



GIVING CHAMPION'S *equipping guide*



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Introduction: you are a **GIVING CHAMPION**

The Gift of Giving

God calls everyone to give generously, but for you, blessed with the gift of giving, your call may also include encouraging others in their own giving journey. Your call is unique; you champion the cause of generosity. You are a Giving Champion.

This Equipping Guide is designed to assist you and other Giving Champions on the road ahead; a road of blessings, opportunities, and new experiences. Divided into an introduction, four sections, and a resource list, this guide offers you insights into being a Giving Champion; core messages of generosity; thoughts on sharing those messages; principles for encouraging others; resources; and an excerpt from Giving Champion Randy Alcorn's book, *Money, Possessions, and Eternity*.

Throughout the guide, you will find that the back story is always one of the heart—your heart and the heart of others. But perhaps the best way to show this is through the personal story of Travis and Rebecca ...

Travis is a successful businessperson and the head elder at his church. He and his wife Rebecca have walked with the Lord for twenty years or more. Consistently they tithed, and sometimes gave beyond their tithe. But when they attended a Generous Giving Conference, they experienced a group of people, unlike any they had met before—a group of people who were generous and real. The experience caused them to reflect on how they had been living their lives.

Before attending the conference, Travis had been considering a job offer at a Christian ministry. The new job would pay him only a third of what he was currently earning. After the conference, still uncertain of which career path to follow, Travis and Rebecca made the decision that Travis would stay in his current job for at least a year. But in order to remove the 'noise' that was making it so difficult to discern which job to choose, they committed to fixing their standard of living at what the ministry job would have paid, giving away the rest of their earnings, thereby increasing their giving fourfold.

This incredibly liberating decision created the margin in their life to grow spiritually and helped them recognize their calling to stay in business and to encourage others to experience what they have themselves experienced. Their perspective on and their practice of giving dramatically changed, and led to life-changing spiritual growth. Travis explained it in this way, "In the last 18 months, I've grown more in my relationship with Christ than in the previous 20 years combined."

Generous Giving has a Heart for Giving Champions

Jesus made an observation that we will talk about throughout this guide. In Matthew 6:21 and again in Luke 12:34, we are told that Jesus said, *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* It is not surprising how much Travis grew because of the decisions he and Rebecca made following that Generous Giving Conference. His heart came into alignment with his treasure. And while it’s exciting that Travis and Rebecca are now giving away four to five times as much money as they were before, what has happened to their hearts is the most exciting part of all.

Generous Giving exists to serve Givers and Giving Champions. We care about helping you fulfill your calling and believe that you will experience greater meaning and purpose in your life when you are living your calling and sharing your gifts. Just as what happened in Travis’ and Rebecca’s hearts was more significant than the acts of generosity it produced, what happens in your heart is more important than what you do as a Giving Champion. At Generous Giving, we are humbly and full-heartedly committed to serving your needs; we care about you as a person and about finding ways to assist you on your journey of generosity.

Lastly, as an organization, there is one more reason we care about Giving Champions: **you are a living resource**. As you follow your own generous journey, your life and your actions will be a powerful inspiration to others, effecting change, and advancing a movement of generosity that can sweep across our nation and into hearts everywhere.



SECTION 1 **LIVING THE LIFE OF A GIVING CHAMPION**

The biblical directive to “follow me” has a special meaning for Giving Champions. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul encourages the believers in Corinth to, *“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”*

While all Christians strive to emulate the life of Jesus, people also look to one another, seeking earthly models among Christians who are clearly experiencing joy and intimacy with God. As a Giving Champion, traveling your own path of generosity, you influence others, leading by example.

No one ever arrives or completes the giving journey this side of heaven. We cannot become too loving or too generous. But as the Holy Spirit continues to shape each of us into the image of Christ, we can exemplify the fruit of generosity in a way that encourages others to take the next step in their journey.

Embarking on a Giving Journey

The joy you experience from giving with increasing generosity logically ignites your desire to encourage others to embark upon a giving journey of their own. Giving Champions have the opportunity and the calling to spread the message of generosity by encouraging others to be increasingly generous.

... But how do you go about doing this?

SECTION 1

First, be on your own journey.

Intrinsically, we know that, “*do what I say, not what I do*” never works. We influence others with our words only when our words are consistent with our actions.

But no one can lead a wholly consistent life. You cannot be a perfect example, for if perfection is the standard, then all of us fail. Instead, Paul’s instructions serve to remind us that our personal journey is of utmost importance in this ministry of encouraging others to experience the joy of giving.

To help you on your journey.

The Giving Journey principles that appear on the next page represent a process collaboratively developed by Generous Giving and the National Christian Foundation. The principles offer guidance for those seeking to deepen their relationship with God and live a life of greater generosity. Many people have found the tools of the Giving Journey helpful in thinking about how one matures in his or her perspective and practice of generous living.

The premise of the Giving Journey is that growing in generosity is a progressive and developmental process. One begins as an EMERGING GIVER, grows to a MATURING GIVER, and develops further to become a GENEROUS GIVER.

... And some Generous Givers are called to be **GIVING CHAMPIONS**.

