you ran out

**What happens to your talent when you die?**

- It goes away with you... someone else will do the job or execute the talent you used to have

**What happens to your knowledge when you die?**

- It ceases to be useful in a brain that no longer functions.

**Not only that, but death doesn't have to be the end function of these things...**

- Tomorrow catastrophe can hit and your money... gone.
- Your stuff gone
- Major changes can happen in your life and you can all the sudden have more time or much less time.
- Your talent can cease... let's say you're a great singer and you get in an accident that damages your vocal chords... boom, done.

**This verse clarifies and wraps this up:**

Psalm 24:1 NIV

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;

## **GOD IS GENEROUS**

**How does God handle this reality that he owns everything?**

**Does God hoard all his stuff that he owns?**

- Does he seek to accumulate as much as he can?

**No, quite the opposite. God gives it all away!**

- Our God is a generous God!
- He doesn't just give away stuff, he gave away his Son

Ephesians 1:7-8 NLT

7 He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. 8 He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

I MEAN THINK ABOUT IT...

- We spat in the face of God and said, forget you, we want to do things our own way.
- He turns around and provides a way to allow us to come back to him, and determines that will happen by giving His greatest treasure... his Son.
- You can't out-give, out-work, out-spend, out-resource, out-anything God.
  - He sets the best example of generosity to us.

The problem is that because we are born with an inherent sinful nature... even though God set the best example of generosity to us... it doesn't come naturally to us.

- Generosity is something that must be conditioned and learned because it works against our natural inclination.
- Generosity is something we have to work out, and make intentional in our lives.
  - If you're a parent, you can look at your kids and see an example of this.
    - When they are toddlers... they don't want to share their stuff or mommy and daddy... the most important things to them.
      - TOYS ILLUSTRATION
    - When they are teenagers... they don't want to share their time. They only have so much time to share amongst their family once their friends, jobs, and school have absorbed the rest.
    - When they are young adults... money comes into the picture.
  - You have to teach kids how to share, because it doesn't come naturally.

Let's answer two questions... **WHY and WHAT**

## WHY GENEROSITY?

So... why should we desire to be generous?

There are seven basic benefits to generosity, only four that you care about if you are not a Christ follower.

### CHRIST-FOLLOWER

1. **By being generous you are reflecting the character of God.**
  - a. God is generous, therefore as we act out of generosity we are reflecting the character of the God we follow.
2. **Generosity points people to Christ**
  - a. Especially when you don't take the credit for being generous, but you give the glory to God

- i. Remember... what I'm giving you wasn't mine to begin with. I'm simply taking a resource I was allowed to manage for a period of time and using it the way God wanted me to.

### 3. It puts your heart on Heaven

Matthew 6:19-21 NIV

19 "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. 21 Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

- It's a Biblical principal that where your money goes is where your heart will be.
  - Checking account illustration
  - Because that's where your investment is.
  - We often think that where our heart is, there our treasures are... the Scripture teaches where you put your treasures at determines where your heart goes.

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## NOT A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

### 4. Helps us to perceive others and what they are going through in a more positive light

- a. Our heart is more inclined to empathy and compassion because we've invested our stuff in others.

### 5. It creates community

- b. We develop relationships and interconnectedness out of situations where needs are being met.
  - i. Let me tell you a humbling experience... people coming over to help you move. Give you their whole day to lift heavy stuff for a couple of slices of pizza.
  - ii. How about someone lending you money when you're down on your luck
    - 1. In the giver it's a sense of happiness... why? Because we were designed to be generous.
    - 2. In the recipient a humbling sense that the world is kind and loves them.

### 4. It makes you the boss

- a. Anything that you cannot let go of controls you.
  - i. If you cannot let go of money, it controls you
  - ii. Stuff, Time, Knowledge, Whatever
- b. In sort of an oxymoronic way of understanding this... the more you set it free, the less it controls you, and the more you control it.
- c. You are telling your money, your stuff, your time what to do and not let it tell you what you should do with it.

## NEW SERIES AND THEME

For all of these reasons and the many that I didn't have time to list: we are starting this new series (that we are actually very much into now), and not only is this our new series, but will also be our theme for 2018.

**GeneroUS** is the name of this series and our theme for 2018, because we are all going to take this journey of learning to be generous together.

- Well, Josh, I'm already generous.
- I watched that Sarah McCloughlin commercial and donated \$2 to the adopted-a-pet fund.
  - Even though that was a generous act... it's not what defines us as a generous person or a generous church
  - Generosity is a lifestyle... a way of living

## WHAT IS GENEROSITY?

2 Corinthians 9:10-15 NLT

10 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.

11 Yes, you will be enriched in **every way so** that you can **always** be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will **thank God**. 12 So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God.

13 As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God. For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are **obedient** to the Good News of Christ.

And then – as a direct result the intention of that increase in resource is this result...

Generosity – NOT stuff, money, time

Every way – not just enriched with possessions and benjamins – Generosity changes your soul and character-- it is a deposit of heaven currency that has eternal value – it's storing your treasure where moths and rust do not destroy.

So – big meaning in this two lettered word – it reveals the purpose for your increase

Always – generosity is a lifestyle. Being generous is not a do, it's a be. You don't do generous, you be generous.

Thank God – credibility given to the owner, not the manager

Obedient – what does obedience result in – blessing! God will give you more to manage.

## THE DIFFERENCE

It's a mindset that doesn't assume everything that comes to me is for my consumption.

- Generosity prioritizes the important things first... the things Heaven cares about.

**Generosity prioritizes the **important** things.**

**IMPORTANT =**  
**The things Heaven cares about.**

### **THINGS THAT END**

- **Money**
- **Stuff**
- **Time**
- **Talents**
- **Knowledge**

### **THINGS THAT DON'T END**

- **Generosity**
- **Character**
- **Soul**

**WHAT DO YOU WANT TO INVEST IN?**

#### **CLOSING**

I remember one stark winter, we started opening Christmas presents on Christmas Eve night. I knew that this Christmas was not going to be extravagant. My mom was single again and was working three jobs to keep the household going. She worked at a sewing factory during the day, waited tables by night, and ran a paper route during the night hours. I would get up on school nights and help Mom with the paper route because it would

mean she would get back home sooner and get some sleep. She would buy me a Pepsi and a bag of Spicy Nacho Doritos Chips and I would throw on my headphones in between drops to listen to Metallica on my Walkman.

As my brother and I opened gifts one by one, it was underwear, socks, and blankets. All essentials. All needed. We got to the end of the small pile and we didn't get any toys or electronics. Weird thing was, we were cool with it. We knew how hard Mom was working. As we were all congregated in one room with a space heater, not enough money to turn on the main system, we enjoyed our Christmas together. We laughed, and loved each other. Our perspective was only family. It was on this moment that couldn't be replaced and would forever be etched in our memories. We weren't worried about what we didn't have.

**Funny enough, this is the only Christmas I remember vividly from my childhood.**

**Sometimes it takes breaking from the stuff to see more clearly what is important.**

**You see when you get your mind on the things that are important, it becomes exponentially easier to be generous.**

**It was a generous gift that God gave us to have this time together as a family.**

- **It was a generous gift that he gave us each other.**
- **It was an even more generous gift that we could enjoy his birthday and what it meant in the greatest gift that God had ever given.**

**The reason why it's easy for us to find generosity in our lives, is because we had the greatest example.**

- **God gave it all.**
- **Jesus gave it all.**
- **The greatest act of generosity the world has ever seen.**