

FEBRUARY TOOL

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Build A Theology of Generosity in February

In my January Tool on Engagement, I mentioned several trends that have been historically true in terms of charitable giving. I concluded there are two important indicators of personal generosity. **One is engagement**, the more a person lives the vision of the church the more generous they become. **The second indicator is discipleship**. Active attending participants in local churches drive philanthropy in our country both inside and outside congregational causes. The church receives by far the largest amount of donations, individuals give far more than corporations, and those with religious affiliation are exponentially more generous givers.

This means the more successful discipleship opportunities we provide the more city, national, and global transformation we experience. There is an underlying fact that you may have grasped, but let me name it here. **Believers drive generosity to all types of causes inside and outside the local church**. The opportunity to help hurting people and advance the kingdom are everywhere. The local church does not need to have a dedicated ministry to solve all the problems nor do we need to feel like we are in competition with nonprofit causes. We simply need to disciple our people to follow their passions. In part, this is what is meant by being salt and light.

I hope you and your team spent some time discussing the steps and micro-steps of engagement in January. Now, let me provide another fun topic to explore. First, a question. Then, I will help with the answer.

Do you have a Theology of Generosity? I am not asking if you believe in tithing and giving. My question is far more specific. Can you describe the type of generous disciple you are trying to grow and is there a clear path of growth in your church? If not, do not be discouraged, most do not have clear and confident answers to such questions.

However, it would be so helpful to name four to six spiritual principles you desire to lead with when it comes to generosity. If you do not have these confidently named you may find yourself leading with a more transactional conversation about money, need, and paying the tithe which

creates a culture most pastors are trying to avoid. However, if you can name a few principles it will create a language that is transferable as well as inspiring for your congregation.

Here are some items to consider as you build your new

Generosity Theology. In the months ahead I will help translate them into Offering Talks, Sermon Series, and Leadership Conversations.

1. How would you define **the generosity of God** and the implications of being made in his image?
2. What are the important spiritual disciplines of the generous life, **like prayer, fasting, and hearing God?**
3. Have you fully explored the teaching of the tithe? Being able to articulate its relevance and purpose from both the Old and New Testament is critically important. For instance, did you know Deuteronomy 14:22-27 describes a tenth being used to throw a big party? Additionally, when asked, adults commonly refer to the “tithe” as any donation to the church regardless of how the amount is calculated. The principle of percentage giving is not commonly present in the modern world. Of course, it is popular to reject the tithe as Old Testament law. *(FYI, I think the tithe is a limiting conversation and should not be a driving message of a generous life.)*
4. **Can you describe the attributes of a generous person?** This is often a helpful exercise in thinking beyond money being given. Generous people are giving with every resource they possess.
5. How many Bible stories can you locate that help surface powerful nuances in the giving experience for individuals? For example, The Good Samaritan and Zaccheus.
6. What are the rewards and fruits of a generous life?
7. Will you emphasize **the spiritual gift and spiritual discipline of giving?**

Here are a few sample articulations that may spur your creativity:

1. **Generosity begins with the most giving God. (John 3:16)**
In terms of ministry application, how might this inspire and direct the content of your weekend worship services?
2. **Generosity is the blessed life according to Jesus. (Acts 20:35)**
In terms of ministry application, how different is leading with the blessed life over leading with the law of the tithe?
3. **Giving is a spiritual gift and a spiritual discipline. (Romans 12:8; Proverbs 3:9-10)**
In terms of ministry application, this statement allows you to create a Generosity Ministry Team that is passionate about above and beyond giving opportunities all year long.

4. Generosity is fueled by prayer and fasting. (Is. 58:6-8; Matt. 6)

In terms of ministry application, hearing God's voice regarding generosity has been the most powerful life lesson personally for me.

5. Generosity can be extravagant sometimes. (Acts 4:36-37; Mark 14:3-9)

In terms of ministry application, we need to challenge people to lead with faith and supernatural potential. This is the only zone God knows as the divine being.

Obviously, if we can not name our Generosity Theology it will be pretty difficult to celebrate successfully growing a generous disciple that is expanding the kingdom inside and outside the ministries of the local church. **As you begin the year when giving is lower, turn your attention to engagement and discipleship.** Your people will be encouraged as you partner with them to accomplish their very best faith life. Take the time. Invest in creating a thought-provoking Theology of Generosity. You will be glad you did.