EMERGING GIVER	MATURING GIVER	GENEROUS GIVER
<p>Reasons for Giving (Why?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I give primarily because of relationships, tax savings, public recognition, or a feeling of obligation. • My primary desire is to pass on assets to children and family. • I follow the advice of trusted advisors – not necessarily spiritual advisors. • I may give in response to something that has personally impacted me. • I may still be seek greatness in the eyes of man. • I am not sure I understand Biblical stewardship. 	<p>Reasons for Giving (Why?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have a growing desire to give as I further understand God’s plan. • I wrestle with a desire to pass on wealth to children or give to the Kingdom. • I am open to listening to trusted advisors based on spiritual truth. • I understand that everything belongs to God and I am simply a steward of His assets. • I am beginning to view giving as an investment in others. 	<p>Reasons for Giving (Why?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My giving is an outward material expression of my spiritual commitment, as God continues to mold my heart to willing obedience. • I see assets as a sacred trust. I see that family estate decisions are to be based on an intentional transfer of spiritual character and financial capital. • I actively seek spiritual guidance for all giving matters. • I experience the blessing of generosity and of being a “cheerful giver”. • I am willing to give to people and/or organizations independent of tax benefits. • I sometimes give anonymously.
<p>Practice of Giving (How?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have more of a “here & now” mentality in my giving. • I may provide a scheduled gift to church or charity. • I may give 10% of my income. 	<p>Practice of Giving (How?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing short term giving strategies and goals is becoming more important. • I have a deepening understanding of stewardship and ownership. • I give a minimum of 10% and desire to give progressively more. 	<p>Practice of Giving (How?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I use systematic planning to accomplish the responsibilities of stewardship. • I give generously (beyond conventional norms) out of both income and assets to multiple ministries/people. • I may give sacrificially.
<p>Direction of Giving (Where?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My giving is not based on planning or intentional strategies. • I tend to give to those who ask. 	<p>Direction of Giving (Where?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am discovering more causes where I find joy in giving. 	<p>Direction of Giving (Where?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I give intentionally and aggressively to causes God has given me a passion for.
<p>Things to possibly read or do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Randy Alcorn - <i>The Treasure Principle</i> • Andy Stanley - <i>Fields of Gold</i> • Leo Tolstoy - <i>How Much Land Does a Man Need?</i> • Listen to personal testimonies of Generous Givers • Attend a Generous Giving Conference 	<p>Things to possibly read or do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wes Wilmer - <i>God and Your Stuff</i> • John Piper - <i>Desiring God (Chapter 7)</i> • Richard Foster - <i>Celebration of Discipline (Chapter 6)</i> • Ralph Doudera - <i>Wealth Conundrum</i> • Go on a mission trip • Listen to personal testimonies of Generous Givers • Attend a Generous Giving Conference • Participate in a Crown Special Edition Study 	<p>Things to possibly read or do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ron Blue - <i>Splitting Heirs</i> • John Piper - <i>Don’t Waste Your Life</i> • Richard Foster - <i>The Freedom of Simplicity</i> • Attend The Gathering Conference • Attend a Generous Giving Conference • Attend a Journey of Generosity Experience • Teach children or grandchildren Crown for Teens • Go on a family mission trip
<p>Questions for reflection:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who has had a spiritual impact in my life? 2. What cause / event has been meaningful in my life? 3. What giving opportunity has brought me the most joy? 4. What, if any, is my annual giving goal? 5. Why have I been given more than I need? 	<p>Questions for reflection:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is an appropriate lifestyle? 2. How much is enough? 3. What, if any, is my lifetime giving goal? 4. If time and money were no object, what would I do with my life? 5. Who is the next steward and are they prepared? 	<p>Questions for reflection:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do I steward all that God has entrusted to me? 2. What are the dangers and opportunities of wealth from a spiritual perspective? 3. How could my family be more involved in giving? 4. What does my eternal investment portfolio look like? 5. What are the benefits of simplicity?

A **Giving Champion** is an individual who is experiencing the joy of giving increasingly generously and is motivated to encourage others in their generosity journey. A Giving Champion's spheres of influence include family, friends, business, church, community, and world. This desire to encourage others is often a calling.

GIVING CHAMPION

- I attempt to pursue God's plan in every aspect of my finances.
- I encourage others to begin the journey of generosity.
- I give to facilitate generosity in others.
- I am motivated by transformation in others.
- I am a careful Steward of all God has entrusted to me: time, talent, treasure, truth and relationships.
- I intentionally seek to influence family, friends, church, and community with living ever more generously.
- I am comfortable around those with wealth.
- I can challenge without being judgmental.
- I find joy in seeing life-change in others.
- I consider how I can utilize my influence and affluence for God's kingdom.
- I seek the approval of God not man.
- I see this as a further expression of my gift of giving.
- I experience a sense of purpose and calling while encouraging others in their generosity.

Things to possibly do:

- Attend The Gathering Conference
- Bring others to a Generous Giving Conference
- Host a Journey of Generosity Experience
- Go on a family mission trip
- Spend time investing in others - mentoring
- Lead Crown Special Edition Study
- Serve on the Board of a Local Christian Foundation

Questions for reflection:

1. Who would benefit from these experiences?
2. Who am I intentionally mentoring?
3. How do I discern my calling?
4. What might my church look like if it was generous?
5. Am I equipped to share my giving story?

Encouraging others on their journey.

Giving Champions touch and influence the lives of others in six distinctive spheres: FAMILY, FRIENDS, BUSINESS, CHURCH, COMMUNITY, and WORLD.

You may feel led to influence each of these areas, or you may find that one or two are of particular concern to you. Giving Champions intentionally and proactively seek to spread the message of generosity where God is leading them.

These examples show ways that some Giving Champions are drawn to spread the message and influence others in each of the six spheres of influence:

A **family** intentionally seeks to pass the value of generosity on to the next generation by traveling internationally to see and experience the vastness of God's kingdom.

A couple gathers a group of their **friends** for a Journey of Generosity (JOG) Experience to explore how to more fully integrate generosity in their own lives and the lives of their friends.

A **business** owner gives a percentage of company profits to further God's kingdom and involves many employees while hoping to inspire greater generosity amongst all his staff.

A **church** member, responding to the desire to see others move toward financial freedom and growing generosity, uses his or her influence to initiate or grow Crown Financial Ministries in the church.

A giver has a passion to see the entire **community** become increasingly generous. He uses his influence, affluence, leadership skills, and time to lead a coordinated strategy of Crown, Generous Giving, National Christian Foundation, Kingdom Advisors, and others in order to influence all segments of society within a community.

A giver has a particular passion for a certain country of the **world** and she thinks creatively about how to bring the message of biblical generosity there.

SECTION 1

You are a Catalyst

All Christians are accountable for trying to effect change in the lives of others, but no one is responsible for the depth, progression, or timing of another person's personal growth. Instead, God uses you, the Giving Champion, as a powerful catalyst to kindle that growth. Seeking opportunities to be the catalyst and to influence others to take the next step in their journey of generosity is the primary objective of a Giving Champion.

When you encourage people along the Giving Journey, as they grow in generosity, they are also deepening their walk with Jesus—and this is your ultimate goal.

A Spiritual Community of Giving Champions

Your special calling will at times be exhilarating and at times challenging; being involved in the lives of others brings both great excitement and great disillusionment. Generous Giving works to create circles of supportive community where you and other Giving Champions can celebrate successes and find encouragement amidst the unavoidable and inevitable difficulties.

