



**Educate  
+ Engage**



THE  
GENEROUS  
LIFE:



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Am I Generous

## OVERVIEW

We must examine what the Bible says about generosity and then, from Scripture's perspective, ask ourselves the difficult question: "am I generous?"

### Scripture Passage

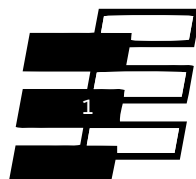
II Corinthians 9:6–15, NLT

"Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. 'For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.' And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. As the Scriptures say, 'They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever.' For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God. So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God. As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God. For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you. Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!

## EDUCATE

God operates by this very simple but profound principle: If we draw near to Him, He will draw near to us (James 4:8). God designed this entire life of discipleship to revolve around faith. Hebrews 11:6 mandates that we must first believe that God is God and that He's a rewarder—not just in finances, but also in health, peace, and opportunity. When we put our faith in God and give generously to His Kingdom, He rewards us and generously gives back to us. This response in turn inspires *more* faith and *more* giving, which God reciprocates with *more* generosity. It's been said for generations, and it's true: you can't outgive God. God *always* reciprocates. If you will, He will. (See II Chronicles 7:14.)

*Discussion Question: How have you seen your faith rewarded when you sought God diligently?*



## Lesson 2

In our opening passage of Scripture, Paul presented attributes of a generous giver: deciding in your heart, not being pressured by someone else, and giving cheerfully. Do those describe you?

*Discussion Question: When someone steps up to the pulpit and announces it's time to give in the offering, how do you respond?*

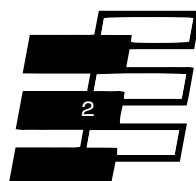
We meet an extravagant worshiper named Mary in John 12. She had a very precious alabaster box full of costly oil she had been saving. Mary didn't allow anyone else to pressure her about what she decided in her heart to give Jesus. She stepped into the room where Jesus was. Without coercion or announcement, Mary broke open the box's seal and generously poured out its contents on Jesus' feet. Others present were offended, outraged. They viewed her worship as outrageous, excessive. Everyone was caught off guard—except Jesus. The precious aroma of the oil filled the room, and so did shock.

Before the fragrance of the ointment even began to dissipate, Judas spoke up. "Why was this fragrant oil not sold . . . and given to the poor?" (John 12:4–6). He sounded generous. He asked what a generous man might ask. After all, we should be compassionate toward the needs of others, such as the poor. But Scripture reveals what Jesus saw and understood all along: Judas couldn't comprehend an extravagant gift like Mary had given—not because he had concern for the poor—but because he was consumed with himself. Judas wasn't generous; Judas was a thief.

Of all twelve disciples, Judas had the money bag. Who would have put a thief in charge of the money? Jesus did, of course! Did Jesus know Judas was a thief? He sure did. Then why would Jesus allow Judas to take care of the money if he was going to steal some of it? Jesus gave Judas the opportunity, not to tempt him, but possibly to test him and give him a chance to overcome his weakness and selfishness.

The likely response would have been to take the money bag away from Judas, but Jesus not only let him keep it, Jesus gave it to him in the first place. Understand that Jesus was not reliant on the money in the bag. He could control when and how much money they all received. He's God. Instead, this was an opportunity for Judas to conquer a weakness rather than allowing it to conquer him. The same goes for your life. It doesn't matter what the issue is; you'll either conquer it with the help of the Lord, or it will conquer you.

*Discussion Question: What are some tips/practices that will help us endure testing?*



Scripture mentions a few examples of generous gifts: David's offering to build the Temple can be estimated from the hundreds of millions to billions of dollars in today's currency. The widow who gave two mites caught Jesus' attention when He called her paltry offering extravagant—not because of the amount but because it was all she had to offer. In that, she gave more than all the other givers combined. Mary's ointment could have been sold for three hundred denarii, which represented a full year's wages. Judas criticized Mary's extravagant worship, but Jesus was impressed by her generous devotion.

*Discussion Question: What's the most generous gift you have ever received?*

Could you willingly give something so precious and not see any earthly reward for it? The Bible never states that the next week Mary was blessed with double the denarii for her efforts, and that the Lord built her a castle. There's no mention of earthly payback, but when Mark penned his version of these events, he captured the promising words of Jesus: "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her" (Mark 14:9).

Mary didn't bring her offering in order to get a reward. We all owe God for what He's already done for us. Even if we never receive another blessing from Him, we can truly say that He's been more than generous to us, for we were dead in trespasses and sins, but He gave us life (Ephesians 2:1, NKJV).

### Closing

The God we serve is generous, no doubt about it. But the question isn't if He is generous; the question is if we are generous. As we found in today's Scripture passage, a farmer who plants small will harvest small, but a farmer who plants generously will reap generously. How we plant, how we give, how we sacrifice, will always affect how Jesus will respond.

## ENGAGE

As we close, take some time to pray and ask God to bring to your attention any areas where you haven't been generous with Him. Ask Him if you are greedy or stingy with the gifts He has given you. Let's ask Him to help us grow in how we serve Him and others with our time, talents, and our treasure.

