

Practice

Exercise: A spontaneous act of generosity

- Set aside a specific amount of money. It can be a little or a lot, whatever you decide. But before you name an amount, pause and open your heart to God and see if a number comes to mind.
- Take cash out of an ATM to carry with you, or earmark the amount in your debit account to have ready when the right opportunity comes.
- Ask God to give you an opportunity to bless someone.
- Then, just keep your eyes open.

We're not trying to solve global poverty or be heroic in this practice, but to tap into the outflow of the Trinity's generous love to all.

Here's a few ideas to spark your imagination:

- Buy someone in line behind you coffee or lunch.
- Anonymously pay for someone's meal.
- Drop off groceries or a gift to someone you know in need or in a time of suffering.
- Send cash digitally to help a friend with medical bills or expenses they can't currently pay.
- Buy a gift for someone to encourage or bless them.
- Give away one of your possessions.

Practice

We recognize that we're all at different places in our stage of discipleship and season of life. To that end, we've added a Reach Exercise to each of the four weeks for those of you who have the time, energy, and desire to go further in generosity.

Reach Exercise: Up your spontaneous act of generosity in either frequency or intensity.

- **Frequency:** Practice a spontaneous act of generosity two to three times this week, or every day! Whatever you desire. It doesn't have to be expensive or elaborate, just take small, frequent steps into giving.
- **Intensity:** Give in a larger, more sacrificial way. You could take money you've been saving for a large purchase, and give some or all of it away to the poor; or you could sell a valuable possession and give to someone in need. We recommend you only do this if you feel a stirring in your heart to give in this way and have the faith to follow the Spirit's gentle invitation.

As you give, watch what happens in your heart ...

Go Deeper

Read

Giving Is the Good Life by Randy Alcorn

Chapters 1-4 (pages 1-60)

Listen

Rule of Life Podcast on Generosity

Episode 01

Reflect

Reflection is a key component in our spiritual formation.

Millenia ago, King David prayed in Psalm 139v23-24:

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

The South African professor Trevor Hudson has said, “We don’t change from our experience, we change when we *reflect* on our experience.”

If you want to get the most out of this Practice, you need to do it and then reflect on it. Through this simple act, we are learning to pay attention to the movements of the Spirit in our heart.

Before your next time together with the group for Session 02, take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the questions on the following page.

☉ Reflect

01 Where did I feel resistance?

02 Where did I feel joy?

03 Where did I most experience God’s nearness?

Discuss (Optional)

For those of you who would like to slow down and integrate this practice more deeply into your life, we've created four optional group sessions in addition to our video-based sessions.

The Scriptures have so much to say about the generous life that we were not able to include in this Practice. These extra sessions highlight four more key passages, along with discussion questions to provoke deeper Bible study and conversation.

Circle up in a living room or a quiet, relaxed place, read the Scripture together, and enjoy a good discussion using the following page.

Read this introduction

The Western world, with its consumerist systems and ploys, is designed to make us reach for more, close our grips on what we have, and “look out for number one.” Through this Practice, we hope to expose not just the force of this cultural current, but the illusion of where it leads: not to a good and wide life, but to a smaller one filled with fear, greed, and discontentment. In this passage, Paul shows how the upside-down Kingdom has an economy much different from our own. To give is not to lose, but to gain. And to live with open hands is to discover a fuller life under a loving Father who is more generous than we can imagine.

Discuss (Optional)

Read this Scripture

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 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. 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. As it is written:

“They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor;
their righteousness endures forever.”

Now he 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, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

—2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Discuss the text

- 01 Which portion of this passage stands out most to you? Why?
- 02 In verse 6 Paul likens giving to “sowing.” In what ways is generosity like sowing a seed and reaping a harvest?
- 03 Verse 7 contains three attitudes around giving: reluctance, compulsion, or joy. Which do you most experience when giving, and how so?
- 04 Pay attention to the “alls” in verse 8: If we believed this about God, how would it impact how we relate to our finances and possessions? How do you think our view of God impacts our generosity?

Discuss the Practice

- 01 As you set aside money to give this week, did you experience reluctance or excitement initially? Why?
- 02 If you’re willing, can you share about the instance(s) of how you used the money to bless someone?
- 03 How did the person you helped respond, and how did their reaction affect you?
- 04 After this week’s practice, how did you personally experience the connection between “sowing generously” and “reaping generously” from 2 Corinthians 9?