Very simply said, a spiritual battle rages, putting forth consistent opposition to the message of generosity. The enemy of our souls does not want us to experience freedom from what the world offers. This seems to be what Jesus meant when He said, "... *You cannot serve both God and Money*" Matthew 6:24.

In western culture, the challenge is intense and complex. One could argue that in North America today, **the single greatest detriment to spiritual vitality may be the allure of materialism in all its various forms**. You will encounter it in yourself, in those you seek to influence, and in all of us who live in a society of such abundance that it is difficult to recognize the line between need and greed.

Living a generous lifestyle often means living counter-culturally. Taking this leap can leave you feeling isolated. For Generous Givers and Giving Champions, turning to the community of those who share your value system and goals will be a wonderful and renewing resource from which you can draw power, comfort, and motivation. As the writer of Hebrews acknowledged in his counsel:

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Hebrews 10:24-25

notes



SECTION 2 THE MESSAGE OF GENEROSITY

Experience the Joy

Above all else, the message of generosity is a message of joy. While the act of being generous brings great happiness, you experience the deepest joys of generosity through the realization of God's calling for your life.

Christians who have the spiritual gift of giving live in God's calling when they practice generosity with great liberality. For Giving Champions, sharing the message of generosity is also a part of the calling. Without the passion of Giving Champions, many people would never know the stories of Christians who are experiencing boundless joy by living a wholly and radically generous life.

Much about spreading the message of generosity lies with Giving Champions such as yourself, who willingly, boldly, and with conviction, step into the role and champion the message. Although it is a powerful and life-transforming message, the fundamental truths of generosity are broad-spectrum; they apply as meaningfully to the life of a new giver as they do for you, the Giving Champion.

And the first of the six principles is that of joy ...

SECTION 2

1. GIVING BRINGS JOY

“...remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35).

“In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life” (1 Timothy 6:19).

Your life becomes joyful, fulfilling, and purposeful as you live in God’s calling. Joy is experienced in the act of giving, but even more so in the alignment of your heart with God’s will.

As generosity comes into your heart, it blesses you in ways you know in the moment, in ways you recognize over a lifetime, and in ways that are revealed to you only in eternity. Generosity enables you to live in the joy of a “life that is truly life.”

2. GIVING IS A HEART ISSUE

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21).

Clearly, giving releases resources. And while the resources liberated through acts of generosity are a blessing, they are literally a ‘by-product’ of the transformational power of generosity within the giver’s heart. The true message of giving is the liberation of hearts.

As we move closer to God, it becomes easier to see that the things in which we invest our time, money, and energy are the things that matter to us most. They are often things that ensnare us and stand in the way of liberation from materialism. Remarkably, in much the same way as your treasure reveals your heart, the purposeful reallocation of your ‘treasure’ can be an effective way to guide your heart away from earthly values and toward more meaningful treasure.

As Randy Alcorn explains in *The Treasure Principle*, “My heart always goes where I put God’s money.” According to Alcorn, giving is not only an indication of where your heart is, but it is also a means of moving your heart towards God. Generosity is a never-ending journey expanding your heart to hold all the blessings of a closer walk with God.

“For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only son ...” (John 3:16).

God is the ultimate model for giving; the most generous of all givers. God’s grace has blessed us with goods, skills, and opportunities to generate what we need in our lives and a rich and wonderful world in which to live out His calling. But at a level of giving beyond anything we can fully comprehend, God gave His Son, whose life bought our salvation.

3. GOD GAVE FIRST

In 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, Paul presents a model that explains the origin and result of our generosity. “*You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and ... your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God*” (v.11). God’s grace and blessing is given so that we can be generous. As we are generous, we both supply the needs of others and show thanks to God (v.12), and others praise God because of our generosity (v.13).

God’s giving to us is like the filling of a cup, and our giving to others reveals the cup running over. In the context of our own blessing and gratefulness, we learn to be generous givers.

We didn’t earn it; we never will. God’s gift was the highest demonstration of unconditional generosity: “*But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8).

SECTION 2

4. SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD

“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33).

In Matthew 6:24 Jesus reminds us, *“... you cannot serve both God and Money”*. He adds in verse 25, *“Therefore, do not worry about your life”*. Jesus is assuring you that you do not have to worry about your earthly life because God has promised always to take care of you. And with earthly matters in God’s control, you are free to pursue more spiritual matters, seeking first and above all else, God’s kingdom and His righteousness through spiritual intimacy.

Intimacy with Christ offers the highest levels of satisfaction both right now and for eternity, but achieving it confronts us with the challenge to surrender our lives to Christ’s Lordship. For many of us, the primary competitor for Lordship in our lives is money. We might even reframe it as security rather than materialism as we hold on to our fears and try to rationalize ways we may have managed money in the past.

But the space that we let money, wealth, materialism, and all its pursuits occupy in our lives is valuable spiritual real estate we could and should be surrendering to God. Be willing to ask and answer the question of how your life is different when Jesus is Lord than when money is lord.

“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it” (Psalm 24:1).

5. GOD OWNS IT ALL

A money manager administers assets for the benefit of the owner, but is always aware that the funds he or she handles are not his own. With all the attention you place on managing your money, how does your perspective change when you come to understand that it is not your money, your wealth, your possessions, or your assets, but instead, **it all belongs to God?**

We are God’s money managers. The wealth of the earth and all its resources are entrusted to us, with the privilege to be stewards of its wise use. Our money is never ours to spend as we choose; our money is God’s to spend as He directs.

6. HEAVEN,
NOT EARTH,
IS MY HOME

When you are able to reach this shift in perspective, you will find that your journey of generosity becomes both easier and more exciting. You will be less conflicted about sharing ‘your’ funds and ‘your’ possessions, because you will recognize that you have been blessed with the opportunity to share the funds and possessions that have always been God’s all along.

“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,”
(Philippians 3:20).

Life is short. Eternity is long. And my home is in heaven, where I will spend eternity. This simple yet radical thinking begs an important question: *Why should I invest so much time, energy, and resources in what is short? Why should I focus on my (or even my children’s) very temporary life here on earth, when heaven is real and coming and calling?*

Spending money on earth is not wrong, but it may not be the best option, and it is clearly not the only option. It isn’t wrong for us to spend money on things that are temporary, however, if we have an eternal perspective and understand that heaven, not earth, is our real home, then we know that we can store up treasures in heaven where we (and those reached with the gospel) can experience them for eternity.

