



GENEROSITY RESET

From Fundraising to Disciple-Making in the Local Church

A CHURCH LEADER RESOURCE FROM



© 2017 by GenerousChurch Inc
All rights reserved.

Published by GenerousChurch.



ISBN (ebook edition) 978-0-9981210-1-7

THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®) Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved.

Cover and Interior Design: Michael Sean Allen
Editor: James Armstrong

Want to keep growing in generosity?

www.GenerousChurch.com

20170123 Edition

NINE GENEROSITY RESETS

Mike's Story	4
From Programming Ministry to Making Disciples	6
From Inspecting Fruit to Deepening Roots	7
From a Linear Outcome to a Virtuous Cycle	8
From a Business Owner to a Loving Father	10
From Stewarding Resources to Sowing Generously	11
From an Internal Focus to an Outward Focus	13
From Increasing Giving to Unleashing Fruit-bearers	14
From Obtaining Knowledge to Practicing Faith	15
From Running Campaigns to Changing Culture	16
Mike's Reset	17
The Generosity Reset Team	21

MIKE'S STORY

Mike has been a pastor in a church in the Midwest for 13 years. He's committed to giving his life to this church, and the church has been multiplying and growing. Growth is a good thing, but it has brought its own set of struggles and frustrations. With growth came the need for greater resources. Mike is a disciple-maker, not a fundraiser, and the elders are mostly business professionals. Their views on how to solve this problem often conflicted with Mike's, and discussions to address the church's fiscal challenges met with resistance in both directions. Their shared dreams for the future were being jeopardized by a lack of resources and increasing conflict.



Most of the proposed “solutions” targeted the church members’ knowledge or vision for the church. For example, some of the elders wanted Mike to preach more on stewardship. Others believed a capital campaign was the

right solution. Still others pushed for a new set of small groups focused on finances. The elders assumed that if people simply knew what scripture said about money, and if they were taught the right financial principles, or if they had a clearer view of the vision and needs of the church, giving would increase and their institutional needs would be met.

Following months of leadership meetings seeking to address the challenges, in Mike's mind and heart all of the proposed solutions

fell short. He remained unconvinced that a sermon series, a giving campaign, or a small group solution-in-a-box were answers to their dilemma—but he couldn't come up with a better one.

Mike is not alone. A pastor whose church was facing similar financial pressures said, “I was ready to quit if the elders kept pushing me to preach another four-week series on stewardship.”

Though you may not relate to these pastors now, at some point in the future you probably will. Most churches face financial challenges, and in some seasons those challenges can be paralyzing. The highly structured, programmatic forms of ministry that many churches employ today require a significant investment of money, staff and energy to sustain. Some pastors compare the church to a machine or a factory that is always hungry for fuel and resources. The burden to resource the church through funding and volunteers usually falls on the shoulders of senior leadership leading many pastors to feel more like fundraisers or CEOs than shepherds or disciple-makers.

We are convinced this “industrial vision of ministry” is detrimental to the souls of church leaders and members, and we applaud the growing desire to rethink this model in many places. While a comprehensive discussion on this issue is beyond the scope of this book, we do want to focus on how this common ministry model can corner us into shortsighted and ultimately unsustainable funding strategies. The solutions that Mike and the church elders were considering are not bad. Many pastors have reported that sermons, small groups, and campaigns have boosted giving—for a season. But are these solutions enduring? Are they really addressing the underlying issues in our churches, or do they just temporarily provide financial solutions?

From Programming Ministry to Making Disciples

In 2003, I (Patrick) was in a conference room at North Point Community Church to discuss the “state of stewardship” in the U.S. church. I began by reporting the latest giving statistics. The picture was not a good one. Christians were giving less percentage-wise despite rising incomes and net worths. Leaders were struggling with how to engage large groups of people in their churches who gave nothing. I didn’t get too far through my report before Andy Stanley stopped me.

“THIS IS NOT A STEWARDSHIP PROBLEM,” HE SAID DEFINITELY. “THIS IS A LEADERSHIP PROBLEM.”

That single statement changed the conversation. Stewardship problems are often addressed with a new small group curriculum or sermon series—programming more ministry. A leadership problem is something deeper and more systemic. Andy’s comments launched GenerousChurch into a multiple-year journey to diagnose the church’s underlying leadership problems and to find more sustainable remedies. Our experience has shown that church leaders need to shift their focus from programming more ministry to making generous disciples. We need to discover new approaches that feel both authentic to the leader and bring spiritual growth to the giver.

