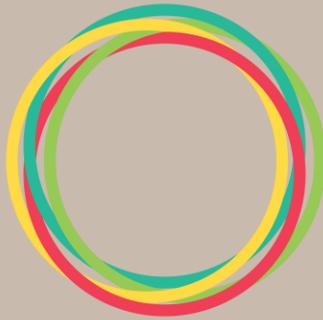


RADICAL GENEROSITY



EACH OF YOU SHOULD GIVE WHAT YOU HAVE
DECIDED IN YOU HEART TO GIVE, NOT
RELUCTANTLY OR UNDER COMPULSION, FOR
GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER.

2 CORINTHIANS 9V7
(NIV)

This booklet provides us simple to understand tools to help us on our journey as followers of Jesus. The purpose of this booklet is to help us take next steps towards becoming people of radical generosity. Jesus said that generosity is the key to living a happy, content, and free life.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Please keep in mind that everything included in this booklet is but a means to an end. We cannot earn favour with God. Our primary goal is to simply create additional space in our lives to abide in a deep, loving enjoyment of God's presence and others.

Remain centered around these purposes:

Love God

Learn the ways of Jesus

Live with purpose

Jesus' work on earth is a response to a history of human selfishness.

In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we see God respond to the human narrative with a gift. In a reversal of expectations, God gives Himself.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, he often chose to go without food or shelter, often for extended periods of time. Yet, he also actively searched out the homeless and the hungry in order to share God's abundance with them. Jesus regularly taught on generosity and how our hearts impact the degree to which we are generous.

His approach to generosity culminated with the Cross. Despite being killed by the selfishness of his own people, Jesus' resurrection from the dead overcomes their evil intent with generous love.

In his teachings, Jesus' message is clear. The key to living a happy, content and free life is generosity. In the current cultural movement, this has arguably never been so important. As our society continue to move in the direction of greed, materialism and hurry, we must pick up the life and teachings of Jesus to recapture part of our humanity.

Adapted from "Generosity" by the Bible Project. <https://bibleproject.com/learn/generosity/>

"JESUS' STANDARD OF GENEROSITY IS NOT THE WORLD'S STANDARD OF GENEROSITY. 'JUST GIVE A CUP OF COLD WATER IN MY NAME,' HE INSTRUCTS. SO LITTLE AND SO SIMPLE AS TO BE SCARCELY NOTICED! LIKE THE WIDOW'S MITE IT IS NEVERTHELESS A HIGH STANDARD. IT DEMANDS THAT WE LIVE IN AWARENESS OF THE THIRST ALL AROUND US."

Margret Guenther
A Home in the World

As Margret Guenther put it in her book *A Home In the World*, the type of generosity Jesus' teaches "demands that we live in awareness of the thirst all around us." But what next steps will help get us to that place?

For all of us, as we consider the benefits of generosity and embrace gratitude in our lives, our next step is different. For some of us, it might be helpful to consider living a more simplistic and slower lifestyle. For others, it could be funding a cause based on a passion, giving money to those struggling to provide for themselves, or spending time with people in need. However, we do recommend that you:

(I) Start simple.

As with any habit, it is often tempting to over-reach at first. This strategy can lead to disappointment. Push and build momentum over time.

(II) Start from where you're at.

Don't start where you *feel* you should be. Start from where you're at. When unrealistic goals are not met, this can leave us discouraged. Instead, start with forms of generosity that are doable and enjoyable to you, working your way up.

(III) Start by establishing generosity as a habit.

Create a rule of life around generosity. There is no formation without repetition in any area of life. Establish habits and stick with them.

THE FOLLOWING PAGES LAY OUT SOME PRACTICES FROM THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS THAT ARE MEANT TO HELP US RECOGNIZE AND RESPOND TO THE NEEDS AROUND US.

THEY ARE MERELY TOOLS TO HELP US LIVE OUT RADICAL GENEROSITY.

A spiritual discipline of the Christian faith, simplicity often goes by the names "simple living" or "minimalism". Simplicity is the act of not only decluttering our closets but decluttering our lives.

THE PRACTICE OF SIMPLICITY

Richard Foster once said that "simplicity is an inward reality that results in an outward lifestyle."

Simplicity is first reflected in the inward architecture of our hearts as we grow and begin to receive what we have as a gift from God, cared for by God, meant to be shared with others.

When we begin to live this inwardly, the result is an outward lifestyle where we choose to leverage our time, money, talents and resources towards other people's needs and what matters most in the world.

Biblically, simplicity is a practice that is entirely based on the life of Jesus. Though Jesus wasn't entirely poor (he was supported by a group of wealthy donors who were mostly upper-class women), he happily lived in the tension of enjoying good meals and yet warning about what money could do to our hearts. For us in the West, we live with that same tension. We can be grateful and enjoy nice things, but must, in the words of Richard Foster, live with "a carefree unconcern for possessions."

