

GIVE SUPERNATURALLY
The Generosity Ladder – Week 6
By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Today is Commitment Day. It is the last day of our sermon series on generosity, and it is the day when we will turn in our Commitment Cards, making our pledges to Build to Equip for the next two years. Our hope and prayer is that we will be able to add up all the pledges and reach the goal of \$350,000.
2. This sermon series is called “The Generosity Ladder,” because a ladder helps you move to a higher level, and our goal is to move to a higher level of giving. I don’t know any stingy people at our church, but we’ve been looking at the sequential steps we need to take to grow from a stingy heart to a generous heart. Let’s do a quick review.
 - i. Step 1: See God as a giver. We are called to imitate God, and God is a giver.
 - ii. Step 2: See yourself as a steward. My money is not mine; it is God’s, and I’m His money manager, using my money to build His kingdom.
 - iii. Step 3: Begin with the tithe. If you are not tithing, you are robbing God, so before you can move to a place of generosity, you must start by tithing.
 - iv. Step 4: Give beyond the tithe. As God increases your income, you increase your giving.
 - v. Step 5: Expect to be blessed. See giving as an investment, not an expense. Whatever you give to the Lord, He will multiply and give back. You can’t out-give God.
 - vi. Step 6: Give supernaturally. Give like God.
3. Today I want us to look at what the spiritually mature giver looks like. What does generosity look like when it has reached its peak? What does it look like when we are living open-handedly, giving God complete control over our finances? What does it look like when we become the kind of givers that God wants us to ultimately become?
4. I call this supernatural giving; or becoming a supernatural giver. It’s when you give so much, so freely, so generously, so sacrificially, so crazily, that it can only be explained by God. That person has to be empowered by God.
5. I want us to look at the signs of supernatural giving. What does it look like to be so generous that people will say, “Only God. Only God can empower such generosity”?

II. 4 SIGNS SUPERNATURAL GIVING

1. **You give so much you have to be told to stop.**
 - i. After the Israelites left Egypt, God gave Moses instructions for the tabernacle, the place where God would be worshiped. So, Moses went to the people and told them all that would be needed, and said, “If want, give what you can to the Lord’s tabernacle.”
 - ii. **Exodus 35:29** “So the Israelites brought a freewill offering to the LORD, all the men and women whose hearts prompted them to bring something for all the work that the LORD, through Moses, had commanded to be done.”

- iii. It says the people kept bringing offerings morning after morning until the builders came to Moses and said, “The people are bringing in too much. It’s way more than we need.”
- iv. **Exodus 36:6-7** 6 After Moses gave an order, they sent a proclamation throughout the camp: “Let no man or woman make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary.” So the people stopped. 7 The materials were sufficient for them to do all the work. There was more than enough.
- v. Try to picture this. We’re raising money for our first church building. Imagine that our church gave so much money to Build to Equip that I had to stand up and say, “Stop! You’ve given more than enough. Stop giving!” That’s hard to wrap your mind around, isn’t it?
- vi. That’s a sign of supernatural giving. That’s when people will say, “Only God can empower that kind of generosity.”
- vii. **Martin Luther** “God divided the hand into fingers so that money would slip through.” Luther would give away everything that was not absolutely necessary for them to keep. At times his wife Katie had to hide the money to keep him from giving it away.
- viii. Try to imagine yourself being that kind of a giver. Imagine the pastor having to call you up and saying, “Stop giving. You’ve given too much!”

2. You give everything you have.

- i. **Mark 12:41-44** 41 Sitting across from the temple treasury, he watched how the crowd dropped money into the treasury. Many rich people were putting in large sums. 42 Then a poor widow came and dropped in two tiny coins worth very little. 43 Summoning his disciples, he said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 For they all gave out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had—all she had to live on.”
- ii. We looked in depth at this story a few weeks ago. Jesus was watching as people brought their donations to the temple. Many people were giving large sums of money, yet this poor widow only dropped in two tiny coins. These coins were called lepta (one is a lepton). They were the smallest, cheapest coins in circulation in Palestine. A denarius was worth a day’s wage. A lepton was worth 1/64 of a denarius, or about 5 minutes worth of labor. But Jesus said she gave the most. Why? She gave all she had.
- iii. This is a sign of supernatural giving. This is when people will look and say, “Only God. Only God can empower that kind of generosity. No normal, sane, right-minded person would just give away everything. Only God can empower generosity like that.
- iv. When Robert Jeffress was a child he played the accordion, and started to amass quite a bit of money. His parents signed him up to play at every kind of event that would take him. He was 16 he volunteered at a little church north of Dallas; one Sunday evening the pastor shared a vision to have a bus ministry. Kids from the inner city could come in and be saved. The only problem was that the church had no buses and no money. The pastor was

