Acts **Dan Hamel**
Week 16—God Moves in Power through Generosity **November 5 & 8, 2026**

Think about the healthiest church you can imagine. A church that is vibrant and growing. Dynamic and deep. Faithful to the Scriptures. Centered on Jesus. Filled with the Spirit. The sort of church you would be delighted to be a part of. The sort of church you would love to bring a friend to. The sort of church that is so ideal that you think, "If I could just bring a person who doesn't believe in Jesus to *this* church, surely it would lead to a life changing faith decision." That kind of church. The best expression of church possible. What attributes or characteristics would describe the people of that church and the interactions within the church? What would it feel like to be a part of that community? Take a moment; share with the person next to you what comes to your mind.

I hear a lot of people say words like love, grace, warmth, joy, community, kindness, worship, faith. There are so many good attributes. One of the qualities you would certainly experience in an exceptionally healthy church is generosity, a pervasive spirit of sharing and selflessness, joyfully and spontaneously meeting needs and caring for one another with love. Generosity was one of the central qualities of the church in the book of Acts. We've been studying the life of the early church in Acts for four months. We've seen how God moved in power through prayer, through the gospel, through the church, through spiritual gifts, and today as we study Acts, we are going to see how God moves in power through generosity!

> All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. (Acts 2:44-45)
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> All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet. (Acts 4:32-37)

Acts 2 and Acts 4 are not only the first picture of the church, but they are also a self-portrait of the church. The church is describing what their community was like in the earliest days, closest to the time of Christ, before compromise or dilution.

The early church was filled with generosity:

- They had everything in common.
- They sold property and possessions to give to those in need.

- No one claimed their possessions were their own.
- They shared everything they had.
- There were no needy persons among them.
- They sold land or houses and the proceeds were distributed to those in need.

The early church, the church at its closest to the person of Jesus, the church before it was diluted and impacted by imperfect leaders and misguided decisions, was a church marked by extreme generosity. This wasn't just normal generosity, like people dropping an extra $20 in the offering basket. It wasn't simply disciplined, routine giving, with people bringing 10% of their income with a faithful, consistent tithe. This was extreme generosity! No one claimed their possessions were their own. Sometimes people even sold houses and land and brought the equivalent of hundreds of thousands of dollars to the church and said, "Use it to take care of people. Use it to help more people know about Jesus." The result was that there were no needy people among them. Generosity was an unmistakable part of the life of the early church and of Jesus' followers.

Generosity was not simply one attribute of many, nor was it low or middle tier in terms of importance. It was a core, central pillar of the life and DNA of the early church. When you look at people, they may have dominant attributes. For example, when you look at Shaquile O'Neal, you think, "He's huge!" His size is his dominant quality. Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson's dominant quality is his strength. The actor Owen Wilson's dominant quality is his nose. These attributes are unmistakable. They stand out. They draw your attention in unavoidable ways. That's what generosity was like in the early church.

Let's dig deeper into that theme and try to understand why the first Christians and the early church were so generous. Their generosity was an obvious and unmistakable quality, but why? When you read and study the Scriptures and really press into the question, the answer is clear: the early church and the early Christians were so generous because God is generous. The generosity of the church was not a random, accidental attribute; it flowed from the character of God! This is a part of God's character that a lot of us haven't stopped to think deeply about. Today we're going to do that, taking a deep dive into the theology of generosity. We'll see how generosity flows from the character of God.

God the Father is Generous

The entire universe flows from God's abundance. The creation of the world is an expression of his generosity. Every good thing in the world is an expression of God's generosity toward us.

- "(God) himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else" (Acts 17:25).
- "'Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.' Then God said, I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food'" (Genesis 1:28-29).

- “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights” (James 1:17).
- “(God) richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment” (James 6:17).
- “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).
- “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).

