

# GENEROSITY

We've probably all seen on the news the generosity of someone giving a large tip to a waitress or of randomly handing out \$100 bills. We know of stories where perfect strangers' lives were connected by the donation of a kidney. Many are the stories of those who give of their time helping disadvantaged youth or open their home to someone in need. We applaud them. We stand in awe. We might even wish we could do the same. The good news is – we can- maybe not the exact act they do or having the same resources they do, but each of us can move beyond giving into the category of generosity.

The Oxford dictionary defines generosity as, “showing a readiness to give more of something, as money or time, than is strictly necessary or expected.” Proverbs 11:24 states, “One gives freely, and grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.” Both are definitions that invite us to move beyond the idea of sharing and into the deeper commitment of generosity.

I remember hearing once that a person's checkbook/ bank statement is in many ways a faith statement or a moral document. While there are the important categories of keeping up the household or our health, where else do our financial gifts go? How much is spent on ourselves and how much on others? Do we share with our loved ones? With those in need? With those we may never know?

“Our generosity is measured not by what we give but by what we keep.”

Fulton J Sheen

“A lack of generosity refuses to acknowledge that your assets are not really yours, but God's.”

Timothy Keller

Of course, generosity does not only apply to our material possessions. We are called to be generous with our time as well. Yes, it is important to make time for our family and friends, and to renew our spirits. What about beyond that? What hours are spent volunteering, mentoring, giving blood, offering a listening ear, or checking on a neighbor? In many instances, our time is as important, if not more so, than our money.

We are called to be generous with our talents. If God has given us a good voice, use it for singing for others; if courage, speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; if woodworking, create toys for children. Offer free financial counseling to new refugees. Make a meal for a new mom. The list is endless.

All acts of generosity flow from a generous heart. If our heart acknowledges God's goodness, how much more will we want to share those blessings with others? If the life of Christ is the path we follow, how much more will we realize our lives are lived, not for our own sake, but for the sake of others?

*Loving and gracious God, widen my heart to love as you do. Widen my arms to reach out to all you embrace. Widen my life to be as generous as you have been to me.*

“Generosity is the most natural outward expression of our inner attitude of compassion and loving-kindness.”

Dalai Lama XIV