A life of generosity—for all who know Christ—means the opportunity to draw closer to God, now, and in eternity. It means joy, a fulfilled heart, and the potential to store up treasures in heaven. Once you take hold of it, once you begin to feel the change generosity brings into your life, it is logical that you also will feel a strong calling to share this message with others.

God invites each of us to experience His joy through the act of giving ... not giving because we have to, but giving because we get to!



SECTION 3 **SHARING THE MESSAGE** *TELL STORIES AND ASK QUESTIONS*

Telling stories is one of the most engaging and effective ways to spread the message of generosity and invite people to consider a different way of life. In almost any situation you might encounter as you champion the cause of generosity, the timeless simplicity of a personal story conveyed from believer to believer remains one of the best ways of sharing.

Telling your own story creates communication that is interactive, genuine, and personalized. Likewise, telling the stories of other Generous Givers is a way to increase the number of meaningful experiences that you are able to share. And hand-in-hand with the power of storytelling comes the tool of asking engaging questions. The value of each of these approaches—telling your own story; telling the stories of others; and asking good questions—is that they allow you to be empathetic and non-judgmental. Perhaps that is why Jesus so frequently used parables as a way to communicate; when the message becomes a story, people listen with their hearts.

The Power of Story

“Why Tell Stories?”

The disciples came up and asked, “Why do you tell stories?” He replied, “You’ve been given insight into God’s kingdom. You know how it works. Not everybody has this gift, this insight; it hasn’t been given to them. Whenever someone has a ready heart for this, the insights and understandings flow freely. But if there is no readiness, any trace of receptivity soon disappears. That’s why I tell stories: to create readiness, to nudge the people toward receptive insight.”

Matthew 13:10-13, The Message

SECTION 3

Stories inspire. Because they invite the listener to see life through the perspective of another person's experiences, they illustrate what could be. Moreover, stories are a powerful tool for encouraging people to embrace an increasingly generous lifestyle. One Giving Champion said, "I always thought I was generous until I heard those stories. Hearing them made me realize I still had a long way to go."

Told well, stories feel non-judgmental. They are not prescriptive, nor do they create guilt or offer advice to people on how to live. Instead, stories offer examples of a way of living and they inspire people to consider different life choices. Stories open up vast possibilities while enabling people to internalize the message. As author Dan Allender suggests, "Most real learning comes through stories."¹

One Giving Champion referred to the power of stories this way, "In hearing the stories of Generous Givers, a glass ceiling that I didn't know existed was removed from over my head." In other words, his perspective about giving was limited because he had never heard of people giving exponentially above ten percent. When he heard the stories of people who were giving significantly beyond that, he felt challenged in a positive way and was encouraged to do likewise.

Sharing Your Own Story

Your story is one of the most powerful tools you have for influencing others. There is no one best way to share your story; it is your story, and you can tell it in any way you like. However, there is one inviolable principle. We must each share our story humbly and with the recognition that we are all still on a journey. Sharing what we are learning, with a humility that acknowledges our own weaknesses, invites others into a dialogue with us. Humility makes us approachable.

¹ Dan Allender.
*Leading With A Limp:
Turning Your Struggles
Into Strengths.* Colorado:
Waterbrook Press, 2006.

People—even friends—will not want you to preach to them, but they are likely to be interested in learning how God is working in your life, or in the lives of other people to whom they can relate. Your willingness to share how your perspective and practice of giving is continually developing encourages others to reflect on their own views about generosity.

In preparing your story, it is helpful to develop a brief, three to five minute version that can be expanded when there is interest on the part of the listener. To help you prepare both the shorter and the longer versions of your story, start by working through some questions that typically come up, or have previously proven helpful to others in thinking about a message they can deliver with ease and assurance.

Clearly there are no right or wrong answers to these questions, just as there is no one best way to share your story. Yet one of the most meaningful parts of preparing your own story happens here, during the time you spend reflecting on how God has changed you over the years.

Great joy comes from seeing how God continues to mold our hearts to be increasingly generous toward Him. Exploring these questions provides a framework for talking about how your practice of generosity has revealed God moving in your life and brought you closer in relationship with Him.

Although these questions may seem sequential, they are not. No two people make the journey of generosity via the same route or at the same pace. Feel free to address these questions in the order that seems most natural to you, to omit questions that are not a good fit with your experiences, and to add answers to questions that are not asked. Your journey may never take you past all of these particular mile markers, or it may simply not have taken you there *yet*.

SECTION 3

Where (or when) did my giving journey begin? Was there a definable “starting point”?

Has my journey been shaped by my spiritual background, my childhood, and my family? Did these influences help or hinder, and if so, how? Were events and people who came into my life later more influential to my journey than those in my childhood?

Have my views of money and possessions changed during my life? Have I experienced changes in my goals, dreams, and fears about money? What are they now as contrasted or compared to what they have been in the past?

How successful have I become? How satisfying is it? Are there unexpected struggles because of success? Do I have more than one standard for measuring my success? Are some types of success more meaningful to me than are others?

SECTION 3

Can I create a timeline of key milestones in my journey? (You may wish to draw a timeline if it is relevant to your experiences and helpful to you). Or does it feel more accurate to me to see my journey like the branches on a tree, reaching upward, but with many parts and paths? Is this something I could map more easily than a timeline?

How has the message of generosity transformed me? (Be as specific as possible). What contributed to my change? Did my view radically change or has it been more gradual? What did I feel or experience as a result of these changes? Did friends, family, or co-workers notice? What surprised me?

How has my relationship with Jesus been changed by my giving journey?

How do I hope to keep growing in this area?

SECTION 3

Overcoming Barriers to Sharing your Own Story

Over the last ten years, Generous Giving has asked individuals on various occasions to share their giving story. Invariably, people are reluctant to talk about themselves in this way. This section deals with the common barriers that make us hesitant to tell our personal giving story, sometimes even to our closest friends.