God is generous. There is no way to mistake it: God loves to give! God consistently gives. The world is a gift. Life itself is a gift. Every blessing we have in our lives is a gift. Jesus is a gift. God the Father is generous. This was one of the most important lessons about God the Father that Jesus chose to teach his followers. We know from Scripture that there are dozens and dozens of attributes of God. He is holy, he is faithful, he is righteous, he is just, he is compassionate, he is patient, he is omnipotent. There are so many wonderful, beautiful, important parts of God’s character that Jesus could have told us about, but he chose to spend a lot of time teaching about our Father’s generous heart!

> “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7:9-11)

Jesus wanted us to know that we have a generous father. God loves to give.

I have a lot of imperfections. I make a lot of mistakes. I have sinful desires. I am selfish. There are so many areas where I wish I was a better person. But I can tell you one thing—even with all those flaws, a large percentage of the mental and emotional focus in my life is directed toward giving my children the best life they can possibly have. I want them to have the best experiences they can possibly have, the best friends they can possibly have, the best education they can possibly have, the best church they can possibly have, the best coaches they can possibly have. I am not alone. Almost every dad I talk to spends their days and their nights constantly strategizing about what would be best for their kids, and then laying down their life, embracing any adversity and hardship, to make that happen. Jesus says if sinful fathers are that generous to give every good thing possible to their children, how much more generous is your heavenly father! God the Father is generous.

God the Son is Generous.

Have you reflected on the life and ministry of Jesus from this angle before? Many people would say Jesus was the wisest man to ever live. Jesus was the most compassionate and merciful man to ever live. Jesus was the most loving man to ever live. All of that is true. But if you journeyed with him for three years, you would also say Jesus was the most generous man to ever live. He was constantly giving himself away.

Do you remember when people were bringing kids to Jesus for him to bless them? The disciples were harsh. “Do you think Jesus has time for your toddler? He’s the Messiah. He has places to go, sermons to preach, people to heal. Do you realize how important he is?” “When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me’” (Mark 10:14). He was so generous with his time and his love.

Do you remember when Jesus was at a wedding, and the host ran out of wine? That would only happen to an impoverished family with very little means. It would have brought great social and reputational embarrassment. Jesus’ mother made him aware of the need, and he said to the servants, “Do you see those six stone jars, those jars that hold 20-30 gallons each? Fill them up.” Then he turned the water into wine and the people were served. When the master of the ceremony tasted it, he “called the bridegroom aside and said, ‘Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now’” (John 2:9-10). Jesus didn’t only fill a few glasses, and he didn’t just make the wine ok. He told the servants to fill them to the brim, then Jesus blessed this newlywed couple and their families with 150 gallons of wine. It wasn’t the cheap stuff; it wasn’t the $7 box wine. It was the best wine on the entire menu, given in hyper abundance. The value of that much wine in the ancient world was between $50,000 - $100,000. Talk about a nice wedding gift! Jesus is excessive with his provision.

Do you remember when Jesus came down from a mountainside where he had been preaching to find large crowds with hundreds and hundreds of people following him? A man started shouting, “Unclean! Unclean!” That meant a leper, someone who had a life-changing and ultimately life-ending disease that was so contagious no one could be near him, was nearby. He came as close as he could, knelt before Jesus and said: “‘Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.’ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’” (Matthew 8:2-3). Jesus was so incredibly generous with his compassion, his touch, his mercy.

Do you remember when Jesus’ disciples were fighting for who would have the highest place of honor among them? They wanted to know who would have positions #2 and #3 in the kingdom and rule over the others, a question that showed much selfishness, greed, and pride. Jesus heard it. You know it broke his heart. He had been with them for three years, and his teaching hadn’t gotten into their heads and hearts yet. He circled them up and said, “All this focus on winning, on being the first, on being at the top, on being esteemed by others—that’s how the world operates! But that’s not what life is like in the kingdom of God.” “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

The cross is the ultimate act of generosity in the history of the universe. Jesus gave us life for us, the just for the unjust. The sinless for the sinners. Even while emptying his life for us and for the world, Jesus saw his mother and made sure she was cared for. He saw the repentant thief, a convicted criminal, someone who had made an absolute mess of his life and had literally nothing to offer Jesus, and the Lord looked at him with love and said, “Today, you will be with me in

paradise.” He looked at those who walked by and cursed him and gave them forgiveness —"Father, do not hold their sins against them.”

