



OCTOBER 17, 2021

Generosity Campaign ~ Week 3

WE CAN'T AFFORD THAT

by Chris Hoover

When teaching generosity to our kids, an opposite lesson happened that surprised us. Here's our story.

From the beginning, Christine and I were dedicated to teaching our children about generosity and the amazing abundance of our God. We committed to tithe 10% and looked forward to the day we could give more.

For most of the years of our marriage, we had one income. Being young and living on a minister's salary, there were seasons when resources were thin. We created budgets and used our Dave Ramsey cash envelopes with passion and diligence. We would truly celebrate the envelopes that had extra cash at the end of the month, and we would have intentional discussions about the places we could pull money when resources ran short. Overall, we were pretty proud of our efforts, but something else was happening that we didn't intend.

Christine and I didn't realize that much of our conversations were centered around money, and many times these conversations were on what we could not afford. One evening, while eating out, one of the kids made a request for something on the menu. Before we could answer, another child answered, "We can't afford that; we don't have enough money." For me, I remember this answer hanging in the air for a moment, "We don't have enough..." In our efforts to teach our children to be generous, we accidentally taught them that God was not being generous to us. The experience for our children was a spirit of scarcity. We had somehow demonstrated that our giving was more out of obedience rather than out of the joy of our abundance.

It did not take us long to begin to teach some creative ways about being generous. We created a cash envelope called 'Family Mission Money.' Each month we would ask the kids to help us decide ways we could bless others. Sometimes we would buy groceries for another family or give to a missions organization. During the holidays, we created a "12 days of giving" and had several adventures like baking cookies for neighbors or giving away quarters at our local ER waiting room so people could purchase items in the vending machines.

Most importantly, we began to make changes about our conversations:

- We spoke more often of how our giving to others was out of the overflow of what God had given us.
- We celebrated the resources we had! We spoke more openly about how much God has blessed us with our home, food, and money.
- We changed our language from phrases like "we can't afford that" to "we are choosing not to purchase this so that we can enjoy Zoe's birthday party on Saturday."
- We purchased a little more family fun items and enjoyed the laughter and memories they brought.

We believe that those shared memories made us even more joyful in our giving. We could give good things to others because we experienced the good things God has given us. Hopefully, our experience can help your family in the lessons of teaching limits to our family while still living in the unlimited and bountiful resources of our joyful God.

"...those shared memories made us even more joyful in our giving. We could give good things to others because we experienced the good things God has given us."

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LET KIDS BE GENEROUS

by Jenny Woodard

Has your child ever seen a homeless person on the street and said with enthusiasm, “How can we help them?” Or maybe they’ve heard about a child in need and asked to start a lemonade stand to raise money. Maybe their friend’s cat just died and their tender heart wants to give them a new one. All three of these examples are from my own children over the past many years, and I’ve heard so many parents share similar stories like these - especially that lemonade stand!

Children are very loving and compassionate people. They are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) so these characteristics are present and active in them. Their hearts are stirred when they see others in need and they are moved with compassion, just like Jesus (Matthew 9:36), to move toward them and act on their behalf. To give. To help. However they can.

But, if I’m honest, I’ve said “No” to my kids’ requests to be generous more than I’ve said “Yes!” Why is that?! We desire for our children to be generous people. We want them to serve others and give of themselves, to be compassionate and care for the needs of others. Why, as parents, do we discourage their young generous hearts? It’s not our intention, but it happens.

