

What Happens When You Let Love and Generosity Prevail?

In his apocryphal tale *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens paints such a clear picture of Ebenezer Scrooge that the word “scrooge” appears in the dictionary—defined as “a miserly person.”

The story is set on Christmas Eve when Scrooge is an old man. But Dickens gives readers a glimpse into Scrooge’s entire life, revealing that he was not always selfish. Though he had a knack for numbers and a frugal nature, he wasn’t born miserly.

So what happened? Scrooge never processed the painful experiences of his youth, and heartache hardened him. This, combined with the character flaw of greed, transformed his positive attribute of frugality into stinginess. Not only was he stingy, he was mean. (The two usually go hand in hand with age strengthening the bond).

One reason Dickens is considered a master storyteller is that his characters are so real. We can all relate to Scrooge because chances are, we know a couple. They might be relatives, neighbors or friends. In fact, if we’re honest, some of us are on our way to becoming Scrooge ourselves! Without question, misers don’t grow old very well, because generosity is a key component to graceful aging.

Take the example of Anna (See Luke 2:36-38). As an elderly widow, Anna likely didn’t possess great wealth. Nevertheless, when it came to blessings and favor, she was extremely rich! Anna was a teacher in the Old Testament, one of only a few women mentioned in the Bible with this gift. She came from the tribe of Asher, not the priestly tribe of Levi. However, despite her gender and tribal heritage, she was well

respected, even given a place to live on the temple grounds. Why so highly esteemed? Anna had a sacrificial spirit, giving her whole life to serving God. That is generosity in action.

Rest assured, her life wasn't trouble free. She spent the majority of her days a widow—her husband died after only seven years of marriage. While such painful circumstances might have hardened her heart, Anna let benevolence prevail. While she could have become a bitter old widow, she chose to live selflessly. And this selflessness led to exaltation, to the extent that her story is part of Scripture, written for all eternity. Anna personifies graceful aging. Her life bears witness to Proverbs 11:25: "The generous soul will be made rich."

If generosity leads to blessing, then why are so many people selfish? And why does this trait become more common with age? I see several factors:

- The fear some have of others taking advantage of them. In many respects, generosity is a state of vulnerability and carries with it the risk of "being burned." Once burned, some will shield themselves at any cost—even at the cost of becoming a miser. In addition, past experience will affect present behavior. When people lose money for whatever reason, a tight fist is a common reaction. In the economic crisis of 2008, people lost huge sums of money; it cost some their life's savings. Not surprisingly, the level of charitable giving dropped precipitously during that period.
- There is the issue of trust. Some people are misers because they have no faith. They won't give because they don't believe God's promises, or they don't think He is able to replenish their bank account—and certainly not increase it!—if they give money away.
- Others simply allow greed and a tendency to hoard govern their lives.

While there are many reasons for selfishness, none are justifiable. True love is manifested in generosity. One of the most widely known verses in the Bible gives proof of this: "For God so *loved* the world that He gave His only begotten Son ..." (John 3:16, emphasis added). Loving and giving are tightly linked. Love is the condition; generosity is the action.

In this season, let's remember the words of Paul when he wrote: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thess. 5:16-18). Don't overlook the glaring truth of these verses that *gratitude is not conditional!* At all times and in all circumstances we have a reason to be grateful. Life's circumstances are always temporary, but God's grace toward us is eternal. If we focus on the big picture of grace, then gratitude naturally follows. Gratitude is not an emotion but a condition of the heart.

Examine the condition of your heart. Purge your heart of selfishness, and let generosity prevail.

✠ *Adapted from Timeless by Kara Davis, M.D., copyright 2015, published by Siloam, Charisma Media/Charisma House Book Group. This book is a comprehensive guide to progressing through the various stages of life. It will help you optimize your total health and improve your physical, spiritual and mental well-being. Timeless is practical, inspirational and a "must-have" road map for anyone facing the inevitable for themselves or a loved one. To order your copy, [click here](#).*

Prayer Power for the Week of December 13, 2015

This week reflect on the goodness of God and His generosity toward us as He loved and gave His only Son for our redemption. Ask Him to direct your steps and give you divine appointments to follow His example. Pray, love and give to those less fortunate and be ready to share the gospel wherever you go. Continue to pray for revival in our nation and around

the world. Remember our military and their families, the persecuted church, and those suffering through loss of health, loved ones or provision. Pray for those persecuted for the cause of Christ and remember Israel as many travel there in this season (John 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:16-18).