

A Bias Toward Generosity*Acts 20:31-35*

All of us have been on the receiving end of God's generosity in many ways. Of course the pinnacle of God's generosity is the sending of His Son into the world to die for our sins. God's generosity gave us life. God's generosity purchased our freedom. If we are to be like God, we too are called to lives of generosity. As a church we state it this way: *Since God is generous we seek to live out intentional generosity as a way of life. We experience deep joy when we choose to be generous with our material and spiritual resources.* This week and next we are considering how we can pursue lives of intentional generosity (**Note:** We will return to our study in Hebrews after the first of the year).

Opening Question: Do you have someone in your life who has served as a kind of generosity mentor? If so, how has he or she modeled generosity to you?

Read Acts 20:17-35

1. What does Paul say about how he ministered among the Ephesians during his three-year stay with them?
2. How did Paul live out a generous life towards the Ephesians during his stay among them (vv. 31-35)?
3. What do you think Paul means when he says that we "must help the weak" (v. 35)?
4. Why do you think this principle spoken by Jesus – "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (v. 35) – holds true? Do you have any personal experience that verifies the truth of this statement?
5. How does this principle from Jesus turn the world's values upside down?

Steve said:

The Ephesian elders were to imitate Paul's example of hard work by "help[ing] the weak" - whether they were weak physically or economically or spiritually. The church must never give the impression, "Unless you're strong you don't belong here. . . Unless you have everything together and can pull your own weight you need to go somewhere else." No, the church is supposed to treat others the way God has treated us. When we were weak and helpless to do a single thing about our sinful condition, God sent His one and only Son to die for us. Because God has been so generous to us, we are to be generous to others who are weak and helpless.

6. How can we as a church avoid ever giving off the vibe that "unless you're strong you don't belong here . . . Unless you have everything together and can pull your own weight you need to go somewhere else"?

7. Read Ephesians 4:29. What does this say about being generous with our speech?

8. Do you have any specific relationships or situations right now where you know you need to be generous with your speech?

9. Read Gal. 6:2. What does this say about how we can be generous in our actions towards other believers? What are some practical ways you can live this out right now?

Steve said:

We hope that our Love Manhattan effort stimulates . . . generosity toward our city. We agree with the perspective that says, "We don't merely want to be the best church *in* our city; we want to be the best church we can be *for* our city." We want to demonstrate with our words and with our actions that it really is more blessed to give than to receive.

10. How does this idea of being a generous church towards our city (i.e. the best church **for** our city) strike you?

11. Re-read our value statement in the introduction. Do you find it hard to believe that you really can experience "deep joy" when you are generous with your material and spiritual resources? Or, would you say that you fully believe it because you've experienced it? Explain.