✿ The Bible instructs us: *“Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.”* Matthew 6:3

Matthew 6:3 is a frequently cited scripture used to validate the uncertainty one feels in telling a personal story about giving. But consider the verses of scripture that lead up to this. Matthew 5:16 says, “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” And Matthew 6:1-4 enlarges this concept saying, (1) *“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. (2) So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.”*

Conflicting messages? Not at all.

Matthew 5:16 seems to be telling us that it is very appropriate to share news of God’s work in our lives as long as God gets the praise and the glory, while Matthew 6:1-3 reminds us not to give for the purpose of receiving earthly recognition. As Jesus explains, when men honor you, you should then expect no further recognition in heaven.

In a similar way, the prohibition against the left hand knowing what the right hand is doing seems to address the motives of the giver, but is not intended as guidance for the Christian to keep the life transformational powers of generosity a secret.

The special section from Randy Alcorn at the end of this equipping guide brings further clarity to this particular question.

✿ I do not want to seem prideful about my giving.

Acting in a prideful way is reason for concern. As we read in James 4:6, "... God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." We do not want to put ourselves at spiritual risk or in a position where God will oppose us. We can, however, share our story in a spirit of weakness, with recognition of our need for God to continue to change our attitudes and actions, along with our sense of gratitude for how God has already changed us. In other words, we can be humble.

In this way, we give glory to God because it is His work in us, not our own effort, which brings transformation.

✿ I do not want solicitations to increase because I am known as a giver.

Concern about your privacy or opening your life to excessive solicitation is reasonable and shows good common sense. But sharing your story will not necessarily put you on a grand stage. You may never address thousands of people, or even hundreds. The sharing of your personal story is meant to be a tool for influencing others in settings where you feel comfortable. You may find yourself talking over lunch with a longtime friend or sharing your giving journey with your family, or a small group at church. If you have defined your own story and are at ease telling it, you will have many opportunities to share it appropriately, as the Lord leads you.

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Sometimes there will be opportunities to share with a larger audience. You may decide that the benefits of sharing outweigh the possible risks. Your boldness can inspire and challenge large numbers of people to give to God's kingdom with great generosity ... if this happens, it will be because you weighed the risk and chose to champion a message that has had a revolutionary impact on your life.

Sharing the Stories of Others

Over time you will likely encounter many givers who have compelling stories. As you interact with more and more Generous Givers and learn how they have experienced the fruits of generosity, retelling their stories will become a powerful tool for you to use in encouraging others.

The more you open your life to the message of generosity, (both as someone on the journey and as someone who influences others on their journey) the more stories will come into your life. Your opportunity to share the right message at the right time will increase as your collection of inspirational stories grows. For example, if you are interacting with a person who owns a business, and you know the story of a generous business owner, you can share elements of the story that will encourage and challenge the listener. And when you know the stories of several business owners, you will be able to select the one that seems the most appropriate for the situation.

Modeling is powerful; when people hear of others living generously, they are inspired. Many Christians will never hear of or meet people who live radically generous lives unless you and other Giving Champions step forward.

An easy way to share the stories of others is by giving away CDs or DVDs such as the ones listed in the resource section of this guide. An act as simple as passing along a copy of a compelling story may

be the pivotal deed that motivates someone to take the next step in his journey. As you share, the stories of generous Christians multiply exponentially such that God's name and His renown are celebrated broadly. In the language of modern marketing strategies: the message becomes viral.

The Power of Authentic Questions

Many times, the best transition into sharing your story comes by asking questions about the other person's story. Questions invite reflection and communicate interest. When asked with love and respect, questions are far more powerful than statements. Without directly confronting the listener, good questions trigger people to introspection about (and even wrestling with) the personal implications of a life of generosity. We cannot tell people what to do. All we can do, by our stories, our questions, and even our example, is invite people to consider a different way of life.

Generosity is about a person's heart and his or her relationship with Jesus. Because it is a heart issue, for questions to be an effective tool, they have to be asked from the heart of someone who authentically cares about that person. A sincere question communicates both your concern for, and interest in, another person. Well-chosen, well timed, and heartfelt questions communicate that you care; in order for someone to feel cared for, they must truly be cared for.

Questions as a Learning Tool

Harvard University, one of the finest centers of education in the world, developed the Case Method of teaching. This dynamic approach to teaching is based on instruction and guidance delivered through questions asked, not through statements made or lectures given. By asking timely and thoughtful questions, an instructor or leader can guide students through a process of analysis and discovery.

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There is no right or wrong answer in a Case Method study; some answers produce baby steps while other answers enable a person to leap ahead in insight and understanding. Both results yield forward movement. In the same way, when asking questions of our friends, we are not waiting to correct their answers. We are there to journey with them as they seek to discern God's calling in their lives.

The Skill of Asking Good Questions

A well-asked question is open ended; does not communicate judgment, nor is it prescriptive. A good question (a) creates for the listener the security of knowing someone else cares; (b) leads the listener to a path of introspection, and (c) invites the listener to internalize his own answers before the Lord.

Part of the skill of asking good questions is understanding why you are asking. Always be thinking of the benefit your question brings to the other person. People sense agendas. Self-serving questions are never well received. Additionally, you must be willing to listen to the answers your questions inspire. Sometimes the most influential moments happen in the silence of waiting for an answer. While it can be tempting to want to rescue someone and fill the silence with words, these times are often when the Holy Spirit is working most in someone's life.

The following are sample questions that have been used in a variety of settings. The last five are questions Generous Giving often recommends because they encourage people to reflect on their responses over a period of time.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

1. Where are you on your giving journey? How is God changing you in this area of your life? How would you like to see God change you in this area of your life?
2. Have you ever given a gift that made you smile or even laugh aloud with joy? If so, when?
3. What might be a next step in your journey of generosity?
4. Has having more than you need created or alleviated anxiety in your life?
5. What are the possible benefits of simplicity?
6. It is natural for us to think about what we give up by giving. Do you ever think about what you give up by not giving?
7. What do you possess that you may be holding on to too tightly?
8. What is the spiritual gift of giving? Do you think you have it?

9. Has money had a positive or negative impact on your relationship with God?
10. Who is the most generous person you know? Why would you describe him or her as generous?

FIVE QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

(May be given to someone for individual reflection without expectation of an answer).

1. Who owns it?
2. How much is enough?
3. What's an appropriate lifestyle?
4. Who is the next steward and is he or she prepared?
5. Have you considered an annual giving goal or a lifetime giving goal?