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry. John Mark Comer. Waterbrook, 2019.

Freedom of Simplicity. Richard Foster. HarperCollins, 1981.

Last updated: September 2021

There are many next steps for those looking to live a more simplified lifestyle. However, here are some practical ways we can fuse a lifestyle of simplicity with that of a lifestyle of generosity:

THE PRACTICE OF SIMPLICITY

(I) We can share our resources

Why buy something when we can share resources amongst our community? Not only can we look for opportunities to save money by borrowing items, but we can share the resource that we ourselves already own with those who could benefit from or need them.

(II) We can make a habit of giving things away

Jesus said that it is "more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20v35). If you find yourself downsizing or getting rid of items, actively find people who could use the things you're parting with. If you don't have items to give, maybe you could set up a blessing fund in your monthly budget as a way of sharing money with the people around us.

(III) We can live on a budget

Money can be squandered and go to all the wrong places. A budget doesn't just help us stay out of debt but allows us to be creative with where our money is going. Often, the first step to generosity is being more intentional with where our money is being spent in the first place.

(IV) We can buy less things

Our culture encourages us to ask "how do I get more?" However, the disciple of Jesus should be asking "how can I live with less?". When we choose to buy fewer, better things, or simply consider purchasing used items, we can save money that is better used elsewhere. A question we should all ask before purchasing items is: "do I actually need this?"

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry. John Mark Comer. Waterbrook, 2019.

**"SIMPLICITY ENABLES US TO LIVE LIVES OF
INTEGRITY IN THE FACE OF THE TERRIBLE
REALITIES OF OUR GLOBAL VILLAGE."**

Richard Foster
Freedom of Simplicity

A spiritual discipline of the Christian faith, secrecy is when we abstain from causing our good deeds and qualities to be known. In a culture that encourages attention seeking, nothing could be more counter-cultural than being generous in secret. This has a profound impact on our hearts.

THE PRACTICE OF SECRECY

Dallas Willard once said that "one of the greatest fallacies of our faith, and actually one of the greatest acts of unbelief, is the thought that our spiritual acts and virtues need to be advertised to be known."

In practicing secrecy, we experience a relationship with God independent of the opinions of others. It helps us learn to lose or at least tame the hunger within us for fame, justification and attention. In this practice, we need the help of grace to learn to love and be unknown.

Therefore, when we speak of secrecy and generosity in the same sentence, we are talking about the act of giving in secret. Secrecy teaches us love and humility before God and others, and trains us to not search for acknowledgement or praise in others. As Jesus said: "your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

For many of us, our next step is to give generously without telling another soul.

BUT WHEN YOU GIVE TO THE NEEDY, DO NOT LET YOUR LEFT HAND KNOW WHAT YOUR RIGHT HAND IS DOING, SO THAT YOUR GIVING MAY BE IN SECRET. THEN YOUR FATHER, WHO SEES WHAT IS DONE IN SECRET, WILL REWARD YOU.

**MATTHEW 6:3-4
(NIV)**

A spiritual discipline of the Christian faith, slowing involves the slowing down of our bodies and our life as a protest against the new normal of hyper-living we see in our society.

THE PRACTICE OF SLOWING

How many of us simply miss recognizing and acknowledging the needs of others because we are too hurried?

We see that amid his busy ministry, Jesus was never hurried and would intentionally slow down in order to recognize and meet the needs of others (Luke 8, Luke 18, etc.). His speed was measured by his love instead of his itinerary.

For many of us, we could become more aware of the needs around us if we simply lived slower, more intentional lives. Counter habits like this one help us wage war against hyper-living and hurriedness.

Ask yourself: Could I set limits to my social media consumption or set times for emails? Could I keep my phone off when I'm out? Could I stop trying to constantly multi-task? Could I walk slower to deliberately look for the places God wants me to practice generosity?

As we slow down to match the pace of Jesus, we will also experience freedom from the tyranny of a heavy yoke.

"LOVE HAS ITS SPEED. IT IS A SPIRITUAL SPEED. IT IS A DIFFERENT KIND OF SPEED FROM THE TECHNOLOGICAL SPEED TO WHICH WE ARE ACCUSTOMED. IT GOES ON IN THE DEPTH OF OUR LIFE, WHETHER WE NOTICE OR NOT, AT THREE MILES AN HOUR. IT IS THE SPEED WE WALK AND THEREFORE THE SPEED THE LOVE OF GOD WALKS."

