



2022 PRAYER GUIDE

WEEK SEVEN

A CALL TO PRAYER

COLOSSIANS 1:9-14



Week 7 - Generosity

God is Generous.

While this may seem obvious to you, it is a surprise to many people when they realize that God is generous. I didn't think God was generous when I was a young man. Somehow, while growing up, I got the idea that if I begged God for help and if I was good enough, He might show me a little mercy. A lot of people have this belief about God. But God is amazingly generous. He made the first move of generosity toward us. And the second move and the third.

God was the first and is the most generous Giver of all.

He's given us His generous love, generous acceptance and forgiveness, and a generous future. Every moment we are alive is a gift from our generous Creator.

He went above and beyond anything we could have imagined: *"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* (John 3:16, NIV)

God loved people so much that He gave. He gave His best. He gave His Son for you and for me. This act of generosity began in His heart first. He loved so He gave.

Once I began to see God's generosity portrayed throughout Scripture, I saw it everywhere. *When the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior.* (Titus 3:4-6, NIV)

It's clear that generosity is an irreplaceable quality of spirituality. Inside the soul of every person is a desire that God gave us to live the generous life. Generosity is essential to following Jesus. What Jesus expects us to do in life cannot be done without a generous attitude.

Generosity is required to trust God at the depth that produces a life of sacrifice, serving others and even forgiving in the same way we are forgiven. We can give without loving, but we cannot love without giving.

We are most like God when we are generous.

Jesus once told His disciples, *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."* (John 13:35, NIV). It's important that we love the poor and care for the homeless, but Jesus did not say "they will know we are His disciples" because we feed the poor. It's sometimes easier for us to love strangers than it is to love the people we know because we know their faults and their issues. If people have to deserve what we give, it's not really generosity. We need to show this generous love and grace to people despite their issues.

[excerpted from **Unlock Your Dream: Discover the Adventure You Were Created For** by Philip Wagner]

Let's pray this week that God will mature us in the discipline and grace of generosity, and that in so doing, He will be glorified in us.

Day 1

2 Corinthians 9:7 - Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver.

What do you think of when you consider the word generosity? The giving of money or material goods? This is one way in which we can be generous but take a minute to consider all the other ways a person can give and contribute to the church, family, friends, or work. Are we being generous in our relationships, in our service, in our sufferings? We can be generous with our service through helping at church or delivering meals to those in need. We can be generous in our relationships by opening our home to a Bible study group or sharing a cup of coffee with someone who needs a listening ear. We can be generous in our sufferings by doing something outside our comfort zone with a joyful attitude, not a complaining one. God calls his church to have a generous spirit because God has been generous to us in His gift of grace through Jesus Christ. We are assured that a generous spirit pleases God and brings him glory. Let's be the generous church God has called us to be in all aspects of our lives.

Lord God, we thank you for the blessings You have given us. We know all things come from You. As a congregation we pray for one another to find new ways to be generous and for the right attitude in our giving. May a more generous spirit in your church, our church draw others into a relationship with You.

Day 2

Matthew 25:37-40

Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

Ephesians 2:8

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

This passage in Matthew 25 is sometimes difficult for us to understand. It is important to remember that the good works described here do not qualify us for salvation, but rather demonstrate that we have been saved. We have been saved BY grace, THROUGH faith, created in Christ Jesus FOR good works. (Ephesians 2). When we meet the needs of others, we demonstrate the grace of God and we potentially open a door for the gospel.

Lord, make me sensitive to the needs of people around me. Help me to not look past those who are hurting, hungry, lonely, or in prison. Open my eyes to the opportunities You place in my path today and everyday to do good works in Your name for Your glory. Help me to plan to serve, volunteer, give, and be involved in the lives of others, and use those opportunities as a way to tell people about You.

Day 3

Luke 21:1-4 - *Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, ² and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. ³ And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. ⁴ For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."*

2 Corinthians 8:1-5 - *We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— ⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.*

In the scriptures above, we see people giving so generously that it was "beyond their means" and out of a place of poverty. In other words, their giving was a *sacrifice*: an act of giving up something important or valuable for something *more important*. Jesus recognized the poor widow as putting in "more than all of them" because of her sacrifice. Paul saw how the churches of Macedonia were giving out of their "extreme poverty;" they "gave themselves first to the Lord!" These givers were recognized by Jesus Christ and by Paul, not because of the amounts of their gifts, but because of the sacrificial nature of the gifts.

Let's meditate on the scriptures above and then think about the overwhelming sacrifice of Jesus Christ! God sent His Son as a sacrifice for our sin. How do we respond? Are we responding by sacrificial giving? Not only of our finances, but also of our time, our worship, our outreach to others? Is there anything more important than generously giving to the work of the Gospel?

Heavenly Father, help me to be a generous, sacrificial giver of my time, my money, my love, my friendship, and my worship. Show me where I can give more, to further Your work in our church, our community, and our world. Thank You for Your Son, for salvation, and for Your grace and mercy towards us. Amen.

Day 4

Psalm 89:11 - *The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it, you have founded them.*

1 Timothy 6:17 - *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. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ 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.*

Ethan the Ezrahite's Psalm exalts the steadfast love of God. In his song he reminds us that God owns everything, that there is nothing that we can ultimately claim ownership of in this world. We often use the word "stewardship" when talking about money. The word "steward" is rooted in the Greek word "*oikonomos*," which means "the manager of a household." In general, to steward is to manage something on someone's behalf. Whether a family member, friend, or employer asks you to watch over something, then you're stewarding—managing—whatever they entrusted to your care.

Paul, who renounced all things to follow Jesus, instructs Timothy (and us) how we are to view our finances. We don't place our hope in them, we use them to generously do good works. In that way we make eternal investments in Heaven, while enjoying contentment here.

Father, I praise You and acknowledge that the heavens and the earth, and everything and everyone in it belongs to You, the creator and sustainer of all things. I am grateful for the good things You have provided me. Keep me from being too attached to things. Help me to hold money and material things loosely, recognizing that they belong to You, and are to be used for Your glory. Make me rich in good works, generous and ready to share. Keep my eyes on eternity, and the investment You want me to make there.

Day 5

Proverbs 11:24-25 - *One gives freely, yet grows all the richer;
another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.*

²⁵ *Whoever brings blessing will be enriched,
and one who waters will himself be watered.*

There is a recurring Biblical principle that can be summarized in the phrase, “you reap what you sow.” If you are kind, people will be kind to you. If you are a blessing to others, others will bless you. If you are generous, you will be rewarded. It is important to note, however, that this is a governing principle, not a promise for every situation and circumstance. If we think that we can somehow manage to get God to give us more by becoming generous (a kind of self-centered spiritual investment strategy), we are missing the point of these passages. We are promised that God will provide for our needs, and our trust in Him to do so gives us the freedom to be generous.

While we are promised rewards, spiritual rewards and recognition, the aim of generosity is that God be praised. Paul tells the believers at Corinth that the result of their generosity is “*they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others*” (2 Cor. 9:13) It is important for us to remember that, though money may pass through our hands, ultimately everything belongs to God, and we give at His direction and for His glory.

So what do we do with the principle of “reaping rewards?” Simply put, we are entrusted with more in order to become even more generous. God doesn’t promise that generosity is the path to financial wealth, but rather that your faithfulness in little results in your ability to be faithful in much. That is an amazing way to live for God!

Father, I ask that you search the motivations of my heart. Deal with the problem of selfishness that I continue to face. Help me to be increasingly generous to meet the needs of others, so they may glorify You. Help me to manage well what You have given me, and make me able to manage even more, for Your glory. Help me to trust You to meet my needs today and every day. Amen!