SECTION 4 **TEN IDEAS FOR ENCOURAGING OTHERS IN THEIR GIVING JOURNEY**

Here are ten ideas that may help you in encouraging others in their journey, as well as refresh you each time you revisit them:

idea 1

THE LIBERATION OF PEOPLE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE LIBERATION OF RESOURCES.

Generous Giving works to create environments and to help you create environments, where transformation can occur in people's hearts. Invariably, as people are liberated, resources are liberated exponentially. And while the impact of giving brings wonderful blessings, the 'gifts' are not the heart message of generosity.

Generosity is not about the gift; it is about the level of trust required by the giver in order to relinquish the gift. True liberation is only realized when you fully surrender your grip and trust God. With practice, the spiritual discipline of giving increases trust in God and leads toward liberation. Embracing generosity is a freeing experience that fortifies faith and brings with it a new level of peace and contentment. Paul taught this principle in I Timothy 6:17, "*Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.*"

By giving, we learn to trust in God who richly provides for us, instead of placing our hopes in wealth or possessions. As you genuinely and visibly live this truth, people recognize your authenticity and come to understand why you are interested in them and in their spiritual journey. They will be able

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to recognize that you are not seeking to get something from them, nor are you asking them to give to something. Your intent is solely that of liberating their hearts so that they, too, may fully embrace Christ's call in their lives.

idea 2

WE CANNOT TAKE PEOPLE WHERE WE ARE NOT GOING OURSELVES.

In I Corinthians 11:1, Paul exhorts the believers in Corinth to, "...*follow me as I follow the example of Christ.*" Paul isn't saying, "Do as I do because I am perfect," instead he is inviting others to join him in an exciting passage of growth, self-learning, and greater closeness with God.

Your life, lived in unassuming grace and humble faith, will shine like a bright candle, illuminating a path for others. The example you live, not the words you speak, is your most eloquent and effectual testimony.

Sometimes your candle will burn with brilliance and intensity. Other times it may flicker or grow dim. Each of us is an imperfect child of God, always on the journey, never attaining earthly perfection. Yet the fact that your light continues to burn throughout storms, trials, and challenges is a living testimony that both enhances and at the same time surpasses any spoken message you might ever share. As the Holy Spirit continues to conform us into the image of Christ, we exemplify the fruit of generosity in a way that draws others toward the next step in their own journey with generosity and Jesus.

idea 3

BE PERSONABLE, NOT PRESCRIPTIVE.

The tendency to tell people what to do seems to be almost inherent in human nature, but who really likes to be on the receiving end of even well intentioned advice? To most people, unsolicited advice feels like criticism. Although you may have been there yourself and know the pathway by experience, avoiding prescriptive-ness enhances the receptivity of others to your words.

At Generous Giving, some questions about generosity seem to come up again and again. These include: How much should I give? To which charities should I give? How much can I spend on myself? How much should I be saving for retirement, college, etc? Attempting to answer such questions puts you in perilous territory. As an alternative, try asking questions that motivate thought and telling stories that inspire listeners to draw parallels between their life and the life of people who are clearly living out God's message of generosity. Above all else, encourage prayer and reflection before God.

Each person walks a unique pathway in the journey with generosity and Jesus. Attempting to give prescriptive advice carries both the risk of overwhelming the listener by suggesting more than he or she is ready to hear or of limiting what the Holy Spirit may already be leading that person to do.

THE HOLY SPIRIT USES GOD'S WORD, RELATIONSHIPS, AND EXPERIENCES TO BRING TRANSFORMATION.

idea 4

Since the founding of Generous Giving, we have been asking the same fundamental question: "What encouraged you in your generosity?" Repeatedly people who were living generous lives gave us answers that were remarkably consistent. One or more of the following elements was present in every person's response.

Some people emphasized how GOD'S WORD had come alive to them through powerful teaching that had caused them to understand their role as a steward not an owner.

Others spoke of the influence of inspirational examples of generosity, which were enhanced by the proximity of the RELATIONSHIP with the person setting or sharing the example. The better they knew the person encouraging them, the more powerful the influence.

Lastly, people often shared stories of EXPERIENCES that had transformed their attitudes and actions about giving. Many of them recounted trips they had been on internationally that changed the way they viewed their resources as well as informed their view about the potential impact of their giving.

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As a Giving Champion, you will be able to utilize all three elements—God’s Word, relationships, and experiences—to influence others. Because people change in relationship over time, sharing all three elements becomes an ongoing process and a tool you can use. Depending upon where a person is in his or her journey, God uses His Word, relationships, and experiences to invite that person to take the next step with Him.

idea 5

SHARING THE MESSAGE OF GENEROSITY IS A SPIRITUAL WORK AND MUST BE HANDLED WITH PRAYER.

Encouraging people to prioritize Christ above all else, especially their money, is a spiritual endeavor. Our affluent materialistic culture churns out resistance to this humble message. *Is materialism a tactic that the enemy uses to distract and deceive God’s people?* As a Giving Champion, prepare yourself for spiritual battle and recognize that the primary weapon in this battle must be prayer.

Involvement in people’s lives should be bathed in prayer. Pray for those with whom you are in relationship ... Pray for those with whom you spend your time ... Pray to know which questions to ask ... And pray for the Holy Spirit to intervene and transform lives.

As Paul cautioned the Ephesians, “*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*” Ephesians 6:12

idea 6

GOD IS PATIENT WITH US AND WE SHOULD BE LIKEWISE WITH OTHERS.

If you feel impatient with the pace of transformation in people’s lives, it is probably because you want so much for them to begin to experience joy at the level you experience it. However acting upon your

impatience, or even just internalizing it, can lead to frustration, missed expectations, and potential loss of relationship. At times the next step for someone may seem obvious, yet even so, it is important to be patient with others as God is patient with us.

Patience requires humility. We can cultivate a spirit of humility by reflecting on our own life and the areas that God still needs to change in us. This will limit our judgment of others and will help us have more patience with them. We can also acknowledge that we are not in the other person's shoes and we cannot know with certainty how we would act if we were in his or her place.

