



STEWARDSHIP 2024

Epworth United Methodist Church, Gaithersburg MD

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Article adapted as stewardship themes

<https://www.ncfgiving.com/stories/10-examples-of-generosity-in-the-bible-and-how-to-follow-them/>

Week 1: Generosity opens the door to Unexpected Relationships

Key Text: Abraham’s hospitality (Genesis 18:1-8) and Hebrews 13:1-2

Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way.

Abraham hurried to welcome three strangers and showed them great hospitality, asking Sarah to bake bread and slaughtering a valuable calf for their meal. What he did not know at the time was that he was entertaining angels (Hebrews 13:2).

How to follow: *Open your home and heart to others, even when you feel inconvenienced. Welcome and care for people who visit you, making them feel valued and loved. You never know when you might be entertaining angels, too.*

- ❖ **Genesis 18: 1-8** The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. 2 Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. 3 He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. 4 Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. 5 Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant.” “Very well,” they answered, “do as you say.” 6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. “Quick,” he said, “get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread.” 7 Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. 8 He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

- ❖ **Genesis 18:9-19** “Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him. “There, in the tent,” he said. 10 Then one of them said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.” Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. 11 Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. 12 So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?” 13 Then the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’ 14 Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.” 15 Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I did not laugh.” But he said, “Yes, you did laugh.” 16 When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way. 17 Then the Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? 18 Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. 19 For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”
- ❖ **Hebrews 13:1-2** Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. 2 Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.
- ❖ **Hebrews 13:3, 16** Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering..... 16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.
- ❖ **Ruth 1:16-19** 16 But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.” 18 When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her. 19 So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem.

Week 2: Generosity opens the door to Abundance and provision

Key Text: The Macedonian church’s generosity (2 Corinthians 8:2-5)

In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people.

Despite their own poverty, the Macedonian church was remarkably generous in supporting others, and God miraculously made them more able to give than they’d expected.

How to follow: *Give when you have plenty as well as when you don’t. Instead of dreaming about all the ways you will be more generous one day when you have the means, allow giving to others to be a constant privilege, a rich part of your life, no matter your circumstances.*

Key Text: A little boy’s lunch (John 6:5-13 and Matthew 14:16-19)

“Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

Jesus accepted a young boy’s humble lunch of five barley loaves and two fish and performed the miracle of multiplying it to feed 5,000 people. On this day, a child in the crowd had more faith than Jesus’ own disciples. The Scripture doesn’t mention any concern about his gift not being enough. He just gave what little he had, and Jesus made it enough for a multitude.

How to follow: *Be willing to share what you have, even if it seems insignificant, knowing that God is a multiplier of gifts. And your willingness to share your resources, talents, or time just might lead to unexpected blessings you would never even imagine.*

- ❖ **2 Corinthians 8:1-7** And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people. 5 And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. 6 So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. 7 But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.
- ❖ **2 Corinthians 8:8- 12** 8 I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. 10 And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. 11 Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. 12 For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.
- ❖ **2 Corinthians 8:13 – 15** 13 Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. 14 At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, 15 as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.”
- ❖ **Romans 15:25-33** 25 Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the Lord’s people there. 26 For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord’s people in Jerusalem. 27 They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews’ spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. 28 So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this contribution, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. 29 I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.
- ❖ **Matthew 14: 16-19** 16 But Jesus said to them, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.” 17 And they said to Him, “We have here only five loaves and two fish.” 18 He said, “Bring them here to Me.” 19 Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. 20 So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. 21 Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.
- ❖ **Matthew 14: 34-36** 34 When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret. 35 And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick, 36 and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well.

Week 3: Generosity opens the door to meaning and impact

Key Texts: Joseph of Arimathea’s gift in death (Matthew 27:57-60)

Joseph took [Jesus’] body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb . . .

After Jesus' crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy and respected member of the Jewish council, approached Pilate and requested permission to bury Jesus' body. Without hesitation, he placed Jesus in his own tomb and sealed the entrance with a large stone.

How to follow: *Let your awareness that all things belong to God grow in this way: Be willing to let go of and give your own resources, even if God is calling you to give something you'd planned to keep for yourself.*

Key Texts: Dorcas' acts of charity (Acts 9:36-42)

In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. About that time she became sick and died... All the widows stood by [Peter] weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them.

Dorcas, also known as Tabitha, was known for her charitable works. She helped the poor in whatever ways she was able. She gave her talent and time, making clothes for the needy.

How to follow: Use your time and talents to help those in need, whether it's sewing clothes, cooking, fixing vehicles, or any other skill you have.