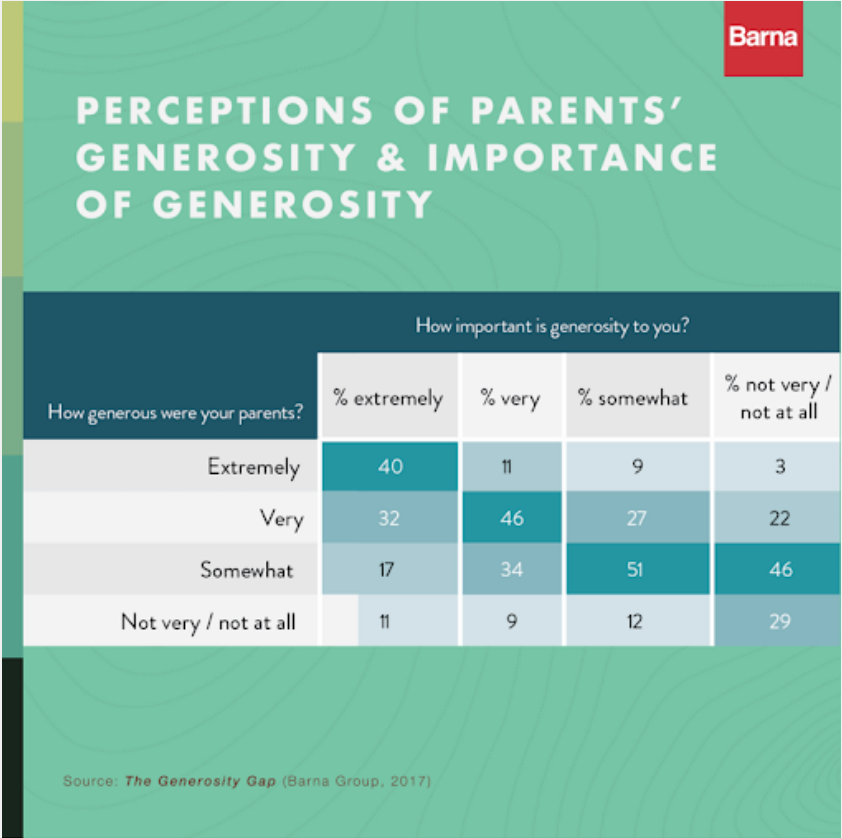
I’m sure there are many different reasons, but here are 3 that come to mind. One, we have this belief that giving is harder than it really is, so we say “no” to their idea in a roundabout way. Two, we come up with so many reasons why NOT to help/give instead of the reasons TO give. And three, this last one hurts... slowing down to help our child be generous is an inconvenience to the plans we have already set in motion

for our day. We tend to respond to their being “moved with compassion” as an interruption instead of an opportunity to see God move through them.

Ouch. That’s not easy to write or hear but it’s good to think about the reasons why we choose not to be generous so that we can move forward differently. Today can be the day that you decide, for yourself and as a family, to be generous with your time, resources, and more. Have a conversation about it and talk about being a “Yes!” family. When God’s Holy Spirit prompts you or your child to give financially, to serve those in need, or be hospitable with your lives, say “YES!” and ask God to show you the next steps. God will provide what you need as you follow His lead. He will show you what to do, and He will bless you as you step out in faith.

“Christians whose parents were generous during their childhood are more likely to highly value generosity as adults.” (The Generosity Gap, Barna Group, 2017) We all want our kids to value generosity when they are older. Modeling is key to anyone learning how to do something. We model for our kids how to be kind and respectful, how to read God’s Word, how to clean up after ourselves, and so much more as they grow into adulthood. Generosity is no different.

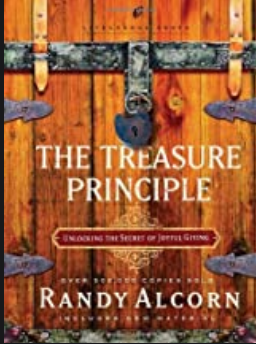
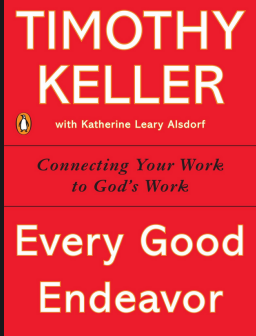
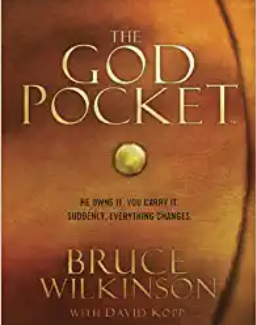
So, the challenge for us is two-fold. Live generously ourselves so that it is modeled for our children AND encourage generosity when it surfaces in our child’s heart. Cheer them on and work together as a team to make it happen. It won’t be a wasted investment. It will grow them to be generous followers of Jesus Christ all the days of their lives.



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- *The Generosity Gap*, Barna Group, 2017

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