Recognize that God is in control. We need to admit that we do not know what is best for this person, however God does. Perhaps there will be a right time to draw someone's attention to blind spots in his or her life, but we must be discerning about how we do this and empathetic to his responses to our observations and questions. We attract people into the liberating message of generosity not by judging them but with grace and patience in inviting them to consider a different way to live. And always, we can pray for the person.

idea 7

DISCERNING WHO TO ENCOURAGE ALONG THE GIVING JOURNEY.

Time is limited. Relationships take time to develop and cultivate. Your time is finite and you simply cannot reach out to everyone you will encounter. II Timothy 2:2 offers direction for this question, *“And the things you’ve heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to many reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.”* Both your time and your relational energy have limits; ask God to direct you to the *“reliable men and women who are qualified to teach others.”* *Who are the one or two people God might bring into your life this year?*

Seek people who are drawn to the message and in whose heart the Holy Spirit has already started to work. Focus your time and efforts where God is clearly directing you.

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idea 8

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

The world's value system is radically different from God's value system and living generously is not always easy. By definition, living differently than the culture around us lives inherently creates distance and social isolation.

Cultural messages of materialism inundate us 24/7. Even the strongest among us will begin to feel as if he is weird or 'doing it wrong' if he attempts to aggressively apply God's principles in handling finances. Living a life of biblical generosity without others to turn to is very difficult, as is living a Christian life without the fellowship and support of other Christians.

There is great joy in finding others to journey with as we seek to honor God with all that we have.

Pray for and seek out others who share similar values. We can live stronger in Christ if we are together. Again, draw encouragement and guidance from the message of Hebrews 10:24-25: "*Let us consider how we may spur one another on to love and good deeds. Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, but let us come together all the more as we see the Day approaching.*"

idea 9

AVOID FOCUSING ON THE TITHE.

A Giving Champion recently said, "I want to spread the virus of generosity. The tithe has become an inoculation against the rampant spread of generosity."

When people focus on the spiritual principle of giving 10 percent to God, as important as it is, they miss the opportunity to talk about the possibilities the other 90 percent holds. It all belongs to God. How any of us spends God's money is a spiritual decision. Liberating generosity becomes possible only in the context of the 100 percent—the all—all that has been entrusted to us by God.

Redirect questions about tithing to the matter of stewardship where tithing becomes the starting line rather than the finish line.

idea 10

THERE IS NO FORMULA.

A formula would really simplify things ... *How much is generous? What percentage is enough? What is permissible to spend on myself? How much should I give my children?*

Infinite questions, infinite answers, and absolutely no mathematical formula.

While there is no formula, there is an answer. One all-inclusive, everlasting answer: Ask God. Slow down long enough to listen to what He's calling you to and inviting you to. And then, be willing to obey ... *no matter what.*

Ask ... Listen ... Obey.

More than anything, as a Giving Champion you are inviting people to fully surrender their lives to Christ. Radical surrender brings joy, peace, and contentment, but it is a process of letting go more fully of our hopes and dreams, and instead, adopting God's vision for our life.

As we embrace for ourselves all that God wants for our life, we experience ultimate fulfillment, meaning, and purpose. When we live in our unique calling, all that God has entrusted to us begins to make sense.

... May we be willing to say 'yes' to God no matter what He asks of us!



GIVING RESOURCES FROM GENEROUS GIVING

Meaningful resources designed to encourage and equip Christians for greater kingdom generosity.

THE DISCIPLINE OF SIMPLICITY by Richard Foster

Richard Foster uses Biblical teachings to explore the meaning of simplicity in our lives, highlighting important inward attitudes and outward expressions that occur as a result of embracing the discipline of simplicity. Foster reminds us to seek the kingdom of God first and then everything necessary will come in its proper order.

FIELDS OF GOLD by Andy Stanley

As Christians, we know that we should give but sometimes it's so hard to take that step of faith and let go when it comes to our finances. Pastor Andy Stanley reminds us that if we truly believe that God is who He says He is, we have no reason to fear. Doesn't it make sense to trust the God of the Universe with our finances?

STOTT ON STEWARDSHIP by Dr. John R.W. Stott

In this booklet, noted Anglican teacher Dr. John Stott expounds 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, highlighting ten important principles of giving. Understanding and applying these basic principles from Paul's writing can help raise our giving to another level as it grounds us in a more thoughtful, more systematic, and more sacrificial approach to generous giving.

THE TREASURE PRINCIPLE by Randy Alcorn

The biblical but little-known The Treasure Principle is this: When it comes to money, you can't take it with you—but you can send it on ahead to your true home: heaven. By giving rather than keeping money, we store up wealth in heaven. Randy Alcorn outlines the "Treasure Principle" in six keys in this introductory book on generosity.

*Booklets
& Books*

Audio

GENEROUS GIVING 101

Generosity isn't about money; it's an attitude of the heart. This CD contains the testimonies of Ed Owens and Scott Lewis, two givers who rejoice at opportunities to fund Christ's kingdom. Also, Randy Alcorn teaches that the safest place we can invest our earthly wealth is in Christ's eternal kingdom.

THE CORNERSTONE COLLECTION with Alcorn, Blackaby, Haggai, Zacharias

How does the Bible view money and possessions in the light of our salvation? Is God just as concerned with the amount we give as the amount we keep? In this collection of sermons by noted teachers Randy Alcorn, John Haggai, Henry Blackaby, and Ravi Zacharias, you will discover why Christ has called His redeemed people to a life of radical generosity.

SIMPLY GENEROUS

Pastor Bob Coy teaches how the gifts and wealth we receive in this present age only have worth in this world. Meanwhile, Bruce and Sue Osterink recount how they scaled back a beautiful lake home and affluent lifestyle for an inner city house and student ministry.

STRATEGIC GIVING

Pastor Rick Warren teaches that money is a tool to help accomplish God's purposes for our lives and suggests five innovative funds for investing in God's kingdom. Hugh Maclellan shares the bold prayer that he made to the Lord several years ago—"God I don't think you're challenging me in my giving"—and the change that resulted.

Video

GENEROSITY STORIES DVD

In this video series, Jess and Angela Correll, Don and Dorris Meyer, and Stanley Tam each share how God has redirected their lives and finances over the years. Learn how they have discovered the joy of giving and integrated that joy into both their family and corporate lives. Sample questions for discussion are included.

