

Experiencing Transformation When You Discover the Origin of Generosity

Although 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 He is amazingly generous.

He made the first move of generosity toward us.

And the second move and the third.

He was the first and is the most generous giver of all. He's given us His generous love, generous acceptance and forgiveness, and the generous future we call the God-dream. Every moment we are alive is a gift from our generous Creator.

He went above and beyond anything we could have imagined: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

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:

"But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward mankind appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the

washing of rebirth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior" (Titus 3:4-6).

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally and without criticism, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5).

Jesus pointed out an example of generosity that accentuated the importance of this quality for us. The situation also reveals the heart behind this kind of liberality. He was so taken by it that He said wherever the gospel would be preached, this story would be told.

Jesus was in the home of some friends when a woman came in and poured a very expensive perfume over His head. Jesus' friends and disciples immediately criticized this generosity and declared it wasteful. But He saw it a different way.

"When Jesus perceived it, He said to them, 'Why do you trouble the woman? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor always with you, but you do not always have Me. In pouring this ointment on My body, she did it for My burial. Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will be told in memory of her'" (Matt. 26:10-13).

Her generosity was significant because of the value of her gift: it was a great sacrifice, and it revealed the depth of her gratitude. Jesus pointed out that this kind of generous gratitude and worship was to be forever connected to His followers.

It's clear that generosity is an irreplaceable quality of spirituality. Inside the soul of every person is a desire 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 all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

It’s important to love the poor and care for the homeless, but Jesus did not say people will know we are His disciples because we feed the poor. It’s sometimes easier for us to love strangers than 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. We can only develop a generous life when we understand where giving begins, and that is with love. This empowers us toward greater heights of generosity.

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