

Creative Ways to be Generous

Generosity is a quality that is a lot like unselfishness. Generous people are able and willing to give. They give both financially and of themselves, in a way that benefits the recipient. Someone showing generosity is happy to give time, money, food, or kindness to people in need.

A generous person lives with a sensitivity to what is going on around them, is prepared to respond with a good gift, and is continually releasing their resources toward the good of others.

- Write Thank You Notes
- Leave a note or small gift for the delivery person
- Anonymously adopt a family in need and help as you can.
- Send a handwritten note.
- Choose not to eat out or skip the luxury coffee stops for a week and give the money saved to a charity.
- Make cards for the nursing home.
- Spend time in prayer seeking God's direction for greater generosity
- Babysit for a friend
- Give a small gift to the mail carrier or waste disposal people.
- Take a meal or cookies to a friend.
- Clean out your closet and give unworn clothes to Goodwill.
- Share a book with someone.
- Compliment three strangers this week.
- Consider your resources; money, time, skills, etc. and share them to put a smile on someone's face.
- Thank someone who has had a positive impact in your life.
- Gather your pocket change and share it with a local charity.
- Donate toys, bikes, books that you no longer use.
- Choose a friend, family member, co-worker, and list 25 things you appreciate about them and send the list to them.
- Hold the door open for others.
- When you get paid – give first.
- Pray for someone that you would not typically pray for.
- Volunteer at your local school, food bank or charity.
- Find a Little Free Library near you and donate several books.
- Send flowers to someone who needs a little love or encouragement.
- Turn off your screens each evening for a week and spend time with a loved one.
- Buy a meal for a stranger, for the person behind you in the drive-thru.
- Buy a massage for a health care worker, or veteran.
- Give a gift card to a stranger, neighbor, or co-worker...just because.
- Leave a platter of treats in the common area of your office or apartment building.
- Write encouraging messages with chalk on the sidewalk outside a friend's home.
- Be present, really listen and give someone your undivided attention.
- Use social media to send words of encouragement to someone.
- Offer to do something for someone that does not benefit you at all.
- Give blood.
- Wash someone else's car.
- Sell something you don't use anymore and give the money to a worthy cause.
- Say "Thank You" as often as possible.

Scriptures on Generosity

1. LEVITICUS 25:35–37, GIVING TO THOSE IN NEED

If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you. Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God, that your brother may live beside you. You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God.

God commanded the Israelites to be generous and merciful to each other. Your brother's (relative/friend) need was not to be capitalized on for personal gain. If you loaned money to a fellow Israelite, you were not to charge interest. Because the Israelites were delivered from Egypt, and therefore recipients of God's generosity, they were to show impartial generosity to each other.

2. DEUTERONOMY 15:7–8, GIVING SUFFICIENTLY

If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.

Here we see a sentiment similar to the one we saw in Leviticus, but God widens its scope. If you know of a brother in need in any of the towns in your land, you are to lend him whatever he lacks.

3. PSALM 41:1–3, GOD'S PROMISE TO THE GENEROUS

*Blessed is the one who considers the poor!
In the day of trouble the Lord delivers him;
the Lord protects him and keeps him alive;
he is called blessed in the land;
you do not give him up to the will of his enemies.
The Lord sustains him on his sickbed;
in his illness you restore him to full health.*

The Psalmist kicks off Psalm 41 by acknowledging the covenant that exists between God and the generous. God responds to the kindness and generosity of his people with protection, health, and abundance. As we will see in a bit, this is to enable them to be even more generous.

4. LUKE 6:37–38, HAVING A GENEROUS SPIRIT

Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.

Generosity comes in more forms than commerce. To withhold judgment, condemnation, and unforgiveness is to act generously, and, in God’s economy, it is rewarded with the same kind of benevolence—pressed down, shaken together, and running over.

5. GALATIANS 6:2, FULFILLING THE LAW OF CHRIST

Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

What is the law of Christ? Love the Lord with our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. And it is fulfilled by bearing one another’s burdens.

6. PSALM 119:36, ESCHEWING SELFISHNESS

Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!

The key to living a life of generosity is in having a heart that delights in the Lord. When we find our purpose and joy in conforming to Christ’s image, we shed the inclination to indulge in materialistic fantasies and desires.

7. PROVERBS 21:13, MAINTAINING GENEROUS EARS

Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.

It is interesting that God attaches intention to not responding to the needs of the poor. No matter what justification we might fabricate to excuse ourselves, the Lord calls it a willful “closing of our ears.” In the same way that we lend to the Lord by giving to the poor, we withhold from the Lord when we respond selfishly to need—that gets repaid as well.

8. MATTHEW 6:19–21, INVESTING IN FUTURE TREASURE

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

In keeping with some of these Old Testament passages, Jesus challenges us with a choice: accumulate stuff here (which ultimately has no value) or use it in such a generous way that we are investing it in the coming Kingdom. When we are generous with the things that come through our life, we are actually sending it ahead, and we will be compensated by God.