GENEROSITY SERMONS DVD

In this sermon series, Pastor Bob Coy presents challenging financial statistics and shares his journey from a “tickled tither” to “generous giver.” Pastor Tim Keller exhorts us to believe the Gospel and live lives of radical generosity. Sample questions for discussion are included.

Web

Visit WWW.GENEROUSGIVING.ORG and experience the journey of generosity. Watch and share videos with friends, join the community to get regular encouragement and interact with other givers, download and buy resources, register for conferences, and more.



SHOULD GIVING ALWAYS BE KEPT SECRET?

By Randy Alcorn

Over the last ten years, I've been suggesting that we learn how to share testimonies about giving in order to help the body of Christ grow in the grace of giving. I once objected to this type of disclosure—as many still do—because Jesus says, *“But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you”* Matthew 6:3-4.

In Matthew 6, Jesus is dealing with motives, something the religious elite often failed to examine. He starts with the broad category of “acts of righteousness,” then moves to three such acts—giving, prayer, and fasting. This is not an exhaustive list. The idea is that any “act of righteousness” (or badge of spirituality) can accord us spiritual status in the eyes of others.

The most important verse, the one that sets up the entire passage, is the first: *“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them”* Matthew 6:1. The operative phrase is “to be seen by them.” This is *not* a prohibition against others becoming aware of our giving, prayers, fasting, Bible study, feeding the poor, missions work, or church attendance. Rather, it's a command not to do these things in order to receive the recognition of men. Jesus continues, *“If you do [that is, if you do good things to win human approval], you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.”* The problem isn't doing good things with reward in mind—it's looking for the reward from men rather than from God.

Let's look at the verses we started with: *“So when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret”* Matthew 6:3-4. This verse cannot mean that we should—or even that we can—be unaware of our own giving. Any more than we could

be unaware of our praying, fasting, Bible reading, or evangelism. To suggest that it does would remove the discerning, thoughtful elements of giving, praying, fasting, and all other spiritual disciplines. This is a figure of speech. It's hyperbole, a deliberate overstatement, which would have been immediately clear to the hearers. That Christ's command cannot be literal is self evident, because a hand lacks the ability to know anything, and besides the person's brain would know what both the right hand and the left hand were doing.

So what's Christ's point? Do your giving quietly, unobtrusively. Don't cough loudly just as you're giving. Drop your check in the offering or send it in the mail without drawing attention to yourself. Give in a spirit of humility and simplicity, as an act of worship. Don't give in order to get your name on a list. Don't dwell on your gift, fixating on it. Building a mental shrine to yourself. In other words, don't make a big production out of it, either in view of others or in the privacy of your own heart.

But can this verse mean it's always wrong for others to know that we've given? No. Acts 2:45 tells of Christians selling possessions and giving to the needy. These people knew each other. If you no longer had your prize camels, coat, or oxcart, and Caleb ben Judah did, people would figure it out. Acts 4:32-35 tells us about more people liquidating assets. Most names, which would mean nothing to us, aren't recorded, but they were surely known at the time.

But some givers were named even for our benefit. Acts 4:36-37 tells us that Barnabas sold a field and brought the money to the feet of the apostles. If Barnabas was looking for status and prestige, his motive was wrong. But it's certainly false to say that it was wrong for others to be made aware of his gift, because Scripture itself reveals it! Barnabas's act of generosity was commonly known among the believers and was publicly and permanently recorded in Acts. This was good and right, and did not violate Matthew 6's warning about bad motives.

Did public recognition tempt others to give for the wrong motives? Absolutely, as we see in the very next passage (Acts 5:1-11). Ananias and Sapphira gave for the wrong reasons. Then they lied to make their gift look better than it was. But the possible abuse of something doesn't nullify its legitimacy. The body of

Christ can benefit from seeing open models of generous giving such as Barnabas's. The world can benefit from seeing the generosity of the Church as an attractive witness to the grace of Christ. The risks of disclosing a person's giving are sometimes outweighed by the benefits of disclosure.

If Christ established a principle in Matthew 6: 2-4 that other people should never know what someone gives, then the members of the early Church violated it in Acts 4:36-37. There's no way around it. Numbers 7 lists the names of donors to the tabernacle. 1 Chronicles 29 tells exactly how much the leaders of Israel gave to build the temple, then it says, "*The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord*" 1 Chronicles 29:9. Philemon 1:7 is likely a reference to Philemon's generous giving, and 2 Corinthians 8:2-3 is definitely a reference to the Macedonian's generous giving. As we seek to understand the meaning of Matthew 6:2-4, we must consider the full counsel of Scripture.

Earlier in the same sermon in which he warns against flaunting your giving and prayers and fasting, Jesus says, "*Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven*" Matthew 5:16. Here we are *commanded* to let men see our good deeds—and not to hide them. Giving is a good deed, isn't it? This passage and Matthew 6 balance each other. There's a time for giving to be seen, but only at the right time and for the right reasons.

The body of Christ needs to let its light shine before men, and we need models of every spiritual discipline. We dare not let the risk of our pride keep us from faithfully disclosing God's work in this area of our lives. And if we must be silent to avoid our own pride, we should support others who can humbly testify to Christ's faithfulness in their giving. The church has plenty of examples of consumers—we need to see examples of givers. Hebrews 10:24 tells us to "*spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*" We can only be spurred on by what we can see.

R. G. LeTourneau was a great inspiration to me. He gave away 90% of his income, motivating me to raise the bar of my giving. I'm eternally grateful that he told his giving story.

Randy Alcorn is the founder and director of Eternal Perspective Ministries (EPM). He has spoken around the world and has taught on the adjunct faculties of Multnomah Bible College and Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon. Randy is the best-selling author of twenty-seven books (over three million in print), including Money, Possessions, and Eternity, The Treasure Principle, and Heaven.

Randy has written for many magazines and produces the popular periodical Eternal Perspectives. He has been a guest on over 500 radio and television programs including Focus on the Family, The Bible Answer Man, Family Life Today, Revive Our Hearts, Truths that Transform and Faith Under Fire.

The father of two married daughters, Randy lives in Gresham, Oregon with his wife and best friend Nanci.

(Excerpted from *Money, Possessions, and Eternity* by Randy Alcorn. U.S.A. Eternal Perspective Ministries, Copyright 2003 ©. Reprinted with permission.)

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Experience the Joy.

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