Acts **Dan Hamel**
Week 16—God Moves in Power through Generosity: Acts 13-21 November 12 & 15, 2026

Two weeks ago, I had lunch with a good friend who is a missionary in Japan. He and his family moved there over five years ago, and two years ago they planted a church in a city where over 99% of the people do not know Jesus and the vast majority will spend their entire life with no chance to hear the gospel. I asked him how things are going, and he had so many encouraging reports to share. They hang out in the park almost every weekend, playing music, throwing frisbee, and connecting with anyone who wants to talk. They met a guy there about a year ago, shared a nice conversation, and invited him to church. Most people in Japan have never attended a church before, but he came. After a few months of listening to the sermons and having deep conversations with them, he decided to become a Christian and place his faith in Christ. He's been a believer now for less than a year, but has grown in his faith, decided to become a pastor himself, and enrolled in seminary. I told my friend how excited I was. He said, "Thank you! The Creek helps pay our salary. The Creek helps fund our church. The Creek helps support the seminary in Japan. All of that is possible because of your church." I was so encouraged by the impact of our partnership.

Last week, as we talked about generosity in the book of Acts, we saw how incredibly generous the early Christians and the first church were. Generosity was one of their most noticeable, hallmark characteristics. We asked why the early church was so generous and we learned it was because God is generous. Generosity is core to God's character, so it naturally works its way into the life of God's people in God's church.

Today, as we continue our study in the book of Acts, we want to focus not on why we are generous, but on what happens when we are generous. We'll see that **when God's people are generous, lives are impacted for God's glory**.

We see this in Acts 13.

> Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:1-3)

While this church was worshiping God, he spoke to them and said, "There are people who have never heard of Jesus. I want these men to go on a mission trip to tell them." The church said OK, they prayed, for them and "sent them off," which of course doesn't mean they simply waved and said goodbye. To "send off" means that they sponsored the sending. This is like parents who send their kids off to college. It's not only a hug at the door—they are supporting their kids, financially funding them. That's what the church in Antioch did. The reality is that it took money to buy a ticket on the boat; it took money to have lodging and food and the necessities of life. God wanted these guys to tell people who had never heard Jesus about him, because people in the church gave, the mission trip was fully funded.

During their trip, they went to Antioch in Syria, Salamis, Paphos, Pamphylia, Perga, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe. [View the online sermon to see a map of the places they visited.] The scholarly estimate is that during this first missionary journey, over 30,000 people had the chance to hear about Jesus for the first time. Many of them placed their faith in Jesus, became Christians, and were saved. Several new churches were planted. All of that was possible because the church in Antioch gave. We learned several weeks ago that the first people on earth to be called "Christians" were in what city? The city of Antioch. Part of what helped them earn the name "Christian" was their extreme generosity—generosity that helped change lives.

On Paul's second missionary journey, he visited Philippi. He told people about Jesus, led many of them to faith, and started a church, and then the church in Philippi sent him off to go tell others about Jesus. Listen to what he wrote to the Philippians: "In the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need" (Philippians 4:15-16). When Paul says "you sent me aid more than once," it means they sent him finances so he could continue in his missionary work and tell more people about Jesus.

This is how Paul describes his relationship with the Philippians: "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:3-5). Paul said they shared a "partnership in the gospel." He is specifically referencing the fact that this church gave generously to allow him to accomplish his missionary work. They were companions, co-laborers, each doing their part.

When you give to the church today, we get to do the same thing as the church in Acts. Tanner, who is telling people about Jesus in Japan, is just one of the many people we have sent off to take the gospel to places in need! Look at all the places where we support missionaries in their work. [View the online sermon to see the map.] Like the church in Acts sent missionaries to places that hadn't heard about Jesus, our church sends missionaries to places that haven't yet heard about Jesus.

Of course, the gospel impact of changed lives isn't only overseas. Over the past five years, we've seen over 1,000 people make a faith decision and be baptized. That's a big number, but look at the names! [View the online sermon for the list of names.] Every one of these names is someone who has taken a step in their faith with Jesus. Isn't that incredible? When you give, you are helping people connect with Jesus!

Last week, we were joined on stage by two dozen families who pledged to raise their kids as faithful disciples of Jesus. Over the last few years, over a hundred young families have made the same promise. When you give, you help invest in these young households.

Because of that, our children's ministry is at record capacity, and because of that, we decided to renovate the children's ministry area. I'll show you some pictures. [View the online sermon for photos of the renovation.] We have a creek that runs through the middle of the area, 3D trees and

clouds, scripture that wraps the entire facility. When you give, you are helping kids grow up knowing about Jesus.

When God's people are generous, lives are changed for God's glory. The early church didn't give only to advance the gospel work around the world; they also gave to show gospel-centered love to people in their own community. We get to do the same thing here.

- In just the last few weeks, two people in our church learned of a need and gave cars to families they wanted to help. Like in Acts, they aren't claiming their possessions are their own and are freely sharing with anyone as an expression of God's love.
- Because you give, we've been able to help sponsor families who are adopting children or fostering children to provide a home to kids in need.
- We've given out 19,000 pounds of food this year.
- We've provided pods for 37,000 loads of laundry this year.
- We've provided scholarships to 175 families for their kids to go to summer camps.
- We've helped those facing homelessness in central Indiana.
- We've sponsored community development on the near-east side.
- We support mentorships and Bible teaching programs in the local school systems.
- We fund ministry in the prisons to connect with inmates behind bars.