From Inspecting Fruit to Deepening Roots

Jesus often used the metaphor of a tree to show the connection between a person's inner life and visible behavior. "A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit" (Matthew 7:18 ESV). Many church leaders are fixated on a certain behavior—the failure to give more money. The pressures to fund church programming cause pastors to narrow their focus on giving rather than on the deeper issues that are preventing it. This is a central leadership problem in the church today—we are trying to change behaviors rather than hearts. We are addressing *fruit* issues rather than *root* issues.

There is a solution. It starts when leaders consciously step back from the immediate demands of funding programs to see a person's entire life—all the fruit on all the branches. This usually reveals much more than a failure to give money. It uncovers uncharitable relationships, stinginess with time, a self-centered view of vocation, and a lack of empathy for the hurting. Seeing the whole tree of a person's life radically changes the leader's goal from temporarily replacing one bad fruit—boosting giving—to transforming the entire tree by going deeper—cultivating disciples who are generous in all areas of life.

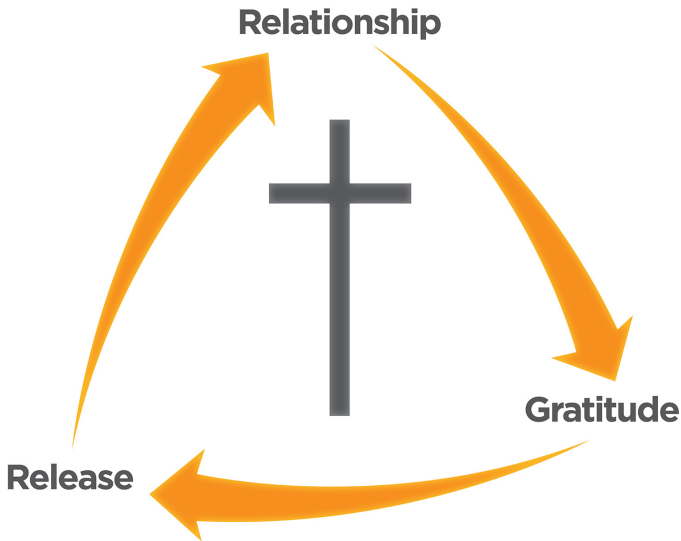
We call this deeper way Whole-Life Generosity. We believe it gets to the roots—the core life issues that must be engaged for sustainable change in people.

We define Whole-Life Generosity this way:
**AN OVERFLOWING LIFE RELEASED
TO GOD FOR OTHERS.**

From a Linear Outcome to Virtuous Cycle

Whole-Life Generosity is not an act; it's a way of living. It's not focused solely on financial giving; it is an integrated approach to life. It doesn't happen linearly, it's a virtuous cycle. In the center of it is Jesus, the model and motivator of a whole, generous life.

WHOLE-LIFE GENEROSITY CYCLE



With Jesus at the Center

All of life is lived in relationship with God.

All we have is received with gratitude from God.

All we are is released to God for the blessing of others.

©2017 GenerousChurch Inc. The Whole-Life Generosity Cycle
is a copyright of GenerousChurch. All Rights Reserved.

WHOLE-LIFE GENEROSITY IS ABOUT MUCH MORE THAN MONEY—IT’S ABOUT ALL THINGS.

Paul is referring to this comprehensiveness when he says, “And God is able to make *all* grace abound to you, so that in *all* things at *all* times having *all* that you need you will abound in *every* good work.”

(2 Corinthians 9:8 NIV, emphasis added)



PROFILE OF WHOLE-LIFE GENEROSITY

The profile of Whole-Life Generosity is different for every person. There’s no “generosity formula” other than asking God what He would have you do and listening to Him. Even though each person’s generosity is expressed differently, we’ve seen these qualities in individuals living a whole-life of generosity:

- Views God as the source of all resources (time, skills, money, relationships)
- Desires to give back in response to God’s grace
- Expresses daily gratitude to God and others
- Looks for those who need encouragement
- Cares for widows, orphans and those in need
- Welcomes the outsider and practices hospitality
- Intentionally seeks ways to serve
- Plans generous acts
- Creates margin with time and money to respond to others’ needs
- Sacrifices for others

From a Business Owner to a Loving Father

Scripture employs many different images when speaking about generosity and giving, but traditional financial ministries focus almost exclusively on one—the steward. They emphasize God’s ownership of everything and our stewardship of His property.

