

**OPEN THE CONVERSATION**

Which of these things might you do when you are feeling blue or discouraged?

Go shopping for something you’d like

Get together with friends

Go shopping for a gift for someone else

Do something that takes care of or blesses someone else

Take a nap

How long does the good feeling last after each of these?

Studies show that giving and helping others make you happy, but it can also lower your blood pressure, help you live longer, reduce your stress levels, and combat feelings of depression.

Can you think of a time recently when doing something good for someone else has helped you thrive?

**INTRODUCTION**

**Write each of these statements on a piece of paper or whiteboard.**

Just as you want others to do for you, do the same for them.

You should not do to others what you would not want done to yourself.

**Explain in your own words what each one means. Which one is more intentional? Which one is more self-oriented? Which one is more other-oriented? Which is active and which is passive? Which is more loving?**

***READ Luke 6:30-31***

1. **The Golden Rule is part of Jesus’s teaching about loving our enemies. How do you think He meant it to be followed?**
2. **What does this tell us about sacrificing for others?**

***READ Acts 4:32-35***

1. **What does it mean for a body of believers to be “of one heart and mind”?**
2. **Though living out a generous lifestyle will look different today than in the early church, what can we learn from their example?**

***READ Philippians 2:1-4***

1. **What are some examples of Christians around you putting your interests above their own? How has this impacted you?**
2. **Paul’s emphasis on humility in this passage is strong. How does the humility he describes in these verses set Christians apart from others, then and now?**

**WRAP UP**

**The result of living with radical generosity isn’t just that no one is needy, it’s that the church thrives.**Generosity in serving and giving is an identifying quality of Christians. When we fully entrust everything we have and all we are to the Lord, we are much more free to love others.

How could we live generously this week in these areas?

* Our relationship with Jesus
* Our families
* Among friends

*Ask for any prayer requests, and pray for one another.*

**EXTENDED CUT**

Generosity and sacrificial giving aren’t new ideas or just good things to do. God has been weaving the idea of generosity into the fabric of how He defines right living for millennia. His Old Testament law made sure that the most vulnerable in society were taken care of in many intentional ways, and in the New Testament, Jesus’s teachings promote taking care of and loving those around us. In the book of Acts, we get a front-row look at how the early church attempted to put the teachings of Jesus into action by providing for their community.

The Golden Rule focuses on what we should do; it requires action and intentionality. We should do to others what we’d want done for us. This profound teaching comes nestled among Jesus’s countercultural instruction about loving our enemies. If someone takes our coat, Jesus said to throw in our shirt also (Luke 6:29). If someone asks for something, Jesus taught that we should give it without expecting to get it back or to receive reciprocity (Luke 6:30,34-35). Jesus didn’t just teach generosity; He taught radical generosity that defied human nature. Jesus has been the most radically generous Person, giving His life for us even though we don’t deserve it (Romans 5:8). We are called to be similarly generous.

Radical generosity and providing for others in our community isn’t exclusively a New Testament idea. God’s law in the Old Testament also made many provisions for the vulnerable in society: women, widows, foreigners, the poor and needy, servants, innocents. Jesus’s New Testament teaching reiterated the heart behind those foundational laws, giving us simple guidelines to live by. We honor the Lord and our communities look more like His Kingdom when we care for people in Jesus’ name.

*Does living in unity mean we will always agree and be aligned on everything?* No, it doesn’t, but it does mean we agree on the most important things. In the case of the Acts 4 example, the church agreed that people were more important than things. When we’re fully bought into the Golden Rule and Jesus’s teachings, that’s where we stand too.

Look at their radical generosity. They weren’t selfish with their possessions; they shared and gave as others had needs; and “there was not a needy person among them” (v. 34). What an astounding reality! Remember that this body of believers likely included many who had traveled to Jerusalem from far away and converted after hearing Peter’s Pentecost sermon. There were likely some big tangible needs among them, including places to live and sleep and everyday necessities. They were dedicated to taking care of one another. We should note also that this wasn’t done perfectly (Acts 5). We won’t be perfectly generous either, but when we live by the standards Jesus taught, we will take radical generosity seriously.

**When we hold to a posture of radical generosity, we maintain that every good thing we have is a gift from God.**

We live in a society that is all about more. To quote John Mark Comer in his book The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry, we live in “a society built around the twin gods of accumulation and accomplishment.” But at what point do we realize living this way is getting in the way of our biblical call to radical generosity? At what point do we put our foot down and say enough is enough? We would likely all say we think people are more important than things, but do our lifestyles reflect that belief? Today, let’s recognize those twin gods for what they are: idols standing in the way of right living the way God intended and designed. When we recognize this, we are prompted to consider what kind of sacrifices we’re making today for the sake of others.