sure about it. He announced that the next Sunday night they were going to take a special offering. So all week Robert Jeffress prayed about what he was going to give. And God spoke very clearly – give everything in your bank account. Robert tried to talk God out of it, but he couldn't. He said it was the biggest decision he had ever made. Was he going to listen to God or not? He took out his checkbook, and gave all of his money. And he said he felt such relief. The lesson: When God speaks, you better answer, and you better answer completely to His call.

- v. I don't know if you will ever do this, or if God will ever call you to do this, but imagine giving away all that you have. All your savings; all your retirement; everything in your bank account. Imagine giving it all away, saving nothing for yourself. That's supernatural giving.

3. You beg to give.

- i. **2 Corinthians 8:1-4** "We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that was given to the churches of Macedonia: 2 During a severe trial brought about by affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 3 I can testify that, according to their ability and even beyond their ability, of their own accord, 4 they begged us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in the ministry to the saints"
- ii. We already talked much about the Macedonian churches. The church in Jerusalem was going through a difficult time due to persecution, so Paul was traveling around to different churches and raising a special offering. Of all the churches that gave, the Macedonian churches were the most generous. Paul tells us several things about them:
 - 1. They were suffering from a severe trial brought about by affliction.
 - 2. They were enduring extreme poverty.
 - 3. They gave beyond their ability.
 - 4. But most astonishingly, they begged to give.
- iii. When Paul visited the Macedonian churches, he probably saw their situation and did not ask them to contribute to the Jerusalem offering. They were in desperate need of help themselves. But the Macedonian churches told Paul they wanted to give. So it turned into a kind of debate. "We want to give." "No, you can't afford it." "Please let us give." "No way. We need to raise a special offering for you." "Please, you must let us participate in this offering."
- iv. When you beg to give, that's supernatural giving. That's when people will say, "Only God could empower such generosity."
- v. I hope you are never so poor that you have to beg to give. But try to imagine yourself being this generous. Let's say the church is raising money, and you want to give, but the pastor specifically tells you, "Don't give. You are going through a hard time." But you keep begging, "Please let me give. You have to let me give. You must let me participate. I really want to give." That's supernatural giving.

4. You give so much that you are criticized.

- i. **Mark 14:3-9** 3 While he was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper,, as he was reclining at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured it on his head. 4 But some were expressing indignation to one another: “Why has this perfume been wasted? 5 For this perfume might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and given to the poor.” And they began to scold her. 6 Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. Why are you bothering her? She has done a noble thing for me. 7 You always have the poor with you, and you can do what is good for them whenever you want, but you do not always have me. 8 She has done what she could; she has anointed my body in advance for burial. 9 Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”
- ii. Jesus is having dinner at Simon’s house. A woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, and poured it all out on Jesus. John also tells this story, and he tells us that the woman is Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. And he also says that Mary not only poured the perfume on Jesus’ head, but also on His feet, and then wiped His feet with her hair.
- iii. An alabaster jar was a beautiful and expensive vase with a long slender neck carved from a crystal-like rock, about 5-9 inches long. The perfume, nard, was very expensive perfume made from the root of a plan and imported from the mountains of India. In fact, this story tells us that it was worth 300 danarii, or 300 days of wages, or almost ten months of wages.
- iv. This was such an extravagant gift to Jesus that she was criticized. She wasn’t complimented. She wasn’t admired. She wasn’t praised. She was criticized.
- v. But not by Jesus. Jesus defended her. Jesus said that He was worth her gift.
- vi. What does it look like to give supernaturally? To give so much that people say, “Only God”? It’s when you give so much, so sacrificially, so extravagantly, that people criticize you – maybe your friends, your parents, even some in your church. Maybe you decide to sell your house, or your car, or give away all your retirement savings to the church. And maybe people criticize you for giving away so much, or for where you give it.
- vii. It’s one thing to be criticized for being too stingy. For not giving, or for giving too little. But when you come under criticism for giving too much, that’s a sign of supernatural giving.
- viii. A Christian business man was traveling in Korea. In a field by the side of the road was a young man pulling a rude plow while an old man held the handles. The businessman was amused and took a snapshot of the scene. “That is curious! I suppose these people are very poor,” he said to the missionary who was interpreter and guide to the party. “Yes,” was the quiet reply, “those two men happen to be Christians. When their church was being build, they were eager to give something toward it; but they had no money. So they decided to sell their one and only ox and give the proceeds to the church. This spring they are pulling the plow by themselves. The