This idea is solidly biblical and helpful. We wonder if this metaphor is popular because it fits with the business mindset and good management principles that have come to dominate contemporary ministry culture. If we view the church as a factory, then the metaphor of managers makes perfect sense.

While acknowledging the usefulness of stewardship language, Whole-Life Generosity focuses on the more intimate language of God as Provider. He ensures that we have all that we need (2 Corinthians 9:8). He is our generous Father in heaven who provides for His children every good thing (James 1:17) and gives us our daily bread (Matthew 6:11).

Viewing God as the Provider, and not just the Owner, fundamentally changes how we view ourselves and our relationship to God. Rather than fearful stewards who must give an account for how we’ve managed God’s property, we can see ourselves as grateful recipients of God’s blessings, called to share everything with others. It exchanges the sterile owner-employee relationship for the more intimate father-child relationship emphasized by Jesus Himself (Luke 12:32).

From Stewarding Resources to Sowing Generously

A shift in the way we talk about God will also change the way we see ourselves and the church. Although our culture has taught us to think about ministry through industrial metaphors—the church is a machine run by managers who supply its resources—scripture uses agricultural imagery because it fits naturally within the context of the pre-industrial world. Let's not too quickly dismiss the farming analogy simply for that reason.

Operating a factory requires knowing the right tactics and principles to produce the right outcomes. It's methodical, mechanical, and formulaic. When we focus primarily on the allocation of resources and providing the right principles to increase a church's giving, we fail to address deeper discipleship issues.

For that reason, Whole-Life Generosity prefers the agricultural imagery of scripture where we find the call to sow generously in faith with seed provided by God. We plant seeds and water them, but we must trust God for the growth (1 Corinthians 3:5-6). It is a vision of investment predicated on relationships not principles.

We must be connected to the soil—the people—where we sow. And we must be in ongoing *relationship* with God, who provides the seed and causes its growth, so we may discern His leading.

Whole-Life Generosity
starts by acknowledging:

**“ALL OF LIFE IS LIVED IN RELATIONSHIP
WITH GOD.”**

And it leads us quickly to the second half of the
Great Commandment: living in loving relationships
with our neighbors.

(Mark 12:28-31)

This approach requires links between what we know, how we
feel and what we do as we are led by the Holy Spirit.

A look at Jesus' life and teaching indicates a great emphasis on
sowing generously with all of one's life. There are eight stories
in the book of Luke alone that illustrate this “sowing principle.”
Jesus prioritized relationship over the outcome. “Seek first
the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” He said, “and all
these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33 ESV). When
we start with our desired outcome—increased giving to the
church—we miss the life and source that makes sustainable
generosity possible--our relationship with God and each other.

From an Internal Focus to an Outward Focus

The industrial vision of ministry—constantly fueling the demands of the church’s programming—arises in large measure from an internal focus. In our consumer-oriented culture, we build churches that concentrate on providing goods and services to members. The church isn’t meant to be a vending machine, pumping out the programmatic goodies we want for our own comfort and convenience. The church is God’s missional agent for demonstrating and advancing His Kingdom. God pours Himself out to us in grace, empowering us with natural and spiritual gifts that are meant for the building up of the Body and for loving our neighbors well.

Jesus is on a grand mission to make all things new, and He’s invited His church to join Him in it. Whole-Life Generosity focuses us on that outward mission, giving us tremendous joy in knowing that the lavish abundance God has showered upon us is for blessing others. A Kingdom focus catalyzes the congregation for a glorious adventure with Jesus, where we learn to deeply rely on Him for His empowering grace to bring flourishing to our churches and our communities. Everyone plays a part in this exciting mission, because God has given each of us gifts and talents—financial and non-financial—that we can share with others. Whole-Life Generosity focuses on our purpose: loving Jesus with all we have and all we are as we enjoy



true life in His kingdom. Knowing our purpose and living in it increases our joy and enables us to freely give even as we have freely received (Matthew 10:8).

