

DAY ONE

The Miracle of a
Generous Heart
Daily Devotionals

Prepared by: Jenny Woodard
for October 4, 2021

A GENEROUS GOD

**Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights,
with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. - James 1:17**

We have a generous God.

Do you believe that? Like, really believe it?

Maybe your circumstances today make it hard for you to believe that your Heavenly Father gives good and perfect gifts. Maybe your circumstances make it easy to not even have to think about it much. It's no secret that we battle our sinful nature while on this earth, and because of that, we sometimes let our circumstances affect our thoughts about God. Who He is and His character. As new creations in Christ, it is vital that we align what we think about God with what scripture tells us. This needs to be a daily practice in our lives. So let's do that now. Read through a few of these verses about our generous, gift giving God.

- James 1:5
- James 1:17
- 1 Timothy 6:17-18
- Romans 6:23
- Ephesians 2:8-9
- Matthew 7:11

Wherever you are today, whether you're facing plenty or hunger, abundance or need, trust that your Heavenly Father is a good God who gives generously to all, every good and perfect gift. As you trust, give thanks.

When we take the time to give thanks for the good gifts God gives, there's an open door for the Holy Spirit to turn our hearts toward ultimately giving thanks for God Himself. Our hearts turn from the gifts to the Giver. And let me just say, there's nothing better than the Giver himself. Setting our minds on the Giver of all good and perfect gifts will grow His likeness in us, transforming us to be generous just as He is generous.

Use a few of these prompts to continue the conversation about generosity with your Heavenly Father.

- Ask God to search your heart and shine a light on any place that might be doubting His good and generous nature.
- Thank God for His generosity towards you. Be specific. Nothing is too small to give thanks for.
- Ask Him to show you how to walk in His likeness today, being generous to someone you encounter along the way.

DAY TWO

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Prepared by: Katie Moyer
for October 5, 2021

GENEROSITY AS A BYPRODUCT

“We love because He first loved us.” - 1 John 4:19

What do you think of when you think of someone described as generous? I often default to the idea of someone freely making a large financial contribution to a person or organization in need. I can often forget that generosity can also be an outpouring of our time or other resources. We don't have to be financially wealthy to be generous. We can be generous with our time. We can be generous in ways we show up and make spiritual deposits in others.

I personally didn't grow up in a Christian home or the church. As Christ began to transform my life, He used servants in the church who generously gave of themselves to invest in and walk alongside me. As I grow in the understanding of what He has done for me, I can't help but want the same for others. 1 John 4 reminds us that we love and can give generously because Christ first loved us. I believe generosity is a byproduct of the love we've received. I can't expect others to believe and grow in the same way if I'm not willing to show up and make the investment. While God can absolutely do His thing, how beautiful that He extends an invitation to us to be part of building His Kingdom. As the body becomes equipped we must continue to look up and out toward our community and world. How might God be calling you to steward your time and resources within our church for the Kingdom? How might God be calling you to look outward toward our world and community to be a light with your generosity?

DAY THREE

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Prepared by: Donnie Calvin
for October 6, 2021

INVESTING WISELY

Read Matthew 9:19-24

It is interesting that, even as I sat down to write this devotional, I glanced over at the Dow Jones market report and noticed that stocks were up 140 points today. “Good news,” I thought, reflecting on the market’s loss of 614 points just one day earlier. Then, I read Jesus’ words in the greatest message ever preached:

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (verses 19-21)

Then, I stopped, bowed my head, and asked the Father to forgive me for being too focused on the temporal investments of this world. Re-read these verses. Is Jesus categorically telling us not to store up treasures? Absolutely not! He is commanding us to store up our treasures in the right place. Jesus, the greatest and wisest investment counselor of all time, wants us to see everything in light of the kingdom of God, much like John Wesley, who said, “I value all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity.”

Let us be challenged to make a practice of godly generosity. Look for opportunities to help those in need, support causes that bring glory to the Father, and be a cheerful giver at all times, thanking God daily for His manifold blessings.

DAY FOUR

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Prepared by: BJ McMichael
for October 7, 2021

IN GOD WE TRUST?

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." Proverbs 3:5-6

Take a minute and pull out a dollar bill and look on the back. Since 1957 this inscription, "In God We Trust," has appeared on all U.S. paper currency. Now, forget about the political implication, and let's consider the personal/spiritual reality. Do we REALLY TRUST God when it comes to our finances?

The word translated "trust" in Proverbs 3:5 means, "to lie helpless, facedown." It pictures a servant waiting for the master's command in readiness to obey, or a defeated soldier yielding himself to a conquering general. The inspired writer then follows it up by saying, "...with all your heart." When we talk about our heart, it has very little to do with the organ that pumps blood throughout our body. It refers to one's emotions or inner self which can oftentimes be swayed by what is temporary especially when we are depending on ourselves.

You see, our most important relationships require complete trust. However, half trust in God and half trust in yourself, someone else and/or something else means we fail to trust the Lord "with ALL our heart." This causes us to miss God's best for us because we think we know what is best for ourselves.

That's why we have to recognize the importance of verse 6. The Hebrew word for straight denotes travel made safe by leveling or plowing the road. That means God won't choose the right path for you. God won't even pick you up and put you on the right path. What this verse asserts is that God will make the best path obvious and unmistakable.

God has proven over and over again that He is worthy of our complete trust. He has made that path obvious and unmistakable by giving us his Son, Jesus. And because of that, we use our mouths to proclaim thankfulness to our God who provides. However, when it comes to making "In God We Trust" a reality with our finances, I wonder if there is something keeping us from putting our money where our mouth is?

DAY FIVE

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Prepared by: Katy Giroux
for October 8, 2021

"SHARE!"

"Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility consider one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." Philippians 2:1-4 NASB20

Working with one to two year olds, I often find myself encouraging them to share the toys or not take the toy from someone else who was playing with it.

Our fallen nature is so easily seen in young children. We want what we have as well as what someone else has. Selfishness, self-centeredness, is a mark of our sin nature. Adam and Eve were tempted to "be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:5) We want that which is rightfully God's. So Scripture repeatedly warns us against covetousness, greed, and pride.

But when we surrender to Jesus Christ, acknowledging Him as Lord and our Savior, we are made a new creature. What sin has broken begins to heal, and we begin to be more like Him. Paul reminds us: We have found cheering encouragement in Christ, gentle comfort in agape-love. We received the working partnership of the Spirit. From these well up the deep affection and compassion for others. As we grow in Christ we lose selfishness and empty pride and make the needs of others a higher priority.

This generosity is not forced or grudging – for that is no true generosity. A two year old made to give a toy back is learning they have to share, but is not yet learning to be generous. As we grow to be like Christ, we become by nature loving and, therefore, generous. If we are not yet trusting God with our time, our skills, our money, our possessions, we are not truly trusting Him. We still think of things as "Mine!", forgetting that each of them is a gift from God.

To be generous in truth, we must first be in the right relationship with God, giving ourselves wholly to Him. As we grow in that relationship with Him, we begin to use what He has given us to serve others, to meet their needs. In our small groups, in church ministries, in worship; we give our time, skills, and money. This naturally grows to become loving generosity to others in our personal relationships, our community, and the world at large. By the miracle of Salvation, we become the conduit of God's abundantly overwhelming provision of love and grace.

Instead of saying "Mine!" we naturally say "God's", and no one has to remind us: "Share!"

DAY SIX

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Prepared by: Laura Shotwell
for October 9, 2021

MORE

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:14-16

Being raised in a single-income home shaped my view of money early in life. My mom worked hard to provide us with what we needed, but there wasn't extra cash for the things that we just wanted. Vacation meant loading up with aunts, uncles and cousins in a van and driving 8 hours to Mexico to visit your great grandparents. Going on school trips meant organizing bake sales on our own time to pay for costumes and food and hotel stays. Being able to see meant waiting for a cousin to get new glasses so that I could have her old pair.

Fast forward to today, and our kids have been blessed to experience a different lifestyle than their parents. They have their needs met, and a lot of times, their wants met, too. And as much as that's been a priority for me as an adult, as a parent, there is a small voice that says, “More.”

More what? If I'm being completely honest, it's a question I've pushed against and fought against for a while. Deep down I've known that “more” would also mean less. So I ignored the feeling, brushed the question aside, and gave more in ways that I was comfortable - sponsoring kids, donating to charities, helping to pay for the burial of a grandparent. I could do “more” with money, which is what I always wanted to be able to do.

“More” finally got the best of me earlier this year. After talking to my husband Trent, to my small group, and to my nearest and dearest friends, I finally came out and asked God, point blank, “Okay, more what?” I promise the conversation was longer than that, but as I slept that night, I got my answer.

In a nutshell, God said I was giving the wrong thing. I wanted so badly to feel financially safe, that I've missed being generous in a completely different way. One of my favorite things to do is to teach. I teach my kids, I teach on Sunday mornings, I teach at work, but I'm not PAID to be a teacher. It's not my job. Yet. So, in an act of obedience and complete trust, and knowing that money is not what I was destined to be generous with, I've started down a path of “more.”

Prompt: Make some time to reflect on your natural God-given gifts. Ask Him directly if you need to! How can you share that part of yourself with others?