

January 12, 2014

## 2014: The Year of Generosity

*Selected Scripture*

The biggest task I have this year as we approach the subject of generosity, is to de-program our entire way of thinking when it comes to generosity, giving, and stewardship.

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Mark Twain:

*"Generosity is a language that every blind man can see and every deaf man can hear."*

Teaching on generosity in most churches is about as welcome as rat droppings on a wedding cake.

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Generosity is contagious, but so is selfishness. I want to be characterized as someone who gives people *value*, not as one who exudes cheapness. Generosity has at its core an undeniable effect on people who come into contact with it. I want the people who grow under my ministry to be people who give out of relationship rather than out of rules and law.

Generosity is, at its core, a lifestyle; a lifestyle in which we share all that we have, are, and ever will become as a demonstration of God's love and a response to God's grace.

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Gordon MacDonald:

*"God made the first move of generosity. And the second. And the third. The word sacrifice is so difficult for us to accept, at times. Yet that's exactly what we must do when we practice generosity: sacrifice something of value to us for the good of another, because we love them. You see, this is what differentiates generosity and giving. Giving can be done begrudgingly and devoid of love. But true generosity is always initiated by love..."*

*The generous giver is someone whose heart generates love and compassion. It is not a sentimental or romantic love, but a love built on compassion and care, a love that is drawn to the broken and fragmented creatures and conditions of our world. This kind of love values human beings as those created in God's image. The generous giver is someone who in a sense, lays the track for others to find eternal life."*

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In Christian Smith and Michael Emerson's book, *Passing the Plate*, they coin the phrase "discretionary obligation" as a way to understand the typical American Christian's approach to giving. Unfortunately, much of American Christianity tends to believe that we have to preserve our wealth in order to meet our own needs, and that being generous is a matter of convenience. They suggest that although Christians believe that they should give generously to the kingdom, they at the same time feel free to give at their discretion, giving only what they can, when they can, and never feeling burdened by a compulsion to give. If "discretionary obligation" defines our understanding of generosity, we will never experience true abundance in our churches.

*THREE FOCUS AREAS FOR 2014::*

1. *TIME*
2. *TALENTS*
3. *TREASURE*

- We are to be Generous Stewards of our Time (*Ephesians 5:15-17*)

**Five Aspects of God's Will for Our Lives:**

1. Be Saved (I Timothy 2:3-4)
2. Be Spirit Filled (Ephesians 5:17-18)
3. Be Sanctified (I Thessalonians 4:3)
4. Be Submissive (I Peter 2:13-15)
5. Be Willing To Suffer For What Is Right (I Peter 3:17)

If you are saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, submissive, and doing right to the degree that you would even suffer, the next step in God's will is...whatever you want!

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*John MacArthur:*  
*"God has set boundaries to our lives, and our opportunity for service exists only within those boundaries. It is significant that the Bible speaks of such times being shortened, but never of their being lengthened."*

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When it comes "time" to die, we should want to be able to say that we did not leave any unfinished business the Lord had for us to do.

Thomas Watson:

"Eternity to the godly is a day that has no sunset; eternity to the wicked is a night that has no sunrise."