- ❖ **1 Timothy 6:17-19** 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. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 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.
- ❖ **Matthew 27:57-60** As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. 58 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. 59 Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.
- ❖ **Acts 9:36-42** In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. 37 About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. 38 Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!" 39 Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. 40 Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. 41 He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. 42 This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.
- ❖ **Hebrews 12:1-3** Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.
- ❖ **Hebrews 11:32-39** And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. 35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins

and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— 38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. 39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, 40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Week 4: Generosity opens the door to Joy and Freedom

Key Text: Zacchaeus' joyful response (Luke 19:1-10)

Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

When Zacchaeus, a tax collector, met Jesus, he repented of his life of greed. He pledged to give half of his possessions to the poor and repay those he had cheated. The law required someone who had wronged another to pay back 120 percent; Zacchaeus offered to pay 400! And he offered to give half of his possessions to the poor (which was not required of him). He was so full of joy that generosity just poured out.

How to follow: *Clothe yourself with the humility necessary to acknowledge and rectify past wrongs, even if it means making significant sacrifices. Allow God's lovingkindness to lead you to repentance and let yourself be filled with the joy of your salvation.*

- ❖ **2 Corinthians 9:6-8** God loves a cheerful giver, and those who sow bountifully will also reap bountifully
- ❖ **Luke 19 1-8** Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. 5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. 7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." 8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." 9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."
- ❖ **Galatians 5:1** "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."
- ❖ **Matthew 6:19-21** 19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
- ❖ **Galatians 5:13** "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."

Week 5: Generosity opens the door to Faithfulness and Hope

Key Text: The widow of Zarephath's trust (1 Kings 17:7-16)

She replied, "I don't have any bread – only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it – and die."

Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land.'"

She went away did as Elijah had told her. The Lord told Elijah to find this widow in Zarephath; she would provide for him. But when Elijah found her, the woman didn't even have enough food for her son and herself to survive. Still, she had faith, and gave what the only things she had left. And the Lord filled her jars of flour and oil, ensuring they were never empty.

How to follow: *In all circumstances, Christian generosity is a response to faith. There will always be a reason, an excuse, not to give. This widow certainly had a good one. She and her son were starving to death. But she had given anyway. Do not let your excuses keep you from the joy and blessings that come from giving.*

Key Text: The widow's offering (Mark 12:41-44)

Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on."

Jesus observed a poor widow giving two small coins as an offering at the temple. He praised her for her great generosity, as she gave all she had (while also subtly calling attention to the fact that a [widow should've been receiving support from the temple treasury](#), and she was paying into it!).

How to follow: *Be willing to give sacrificially, even if it seems like a small amount, even if you've had a need that made you a recipient of generosity. Your generosity matters, no matter the size of your gift.*

- ❖ **Luke 21 1-4** As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. 2 He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 3 "Truly I tell you," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. 4 All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."
- ❖ **1 Kings 17:7-16** 7 Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. 8 Then the word of the Lord came to him: 9 "Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food." 10 So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, "Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?" 11 As she was going to get it, he called, "And bring me, please, a piece of bread." 12 "As surely as the Lord your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die." 13 Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. 14 For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land.'" 15 She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. 16 For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah.
- ❖ **2 Kings 4:1-7:** 4 The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves." 2 Elisha replied to her, "How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?" "Your servant has nothing there at all," she said, "except a small jar of olive oil." 3 Elisha said, "Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few. 4 Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side." 5 She left him and shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. 6 When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another one." But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing. 7 She went and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left."

- ❖ **Mark 9:17-29** 17 Then one of the crowd answered and said, “Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. 18 And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.” 19 He answered him and said, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.” 20 Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. 21 So He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. 22 And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” 23 Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” 25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!” 26 Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, “He is dead.” 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. 28 And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” 29 So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”
- ❖ **Hebrews 11: 1-3:** Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for. 3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.
- ❖ **Malachi 3:10:** Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

Week 5: Generosity opens the door to Gratitude and Gratefulness

The Shunammite woman’s service to God’s messenger (2 Kings 4:8-37)

One day Elisha went on to Shunem, where a wealthy woman lived, who urged him to eat some food. So whenever he passed that way, he would turn in there to eat food. And she said to her husband, “Behold now, I know that this is a holy man of God who is continually passing our way. Let us make a small room on the roof with walls and put there for him a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp, so that whenever he comes to us, he can go in there.”

This Shunammite woman didn’t just welcome and care for Elisha once or twice; she continually gave to him, even going so far as to build a room just for him.

How to follow: Revolutionize the way you give by framing your giving to people as a gift offered to God. Make plans to regularly host those who serve God and set apart a space in your home for these holy visitors.

- ❖ **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"
- ❖ **Lamentations 3:22–24** The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.
- ❖ **Philippians 4:6-7** "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God"
- ❖ **Psalms 23** "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul".
- ❖ **Psalms 106:1** "Praise the Lord. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever".