



GENEROSITY

Resource

GENEROSITY RESOURCE.

God is our centre. He is our destination and the direction. He is before all, above all, in all, and surrounding all. We follow Him before any vision we value. And when He speaks, we, His church, respond. As we read the Scriptures, we see clearly that His vision is the restoration of His creation. His desire is to see all things made new. The commission Jesus gives us echoes this vision.

Here at Causeway Coast Vineyard, we want to be an 'everyone, everywhere, everyday' people who live and work for the transformation of our entire community for today and the generations to come, through the power of Jesus in our lives and in our neighbourhoods.

That's why we ask the question:

How should we live today to see this community look more like Jesus tomorrow?

One of the things that is clear when we read through the life of Jesus is how He lived an open-handed life. He was generous with His time, His resource, His friendships, and His life. And He calls those of us who are in a living relationship with Him to do the same.

So what does that mean for us today? What might it release tomorrow if we can live increasingly in an open-handed way today?

The Joy of Generosity

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field." Matthew 13:44

The journey of generosity is one of the most life-altering, joy-filled adventures we get to embark on as followers of Jesus.

Jesus Himself likened it to a man who found a treasure hidden in a field. When found, the man sold all he had 'in his joy' in order to buy the field. He was so compelled by the treasure he had found, so moved by its worth, that he happily sold everything he had in order to pursue the treasure.

A response driven by overwhelming delight, not duty.

It wonderfully describes the adventure of generosity we are invited to embark on: a journey of being so moved by the worth and value of Jesus, that we respond with open hearts and open hands.

God Doesn't Need Our Money!

One of the greatest stumbling blocks on our journey of generosity can be the belief that God needs our money.

This could not be further from the truth. The Bible tells us that the earth belongs to the Lord and everything in it (Psalm 24:1). He is the holder, sustainer, and owner of all. Therefore, we cannot give Him something that is not already His – including our money!

The foundation stone on our journey of generosity is that God does not need our money.

Yet, when we read the gospels, Jesus talks about money a lot. In fact, 15% of all He says in the gospels are directly related to money and what we do with it.

But why? If God doesn't need our money, why would He invite us to give it to Him?

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Because it's not about the money!

Jesus said this is the gospel of Matthew...

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Within these few lines, Jesus lays a remarkable foundation for what a life of generosity is all about.

He begins by inviting us to look beyond the physical and the temporal. He extends the invitation to store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, rather than here on earth. Jesus is clearly talking about so much more than just the money in our bank account, or even the physical resources that we own.

But He concludes this instruction on money with the statement:

'Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'

Jesus draws our attention to the heart, not money.

He indicates that what we treasure reveals the nature of our heart. In other words: how we handle what is in our hands, reveals what we value within our hearts.

This shows us that God's invitation to be generous with what we own is a matter of the heart, not just our bank account.

Treasure

So what about 'treasure'? What is it? And how can we use it?

Treasure can be described as anything we hold of value.

Money is the most obvious example, but that is only the beginning. By using the language of treasure, Jesus exponentially expands what it means to be a people of generosity.

Our treasure definitely includes our money, but it encompasses so much more! Anything we hold of value... our skills, time, and possessions can all be indicative of treasure.

As we continue along our journey of learning to live an open-handed life, we get to think openly and creatively about being generous with what we treasure.

We get to dream with God in how we get to give our money and resource to those who need it most, but we also get to embark on the adventure of learning how to give our time, skills, and energy to those around us too.

The journey of generosity is not necessarily about us giving more of our stuff, it's about giving God full permission over what we do with our stuff.

It's not about us owning money or things, it's all about our money and our things not owning us!

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What About Tithing?

Throughout the story of the Old Testament, tithing is considered to be the starting line for what a life of generosity looks like.

From the earliest community of God in the Old Testament of the Bible, we see God institute the practice of tithing (giving ten percent of whatever is grown, earned or received back to God).

See Leviticus 27:30, Numbers 18:26, Deuteronomy 14:24.

The practice of tithing in the Old Testament is fundamentally rooted in the understanding that whatever we give is already God's in the first place. Remember, we cannot give God anything that does not already belong to Him. Tithing is a way we can simply demonstrate with our hands what we believe in our hearts. It's a way to establish in our lives that God is first and all that we have belongs to Him.

Many of us choose to give the first 10% to God through the vehicle of our local church... but that's just a starting point! Like anything else, tithing can also become an empty religious practice if our hearts aren't fully surrendered to God, along with all our possessions and treasure. For instance, we don't see tithing practiced in the New Testament churches, as they had a new understanding of everything belonging to God... and they lived in line with that revelation from the Holy Spirit.

In fact, in Acts 4 we read an astonishing story of God's grace at work through generosity:

Acts 4:32-35 NIV

"All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all 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 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need."

This is so much more than a tithe... that's why we don't read of it in the New Testament. The greatest example of God's grace written about in this moment is not the number of salvations, or healings, or miracles, but the incredible surrender and generosity of God's people! So much so that 'there were no needy persons among them.'