Kosuke Koyama
Three Mile an Hour God

A spiritual discipline of the Christian faith, service is when we actively extend our gifts and strengths to others and the causes of God in our world. This discipline is often more important for followers of Jesus who find themselves in positions of influence, power and leadership.

THE PRACTICE OF SERVICE

Generosity goes far beyond money. It's important for us to think of new ways we can be generous by extending our talents to meet the needs of the people we cross paths with.

Actively pursuing the discipline of service can help train us to be less arrogant, possessive, and envious. In fact, to live a lifestyle of *consistent* service to others like Jesus is one of the most difficult and challenging things to do. As Dallas Willard said though: "it is also the pattern of life for which this bruised and aching world waits and without which it will never manage a decent existence."

Ask yourself: Where can I extend my skills and talents for the good of the community and those who cannot afford it?

A next step could include volunteering with your local church, partnering with a non-profit organization, or offering your services for free to friends, family, or neighbors who cannot afford to pay for it.

**"TRUE SERVICE IS A LIFESTYLE. IT ACTS FROM
THE INGRAINED PATTERNS OF LIVING. IT
SPRINGS SPONTANEOUSLY TO MEET THE
HUMAN NEED."**

Richard Foster
Celebration of Discipline

Found throughout the scriptures, tithing consists of offering a tenth of one's earnings to the local church. Tithing is an opportunity for us to cultivate a heart to serve the needs of others, while aligning ourselves with God's vision of humanity.

THE PRACTICE OF TITHING

In the Old Testament, the word tithe comes from the fact that this consisted of offering a tenth of one's produce and livestock to the priests ministering to them. This was used to support the priests and their livelihood, as well as looking after the poor and those in need amongst them.

By offering a tenth of their produce and livestock, this also served as a reminder to the Israelites that the earth belongs to God and that every blessing they received was from Him.

It's important to note that Jesus often critiqued the religious leaders not for neglecting this practice, but of losing sight of the purpose. Instead of a focus on behavior, Jesus took issue with their motives.

For Jesus, justice, mercy and faithfulness flow from a practice of regular giving. For him, when these things do not flow from the practice of tithing, we have missed the mark. Giving is not simply a physical act but requires the proper heart posture.

The practice of tithing helps us establish generosity and selflessness in our hearts. One economist put it this way: “Money as a form of power is so intimately related to the possessor that one cannot consistently give money without giving self.”

THE PRACTICE OF TITHING

Here are three different ways we can tithe to a local church organization:

(I) Starting where we're at

If you find yourself in a position where you're unable to give a tenth of your income, start from where you're at. This is not a law. If you find giving a tenth of your income difficult in your current stage of life, simply adapt it to fit God's will for your giving.

(II) A traditional tithe

If you find yourself able to regularly give a tenth of your income to the Church, try it. In a culture deeply rooted in consumerism, we stand out when we choose rhythms of generosity by partnering in the things God is doing among us. Though tithing is an *expression* of generosity, it's the practice of tithing that often helps establish generosity and selflessness in our hearts.

(III) A graduated tithe

If you find your income is increasing from year-to-year, and you're excited about what your local church organization is doing in its neighborhood or city, consider a graduated percentage of income to which you tithe. This practice can help us focus on the importance of giving as an alternative to the temptation of greed as our income rises.

"GIVING FREES US TO CARE. IT PRODUCES AN AIR OF EXPECTANCY AS WE ANTICIPATE WHAT GOD WILL LEAD US TO GIVE. IT MAKES LIFE WITH GOD AN ADVENTURE OF DISCOVERY. WE ARE BEING USED TO HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD, AND THAT IS A LIFE WORTH LIVING FOR AND GIVING FOR."

Richard Foster
"The Grace of Giving"

Believe it or not, there is science to back up the type of lifestyle Jesus calls us to.

Research shows that generosity has measurable health benefits and can even help you live longer.

In 2001, Dr. Stephen Post, director of the Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care and Bioethics at Stony Brook University in New York, founded the Institute for Research on Unlimited Love.

Funding more than fifty studies across forty-four major universities, IRUL accumulated large quantities of data to suggest that giving does more than make us happy. One of the studies that IRUL inherited, spanning sixty years, provided data that shows giving results in long-term health benefits and reduced depression.

However, Post did not focus on just monetary giving. For him, generosity spanned ten categories: celebration, generativity (helping others grow), forgiveness, courage, humor, respect, compassion, loyalty, listening and creativity. For him, each of these are a way of giving to others and to ourselves.

Why Good Things Happen to Good People. Stephen Post and Jill Neimark. Crown, 2007.

**WE WANT TO PARTNER
WITH JESUS TO SERVE THE
CITY OF BRANTFORD.**

**YOUR CONTINUED
GENEROSITY MAKES THIS
POSSIBLE.**

THANK YOU.

