



Teach: Generosity for Everyone



It doesn't matter how old we are or how much we earn, we all can live generously in whatever stage we are in. But don't just take my word for it, let's look at a few examples in the Bible for inspiration.

The boy with the fishes and loaves (John 6:1-14). While I am not sure how old he is, he appears to be old enough to travel to town and take care of a chore for his family. He probably knows the value of money and certainly of food. Then, Jesus and His disciples come along asking if they can use his resources to help others. I don't think the boy was wrestled to the ground and had his groceries taken, I think he gave them willingly. But even so, I don't believe he had any clue as to what was about to happen. From his small gift, 5,000 people were fed. I wonder if it turned out to be the best day of his life. He probably got home late, couldn't wait to tell mom, and bragged to all his friends. I bet it left him pretty eager to go to town again looking forward to his next giving adventure.

The poor widow who gave all she had (Mark 12:41-44). I would imagine in the modern church if a poor widow showed up at her pastor's office wanting to give all she had, her gift may very well be declined. Her pastor wouldn't want to hurt her feelings, but he would reason that she needs her resources more than the church does. He might even offer that the church has a Benevolence Fund she could benefit from. Unlike the scenario I just described, I love that neither Jesus nor the poor widow were concerned about what the future holds regarding her financial needs. Jesus was more than willing to accept her gift, and she was more than willing to give it.

The rich young ruler who has more than enough (Matthew 19:16-30). Jesus asks him to do as the poor widow did and give everything, but he refuses. It is interesting that a young boy gives all he has one day, and a poor widow gives all she has on another day. Evidently generosity is for everyone and it has nothing to do with the amount of resources you possess nor how old you are.

Zaccheus and Barnabas, two very successful men in the prime of their earning careers (Luke 19:1-10, Acts 4:37). While I am not sure how long Barnabas has been a believer, I do know that he is way ahead of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus isn't even a believer when his story begins, but by the end of it he is living extravagant generosity. Barnabas actually surrenders an entire piece of property he owns, and gives it to the church to distribute the resources no strings attached.

Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-16). The Bible also contains real stories of our struggles with being giving people. You actually do not have to travel very far in the Bible to find the story of Cain and Abel. Both gave. One got it right and the other had some learning to do.

Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). The end of this story is what grabs most people's attention. Both Ananias and Sapphira lose their lives. Obviously, this is not the norm. However, what grips me the most is the work of Satan against believers in the area of giving. He must view generosity as a powerful spiritual discipline to divert.

Here are a few lessons we can learn from a few ordinary people in the Bible who, on random days, decided to be giving:

1. Giving is for everyone regardless of your age.
2. Giving is for everyone regardless of your net worth.
3. Giving is for everyone regardless of how strong your faith is.
4. Giving is in your future regardless of what you may have previously planned.
5. Giving is indeed for everyone at any time.
6. Giving is for everyone even though we all fail at it at times.
7. Everyone can learn to do better at living generously.

8. The more generous we all are the better our world becomes.

Now, I do know giving can be hard at times. It is not always top of mind. I think everyone would agree that giving is good both personally and for the world at large. Just imagine what life would be like if everyone lived just a little bit more generously everyday?

The Generous Life is not the stuff of super heroes or mega saints. It is a great way to live for normal people. Generosity is indeed for everyone, so let's all join the journey of getting a little better at it each day.