We should never settle for a 'tithe' mentality when Jesus brings a full surrender mentality and each of us gives as we are able, joyfully, and with open hands and hearts!

Just the Beginning!

If generosity is demonstrating with our hands what we believe in our hearts about God... Then giving is just the beginning of this joy-filled journey of generosity. For ALL of our life belongs to God, not just the first ten percent of what we earn or any other amount we feel God has called us to give.

Some of the deepest blessings are found in joy-filled generosity. Paul said this about generosity when writing to the Corinthians:

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

Joy-filled generosity opens us up to so much more of the abundant nature of Jesus and His kingdom.

Paul states that by whatever measure we give, is the measure by which we will receive. He uses the imagery of sowing and reaping. If we sow sparingly we will reap sparingly, but if we sow generously we will reap generously.

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Open to Give and Receive

When we live with open hands we are not only more likely to give whatever is in them, we are also freed to receive.

Jesus clearly taught His followers that it is better to give than to receive (Acts 20:35), and on many occasions, taught that the act of giving created an opportunity for multiplication and blessing in our own lives (Luke 6:38).

Giving is always an expression of God being first in our lives, but the beautiful truth is that when we give, we enable ourselves to steward more of God's resources. Just like Paul taught us a moment ago: whoever sows generously, will reap generously.

Whether the blessing is financial, physical, emotional, or spiritual is up to God, but as we search the scriptures, we see again and again how God abundantly blesses the generous of heart.

What About Now?

Finances can be overwhelming. But Jesus desires us to be free from all the pitfalls associated with it. Jesus gives us freedom from the love of money and the crippling anxiety that is often associated with it.

A great place to start on our generosity journey would be to engage in a money management course. Here at CCV, we have several tools that help us steward our giving, spending, and saving. CAP (Christians Against Poverty) offer a fantastic course that covers all the basics, and more information is found below at:

www.vineyardcompassion.co.uk/cap

For more information on how you can give to Causeway Coast Vineyard, please follow the link:

www.causewaycoastvineyard.com/giving





STORIES OF GENEROSITY.

IN THE BIBLE

History isn't always changed by the extravagant, in fact, it's often changed by the simple. One of the greatest stories of generosity in the Bible, still told and marvelled at today, is about a woman who gave the smallest of all gifts.

You can read it for yourself in
Mark 12:41-44 NIV:

“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. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.

They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

She was surrounded by wealthy men and woman who were putting large sums of money into the offering basket. Yet, her offering of ‘two very small copper coins’ was the only offering Jesus drew attention to that day.

Why? Because it revealed more about her heart than all the others who were present. She gave from her heart, while the others merely gave from their hands. We want to be a people who give joyfully and from the place of absolute surrender in our hearts as we work to see God's grace and provision for all in our community.



STORIES OF GENEROSITY.

— IN OUR COMMUNITY

Recently, someone who is part of our church heard about 6 boys who, along with their families, arrived on the north coast after escaping from a very difficult situation of their homeland. They came here with very little and basics had been given to them. This person was told that the boys love football but don't have boots so they weren't able to play at school yet. Straight away this person thought "I reckon between some pals and I, we could buy them new boots".

After a handful of texts, 5 friends were excitedly signed up and 6 pairs of football boots were bought for these boys. But that generosity spurred on even more when they began to think about the rest of the football kit.

This generous person then called a friend at the football club just up the road, who is also a part of CCV, and he kindly said he would not only give them full football kits, but also gave them and their families tickets to a home game!

There was a couple in CCV who were going through a job transition. One of them had just come out of employment and was exploring what to do next. They had set some saving aside to tide them over, but just before the job ended, they felt God invite them to give 3 different people £500 each, an amount which was most of their savings. Whilst financially it wasn't a great move, they described it as their joy to give. The week they gave the first gift, someone arrived at their house with a gift that covered their heating bill for three months. The day after they gave the second gift (up to £1000 at this point) a cheque arrived through the door for £3000. Then the day after their current job ended, they randomly received a message through social media with a job offer! They started the new job just 2 or 3 weeks later. Their incredible journey started with a willingness to listen to God's heart for generosity!

STORIES OF GENEROSITY.

— IN OUR COMMUNITY



One summer we preached on generosity in our Why Jesus? series. After the message on generosity, someone who is a part of CCV was prompted to tithe an inheritance they received following a relative sadly passing away. They decided to give the significant amount to Compassion because their relative had a strong value for helping people less fortunate.

The beautiful thing about these stories are that they demonstrate how generosity is alive in our church and in our wider community.

God wants to bless us and everyone with His incredible abundance and it is our privilege to be part of this journey together!

A member of the public had been out for a meal and were chatting with a young couple at the table next to them. In jest, the person said to the couple as they were leaving, 'You can pick up the bill for us!'

But they were flabbergasted to find out that the young couple did just that. The member of the public wanted to "pass it on" and donated £90 to CCV Foodbank which was the cost of their meal plus a bit more.