businessman was silent for some moments. Then he said, "That must have been a real sacrifice." "They did not call it that," said the missionary, "they thought themselves fortunate that they had an ox to sell!"

- ix. I'm some people praised their generosity. But they probably were also criticized – perhaps by their friends, their neighbors, their children, their siblings, their wives, maybe even by some in the church.
- x. But criticism is not a reason to give less; it is sign that you are giving supernaturally.

III. CONCLUSION

1. What I've tried to do today is to give you a glimpse of mature generosity. Of what it looks like to reach the peak of generosity. And it may seem impossible for you to reach this level of supernatural giving. But this is God's will for us. God wants us to not just tithe, not just give beyond the tithe, but to give supernaturally. To give so much, so extravagantly, so sacrificially, that people look on and says, "Only God. Only God can inspire and empower and generate such generosity."
2. Wouldn't it be wonderful if people in Acadiana would say about Church Acadiana, "That's a generous church"? Wouldn't be wonderful if when you died people would say about you, "He/she was so generous"?
3. That's the goal. Not just to raise enough money to build our first building. But to truly become generous people – a generous church.

IV. WALK THROUGH THE COMMITMENT CARD

1. Today is Commitment Day. We are going to turn in our Commitment Cards. During the closing song, I'm going to ask you to walk forward to turn in your Commitment Card.
2. First, let me walk you through how to fill it out.
 - i. On the left side, fill out your name and contact information.
 - ii. The middle column is for non-tithers – those who don't yet give 10% of your gross income to the church. If that's you, then the middle green section is the part for you. Don't fill out the right white section.
 - iii. If you are a non-tither, then I want to challenge you to make a two-year commitment to one of three options:
 1. If you don't give regularly, then commit to becoming a Beginning Giver, giving 1%-4% of your gross income to the church.
 2. If you are already give 1-4% of your income to the church, then commit to giving 5-% percent.
 3. If you already give 5-9%, then commit to give a full tithe.
 4. So, if you are not a tither, then I don't want you to donate to Build to Equip. I just want to challenge you to increase your regular giving.
 - iv. If you are already a tither, giving 10% or more of your gross income to the church, then the far right section is for you – with the Build to Equip Logo. For you, the challenge is to give over and above your regular offering to Build to Equip.
 1. So, each time you give, you would give your regular tithe to the general fund, and then a certain amount to Build to Equip.

2. Let's talk about how to fill out that far right section.
 3. Let's start with the first blank (which is highlighted). If you are giving an initial offering today, like Lydia and I are giving a \$25,000 gift today, then write that amount in the first blank.
 4. In the second blank, write down the extra amount that you plan to give to Build to Equip on a regular basis (weekly, monthly, or yearly). This is not your regular tithe. This is the amount above your tithe. For Lydia and I, we give on a monthly basis, and we plan to give \$609.90 each month to the campaign.
 5. Let's move to the third blank. Add up what you plan to give on a regular basis over the course of two years, and put it in the third blank.
 6. The fourth blank is the sum of the two highlighted blanks. This is the total amount you are pledging to give to Build to Equip.
3. In a moment we are going to have a song.
 - i. Stay seated.
 - ii. Fill out your Commitment Card.
 - iii. Bring it forward and drop it off, along with your first fruit offering.
 - iv. Sing with us.