Every once in a while, I'll have someone talk to me about investment opportunities such as real estate, the stock market, or commodities, and people are excited and hopeful to find an investment vehicle that can provide a great return, something into which they can put $1,000 today and in ten years it will worth $3,000 or $5,000. People love great investments with great returns. What better investment, what greater return could you possibly get, than helping make a Christ-centered impact on someone's life? It's wise to invest for retirement, but when we give, we are investing for eternity!

Generosity flows from God's provision! The early church truly believed that everything they had came from God and belonged to God, so rather than using all their resources for themselves, they freely and generously shared them with others. Once the Apostle Paul was taking up a collection of money to help people suffering from a famine in Jerusalem. He asked the church in Corinth to give.

> And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work….Now (God) who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion. (2 Corinthians 9:8, 10-11)

Three times the Bible tells us that what we have we have from God:

- God is able to bless you abundantly.
- God will also supply and increase your store of seed.
- You will be enriched in every way.

Every good thing we have in life, we have because of God. Why has God blessed us? So that we can be a conduit of that blessing to others. Look:

- You will abound in every good work.
- So that you can be generous on every occasion.

When we stop to remember that all we have comes from God, it makes giving a lot easier, and it makes not giving a lot crazier.

Let me tell you how this works in the Hamel family. Before Keren and I ever spend a single penny of money, we give at least 10% of our income to the Lord. Just like in the Christians in Acts did, we give it to the church. It is the thing we are most excited to do with our money. We've done that since we were married. No questions. No debates. No exceptions. We always put God first. But it's been so cool with our kids to have conversations about this, and to train them in how to honor God with money. Our kids don't have a regular allowance, but they get money sometimes as gifts or for exceptional behavior. They each have their own piggy banks. But every time they come into money, whether it's $1, $5, or $10, before we put the money into the piggy bank we talk to them about God and giving. Who is the source of every blessing in our lives? God. What's the very first thing we do with every dollar we are ever given? We put God first. What's the minimum amount we should ever give God? 10%. How much do you want to give him from what you have? Sometimes they say 10%, usually they say more, sometimes they say all of it—and I have to say, "Let's not go crazy now." We take a portion of every dollar and the kids put it into the Jesus jar. That jar fills up with coins and bills over the course of months. Once our Jesus jar is full, I bring all three kids into the worship center and I circle them up around one of these tables. Everyone we have comes from God, right? Yes. You chose to give some of it back to God, right? Yes. What does this money go to? This money goes to help people learn about Jesus. This money goes to help through the fall family block party. This money goes to help kids go to camp. This money goes to help missionaries take the gospel to other countries. This money goes to help translate the Bible into languages so people in other parts of the world can read God's Word for the very first time. Yes. Yes. Yes. Is there anything more important we can do with our money? No. Is there anything that could bring us more joy? No! We are so excited. Then we pray and thank God for the chance to give. We ask that our giving will bring him glory and advance his kingdom, then they put the money inside the boxes. Parents, teach this to your kids. How cool would it be if every week we saw a dozen families with children and teenagers huddled up, praying and giving and training our kids in generosity! Don't only model it for those younger than you; put it into practice in your own life!

Many of you are doing this in such an inspiring, commendable way. Your generosity is what allows our church to do everything we do. Your generosity is the reason I, and our entire staff team around here, have a job. I want to honor you and encourage you for the ways you so faithfully give. Well done. Others here haven't yet begun the journey of trusting God with their finances, putting him first, and giving. So here is my simple encouragement: Talk to God. Pray to the Lord with open hands and an open heart and say: "I want to honor you here. I want to trust you and live a generous life. I want to extend compassion and help advance your kingdom. Show me what that looks like."

This is exactly what we see in God's Word. "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

So pray, ask God to show you want to give, and then give with joy! If you've never made a meaningful, significant gift like that before, it can be hard and scary! But it's worth it! You will never look back and never regret trusting God and putting him first and leaning into generosity. I've regretted 1,000 ways I've used money over my life. I have never once ever regretted using resources to love God and love others.

One time during his ministry Jesus was asked what the most important command in the entire Bible is, and he said to love God and love people. Jesus said all of life comes down to those two things: love God and love people. If that's the most important command in Scripture, if that's what all of life is about, loving God and loving others, generosity is an overflow of love for God and love for others.

This is one of those areas where what really matters is not only what we think or what we know or how we feel in our hearts, but what we actually do! Once Jesus told about the traveler who was beaten, robbed, and left for dead on the side of the road. A priest passed by, saw the need and did nothing. A Levite passed by, saw the need, and did nothing. The two religious people, spiritual people, theologically trained people with seminary degrees, did nothing. But then the foreigner from the wrong side of the tracks saw the man lying in the ditch. He treated his wounds, put him on his donkey, took him to an inn, and paid for his expenses. The priest and the Levite knew the right theology. They had seminary degrees. They knew the Bible and all the answers to the religious questions. But who did what God wanted? Who lived a life of love and compassion? The one who actually helped!

When the early church saw a need—a need in their community or a need around the world—they didn't simply say a prayer, they didn't hope someone else met it. They stepped up and gave generously. That is part of what made the early church so great and what allowed the church to spread around the world. Let's pray the same is true in our lives!