The beauty in this passage is found in Jesus' promise that as we invest our resources in God's Kingdom, our heart will also be pulled in that direction. If you ever find yourself praying that God would awaken a desire in your heart for Kingdom things, try practicing generosity for a couple months.

9. PROVERBS 11:24–25, YOUR GENEROSITY DEFINES YOUR EXPERIENCE

One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.

This passage communicates a principle sewn into the fabric of God's world. The more you grasp and hoard, the more you need. Those who give freely and generously find that they are happier, healthier, and experience more blessings.

10. PROVERBS 19:17, LENDING TO THE LORD

Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed.

Can you imagine being in the Lord's debt? How much more would you give to the poor if you knew that God himself planned to pay you back? True, altruistic generosity requires a certain amount of faith.

11. PROVERBS 22:9, EXPECTING THE LORD'S GENEROSITY

Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor.

Many people live from deficit, believing that there is only so much to go around—and if you do not get yours, someone else will. It is nearly impossible to see the world that way and be a generous person. However, if you live with a "bountiful eye" that sees the world ruled by a magnanimous God who "owns the cattle on a thousand hills" (Psalm 50:10), you are more apt to be open-handed with the resources you have, because you know that God will repay you.

12. MATTHEW 10:42, GOD KEEPS TRACK OF OUR GIVING

And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

Again, we see a relationship between how we treat the needy and vulnerable around us and our future reward. The Lord is keeping intricate accounts and does not even neglect to record water given in his name.

13. LUKE 21:1–4, JESUS' ENTHUSIASM ABOUT GENEROSITY

Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

True generosity does not come from our excess; it comes from sacrificial hearts. The beauty of this passage is in Jesus' enthusiasm to point out this woman's magnanimity out to the disciples. To think that God gets this excited when we are openhanded is inspiring.

14. JOHN 3:16, LOVE GIVES. PERIOD.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Is it any wonder that the Bible verse that most explicitly expresses the beauty of the gift we have received in Christ Jesus would also communicate something about God's gracious generosity? Because God loved the world, he gave. Love blossoms into generosity—always.

15. 1 JOHN 3:16–18, GIVING LIKE CHRIST

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

Our generosity should model our savior's selflessness. He gave his life for us, so we are called to be willing to do the same. It is not enough to talk about our love; it needs to be expressed in concrete examples of generous sacrifice.

16. 1 JOHN 2:5–6, FOLLOWING CHRIST'S EXAMPLE

By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Paul encourages us to examine ourselves to see whether we're in the faith (Cor. 13:5). One important way we do that is by taking stock in whether our lives are beginning to take on the self-sacrificial and cruciform nature of Jesus. We'll give of ourselves and our resources.

17. ACTS 20:32–35, SET A GENEROUS EXAMPLE

And now I commit you to God and to the message of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all who are sanctified. I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands have provided for my needs and for those who were with me. In every way I've shown you that by laboring like this, it is necessary to help the weak and to keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus, for He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Paul's visit with the Ephesians ends with these words. He wants to leave them an example to follow. The pattern he wants to impart is one of hard work and sacrifice because he wants them to understand the virtue of generous living.

18. 2 CORINTHIANS 8:12–15, GIVING SHOULDN'T BE A BURDEN

For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."

The generosity that we are called to isn't intended to be a burden. It is intended to create a culture of equitability.

19. 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6–8, GOD DOESN'T WANT TO COERCE GENEROSITY

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

God's ultimate desire is that we would give happily. God does not want us to have to give out of obligation or coercion. He wants to bless his children. Not so that we can live in complete comfort and luxury, but so that we can be even more generous—abounding in every good work.

20. 1 TIMOTHY 6:17–19, BEING RICH IN GOOD WORKS AND GENEROSITY

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

God richly provides everything for our enjoyment. It is not God's desire to withhold or diminish our pleasure. In fact, God wants us to experience true pleasure. God wants us to experience the joy of being rich in goodness and generosity. Once again, Paul echoes the sentiment so prevalent throughout the scriptures: our benevolence now is an investment in eternity. Who would turn that down?

It is obvious that being conformed to the image of Christ includes emulating his sacrificial, giving nature. We should be using our own generosity as a gauge for our own spiritual health.

How open are we to give? How sacrificially?

Ways to Become More Generous

1. Study what the Bible says about giving

This is a must. If we take the Bible seriously, it must be our go-to authority for deciding how we're going to view and use our resources. For a good place to start digging into the topic, check out *20 Bible Verses on Generosity*.

2. Be thankful

Part of being firmly rooted in our faith is to be overflowing with thanksgiving. Learning to be thankful for the blessings in our lives makes us more content, satisfied, and less likely be striving for more. This totally frees us up to be more charitable.

3. Start paying attention to the needs around you

When you're having conversations with others, become a detective of their needs—even if they're unspoken. Are your neighbors stressed about their trip because they're going to need someone to water their plants? Does your pastor's wife need someone to talk to? Is there a family at your daughter's school that needs financial help?

Recognizing needs is a skill you develop by learning to pay close attention to people and read between the lines. Once you know their needs, offering to meet them (or rallying others who can) is the logical next step.