From Increasing Giving to Unleashing Fruit-bearers

Because Whole-Life Generosity is a call to release “all we are,” narrow categories don’t fit. Measuring success by a single metric—increased financial giving—limits vision of success to the fiscal. Whole-Life Generosity looks for evidence of the fruit of the Spirit throughout a person’s life. As we live and lead others into Whole-Life Generosity, the fruit becomes evident in how people sow their time, skills, influence, forgiveness and, yes, their money.

The fruitfulness, of course, is going to look different in each person’s life. Whole-Life Generosity recognizes the diversity of callings and vocations God has given to each person. The ground each sower is called to work is different, and we must apply God’s principles to our unique context. There is no formula or percentage that fits everyone. It’s not about checking a box; it’s being led by the Spirit.

Everyone can excel in the grace of Whole-Life Generosity. It applies equally to every person in the church—the rich, the poor, and everyone in between. All are valued because every sower has something valuable to contribute, not just those “entrusted with much.” The role of local church leaders is to unleash these generous disciples to sow for the Kingdom wherever and however the Lord has called them.

From Obtaining Knowledge to Practicing Faith

Research shows that believers' generosity is linked to their knowledge of scripture. While essential, knowledge alone is insufficient. God doesn't want us to just know the Scriptures; God wants us to know *Him*. Jesus' ministry showed that right knowledge without love for Him was just religiosity, not genuine faith. Whole-Life Generosity helps us progress from learning biblical principles to actually following Jesus: getting to know and share His heart.

**INTIMACY WITH OUR FATHER, WITH
JESUS OUR GOOD SHEPHERD,
AND WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT OUR
COMFORTER CALMS OUR FEARS
AND EMBOLDENS OUR LOVE.**

Jesus leads us into His kingdom and reveals its mind-boggling abundance. We're enabled to throw off the culture's false teaching that scarcity reigns. As we delight in the Triune God's inestimable love, our eyes are opened to God's lavish generosity towards us. Increasingly, we're able to obey Jesus' command not to worry about material things, trusting that our Provider knows our needs and won't be stingy. We learn to *experience* God's goodness, not just memorize Bible verses about it. As our faith is enriched from head knowledge to increased heart knowledge, our joy increases and we become more open-handed.

From Running Campaigns to Changing Culture

A group of elders at Mike's church were proposing a common solution to their budget gap—a giving campaign. These efforts are usually based on how to “Get more people to give more money to the ministry.” The type of leadership we need today isn't based on how to communicate the church's operating budget in a more compelling way, seasoned with more discipleship language. Nor do we need leadership that merely takes the “best practices” of para-church ministries' funding models and applies them to the local church. We don't need leaders who run church campaigns; we need leaders who change the church's culture.

That is why Whole-Life Generosity starts with the personal walk of generous leaders. It examines the key leaders' relationships with God, how they recognize God's provision and how they are growing in gratitude as a result. It asks whether they are releasing all they have, with joy, to God and others. It's only when the key leaders themselves experience transformation around Whole-Life Generosity that they will have the moral authority to lead others. They must model it, not just talk about it. Simply put, Whole-Life Generosity is built on the fact that more is caught than taught.

As pastors experience this new vision of generosity, their focus can shift from the immediate need to boost giving to cultivating deeper connections with the leaders around them. Rather than trying to *use* the people in their church, they can

sow a vision for a richer relationship with God and cultivate grateful disciples who will *want* to release all they are to bless others. The leaders' focus moves from what they want *from* their people to what they want *for* them.

Rather than being a short-term and unsustainable giving campaign,

**WHOLE-LIFE GENEROSITY IS A
CONTINUOUS APPROACH THAT MAY
TRANSFORM THE ENTIRE CULTURE OF A
CHURCH, BEGINNING WITH THE SENIOR
LEADERSHIP.**

Mike's Reset

That is exactly what has taken root in Mike's church. After 18 months of engaging Whole-Life Generosity, Mike has found refreshment. He and his family are creating their own stories of generosity; he is influencing the leaders around him through richer relationships, and they are starting to see good fruit. Rather than a sermon series on giving, Mike is weaving the ideas and values of Whole-Life Generosity into all of the preaching and teaching ministries of the church. As a result, Mike reported that the leaders are beginning to "catch it." They no longer see "giving" or "stewardship" as an isolated, short-term program of the church. Instead, they've integrated Whole-Life Generosity as a main pillar of their congregation.