Jesus is not only the most generous person to ever live, but he is also the pinnacle, the high point, the ultimate expression of generosity in human form. Anyone who follows him, and any church that belongs to him and worships him and follows him, would very naturally take on his generous nature.

When I was growing up, generosity was not a part of my life or my character. I don’t know exactly why. It could have had to do with growing up in poverty—my parents filed for bankruptcy when I was a kid, we were on food stamps, we drove really old cars that constantly broke down. My mom was a single parent working multiple jobs. We had nothing. That probably contributed to a scarcity mindset in my life, making me insecure about what little I had, and causing me to assume I needed to hoard and protect. The thought of buying a gift for another person, or buying a meal for another person, or sharing—those things literally never entered my mind. But I got a little bit older, and I matured in my faith. By the time I was in my twenties, I moved to a new town and served a church as a pastor. I made a new best friend, who I hung out with several times a week. While I was around him, I observed something I had never seen before: continuous, spontaneous, almost instinctive generosity. In a way that brought no attention to himself, every time there was a chance to give, he gave. I can’t tell you the number of times I saw him pick up a meal at a restaurant, or pay for a vacation for a family that didn’t have many resources, or help a student with a college bill, or sponsor someone for a mission trip, or help someone buy a car, or underwrite a family’s expense to adopt a child, or help someone with a downpayment on a house—any way he could give, he gave; any time he could meet a need, he did. It was a default; it was second nature. I don’t know exactly how, but by God’s grace, something in my heart and in my life changed because of being friends with this guy and spending so much time with him. I am not trying to say I’m the most generous person in the world now, but I’ve personally witnessed this profound shift from self-focused and hoarding to others focused and giving, finding great joy and delight in generosity, and it all started with a close friendship with a really generous man. Being close to him, and seeing that part of his life, I wanted to become more like him. The same should be true for every one of us as we grow in our friendship with Jesus. No matter how we grew up, no matter our natural disposition, no matter the current behavior pattern, if we spend time with Jesus, and grow in our friendship with him, we will grow to become more like him in generosity!

God the Spirit is Generous

The Bible teaches that God the Father and God the Son send God the Spirit to us as a gift. The Spirit himself is a gift, but he is a gift himself that keeps on giving.

- “Now to each one the manifestation (gifts) of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:7). Every person who believes in Jesus is not only given the Holy Spirit to

live inside of them but is also given gifts from the Holy Spirit. Those gifts are given not for our good but for the good of others—they are given to be given.

- "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:10). The Spirit has given you gifts, and they are to be given to other people.
- "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). The Spirit comes and enriches our lives in every possible way.

When you look at the first Christians and the early church in the book of Acts, generosity is one of the pronounced qualities—you can't miss it. It's extreme, inspirational, counter-cultural generosity. And it wasn't by accident. It wasn't random. The generosity of Christians flows from the generosity of God. Here's the simplest way to say it: **Because God is generous, God's people are generous**. In fact, I would be so bold as to say one of the hallmark signs that a person has truly come to know God, trust God, love God, and grow in their walk with God, is how much the generosity of God has begun to shape and characterize their life.

I'm friends with a young adult in our church who learned Spanish in school for 4-5 years. She had all the vocabulary and all the syntax. She knew the components, but in practice her speech was clunky; it didn't flow effortlessly. She had the chance to spend an entire semester studying in Spain, living with a local family, totally immersed in the language. In no time, the language came instinctively, naturally, with a perfect accent, flowing right out. As we spend time with God, walking with him, growing in our faith, worshiping him, coming to know him better, our hearts will become more like his, our love more like his, our generosity more like his. Let's pray toward that end!