4. Celebrate the victories and special moments of others

A generous person isn't threatened when others do well. They're not overcome with jealousy and they don't fear the success of people around them. They're happy to celebrate people's achievements because they truly want the best for them.

5. Learn to accept generosity

It can be difficult to put yourself in a position of vulnerability, but it's important. Learning to accept generosity from others can help you become more empathetic and better recognize the need for we all have for the kindness of others. It's also a helpful way to teach others to become more generous.

6. Give regularly to your church

Learning to give regularly is an important part of becoming unselfish. Think of it as the training wheels of generosity. We'd like to think that the more we keep, the more we'll have to give when someone really needs it. But the truth is that we learn generosity through giving.

7. Find charities you can support

Whether you're passionate about digging wells in the desert, feeding the hungry, or supporting the persecuted church, find organizations that do work you think is important. Pray for these organizations, volunteer for them, or make donations.

8. Prepare for spontaneous generosity

Invest in a couple gift cards to grocery stores, restaurants, or hotels and keep them with you to give to people who may need them.

9. Give something up and divert that cash

Do you eat out on Thursday afternoons? Do you make frequent trips to Starbucks? Take a break for a month and donate the money you would have spent to your church, a local food bank, or a charity.

10. Get rid of everything you haven't used for a year

Because generous people don't tend to find personal happiness in acquiring stuff, they often choose to live simply. Their closets aren't full of clothes they never wear or equipment they never use. Take some time and go through and donate or dispose of things that are just filling up space.

11. Start really small

If you've never given away money, start by giving away \$1. If you are embarrassed to give just \$1, don't be. Of course, the point of this exercise is not to report a \$1 tax deduction on your year-end tax return. The point is to get started. If you'll feel more comfortable giving \$5, \$10, or \$20, start there. But no matter what dollar amount you choose, jump right in with something small. You can afford it... and that little push can help build momentum in your life towards generosity.

12. Make giving your first priority

With the best of intentions, we tell ourselves that we'll give from what we have left when we've taken care of everything else. The problem is that there's seldom anything left. Decide a percentage you'd like to give, and do it first—right off the top. You'll find it energizing and lifegiving.

13. Don't think of generosity as being "nice"

Becoming a giving person isn't about being cordial and pleasant; it's about making people a priority. You don't have to become a pushover or afraid to tell people no. Many are afraid to become givers because they think they'll be taken advantage of. It's not true. It's important for altruistic people to do the work of finding the right causes and opportunities.

14. Become more forgiving

You cannot separate forgiveness and the gospel—they're inexplicably united. But forgiveness is a powerful element of generosity. Sometimes people end up in difficult situations, and it's entirely their fault. A generous person doesn't simply say, "You made your bed, now sleep in it." They'll often say, "Let's work on a solution to get you out of this situation." This often requires an element of forgiveness.

15. Give praise

People are starving for appreciation. Recognizing and acknowledging what's praiseworthy in others is truly benevolent behavior. It not only blesses them, it helps you become someone who sees the world with a more generous eye.

16. Consider the benefits of generosity.

Generous people report being happier, healthier, and more satisfied with life than those who don't give. Generosity produces within us a sense that we are capable of making a difference in the world, that we are actively addressing the needs of those around us, and that we are shaping our community into a healthier one. While generosity is typically seen as the opposite of self-serving, counting the ways generosity makes us more like Christ can be self-encouraging.

17. Spend time with people in need

It's pretty easy to become isolated from actual needs. If you want to become more generous, you need to get closer to people with real obstacles. Volunteer at a homeless shelter, food pantry, or soup kitchen. Actually getting to know people who are struggling can really change your perspective.

18. Set aside time each week to pray for others

Christians often tell each other, "I will pray for you." I think we'd be surprised at how seldom it actually happens. But bringing petitions to God on behalf of others is one of the most compassionate things we can do. Set aside a specific time each week to pray for the needs, and asking for wisdom on how to help them. You'll find you benefit as much as they do.

19. Be patient

If you want to be a person that puts others first, learn to cultivate patience. Patience tells others that they matter. It's no wonder that you often hear the descriptors "patient" and "generous" spoken together.

20. Spend time with generous people

Go out of your way to find generous people and get to know them. Ask them questions to better understand how they got that way, "Where did you start? What advice would you give to someone who wanted to be more generous? How do you decide what and when to give?"

21. Visit seniors

It's amazing how many seniors live in assisted living facilities and have no one who comes to spend time with them. Volunteer your time to go sit and talk with them. Not only will you find you really enjoy it, you'll immediately see how much it means to them.

22. Practice generosity in secret

It's not always possible to give in secret, but do your best to try. Nothing will undermine the spirit of generosity like doing good for the purpose of being noticed by others.

Generosity matters! When the church truly becomes generous, the whole world will benefit. It's one of the most profound ways that we can communicate the truth of the gospel.

What simple steps will you incorporate into your life to foster generosity?

Modified from:

Pushpay: pushpay.com/blog/20-ways-to-practice-christian-generosity/

Joshua Becker: www.becomingminimalist.com