Although Mike's church has further to go as they integrate Whole-Life Generosity, early signs of holistic fruit show exciting promise:

- Stories of whole-life, sacrificial generosity are being shared throughout the congregation. One family has made the decision to adopt. A CEO is helping an inner-city ministry design leadership curriculum for youth. Another family took a family of six who needed living assistance during an illness into their home for an extended period. One of the church staff decided to forgo the sale of an unused car in order to give it to a family in need.
- With money raised through a special offering, Mike's church was the lead funder among a group of churches from within the community looking to plant a new church in another part of the city.
- There was a noted increase in the number of people giving for the first time. Also the church's Christmas offering exceeded prior years without any special appeals.
- The conversation at the elder level has shifted from worry over financial affairs to deeper, spiritual matters. Every elder and deacon in the church has signed a leadership covenant that includes moving toward Whole-Life Generosity with all they are and have.



- One of the church's key businessmen decided to step into the role of missions pastor. The church saw some 6,000 people make professions of faith through a partnership with frontline ministries overseas.
- During a recent summer month where financial giving to the church was in a slump, the elders decided to enter into a season of fasting and prayer. The next month saw the most money given for that particular month in the church's history.
- The church currently gives almost 25% of its revenue outside the four walls of the church. The long-term goal is to see that number reach 50%.

Mike and his leaders do not have a vision to build the largest megachurch in their city, which would demand ever-increasing amounts of capital to operate. Instead, their desire is to be a church that releases all they are to God to be used for the blessings of others in order to see an abundant Kingdom harvest for the glory of God.

Leadership author Max De Pree said, “The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality.” The reality we face is that popular ministry models are expensive to operate, burdensome on leaders, too internally focused, and often force us to prioritize short-term financial programs ahead of long-term healthy discipleship. We believe that Whole-Life Generosity can begin to change this reality by focusing on the root issues of our relationship with God and by integrating gratefulness, generosity, and missional purpose into the entire culture of a church, starting with the leadership.

NEXT STEP

Begin your journey to a Generosity Reset by taking the next steps found in the Generosity Reset videos.

Subscribe at www.GenerousChurch.com/Reset

WOULD YOU LIKE TO EXPERIENCE A GENEROSITY RESET?

We want to offer you a free subscription to the Generosity Reset videos, a series of six 3-5 minute videos sent to your inbox to encourage you to take the next steps as a generosity leader.

Go to www.GenerousChurch.com/Reset to subscribe.

The Generosity Reset Team

Special thanks to the GenerousChurch Content Team of writers and contributors to this book:

Sharon Epps, Content Team Lead

Skye Jethani, Author, Speaker, and Pastor

Patrick Johnson, Founder of GenerousChurch

Amy Sherman, Senior Fellow Sagamore Institute's
Center on Faith in Communities



Church leaders desire to see everyone in their churches living generously. That's a part of being a disciple of Jesus. Yet large groups of people in churches today don't give. Many leaders have no idea how to change this issue outside of a capital campaign or program.

If this continues, it will be difficult to lead and grow the church into the future. Twenty-percent of people can't sustain eighty-percent of the ministry over the long haul. This model will not last. A thriving church of generous people is God's plan to bring the Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

GenerousChurch wants to equip you as a leader to unleash generous givers in every area of life. We're going to show you an authentic way to confidently lead people into whole-life generosity. You, your leaders and your church will be blessed as you step into this God-adventure. We've seen it happen many, many times with our church partners.

You've read *Generosity Reset*. Now go to www.GenerousChurch.com/Reset to take your next step.

www.GenerousChurch.com

WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT GENEROUS CHURCH



Growing people in whole-life generosity is a profound discipleship ministry. *GenerousChurch* and their work is helping us change our culture from one of 'giving to fund a budget' to 'giving time, service and resources as an act of worship'.

- Trish Nelson, Executive Pastor, Christ Church Anglican

We went from struggling to meet budget to celebrating a culture of generosity.

- Bryan Clark, Senior Pastor, Lincoln Berean Church

Seeing the eyes of my leaders opened to discover their potential for generosity was a blessing to me as a pastor.

- Greg Ealey, Senior Pastor, Paseo Baptist Church



Christian Living / Leadership
Publisher's Retail: \$4.95



GENEROUSCHURCH™

Want to keep growing in generosity?

WWW.GENEROUSHURCH.COM