

A pair of hands is shown holding a silver communion plate. The plate is circular with concentric rings and a dark center. The text "WHEN YOU GIVE" is written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters in the center of the plate. The background is a light blue color with a pattern of darker blue, wavy, hand-drawn lines. The hands are positioned at the top and bottom of the plate, with fingers gently gripping the rim.

**WHEN
YOU
GIVE**

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The purpose of this booklet is to thank you and to reflect upon what happens to our hearts and our souls when we give.

So, first things first, thank you for your generosity. Generosity reflects the heart of God, it joins us to God's work in this world, and it changes us.

By giving, you have taken a big step in your faith. Before you even think about what's next, let us take some time to reflect on the implications of your act of generosity and faith.



GENEROSITY REFLECTS THE IMAGE OF GOD



So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:27

You were created in the image of God.

When I was young, I thought this meant that God had human form and shape. As I have grown to understand the profound implications of this act of creation, I have come to realize it means so much more. To be created in the image of God is not so much about our physical attributes as it is about the divine attributes of God that live in us.

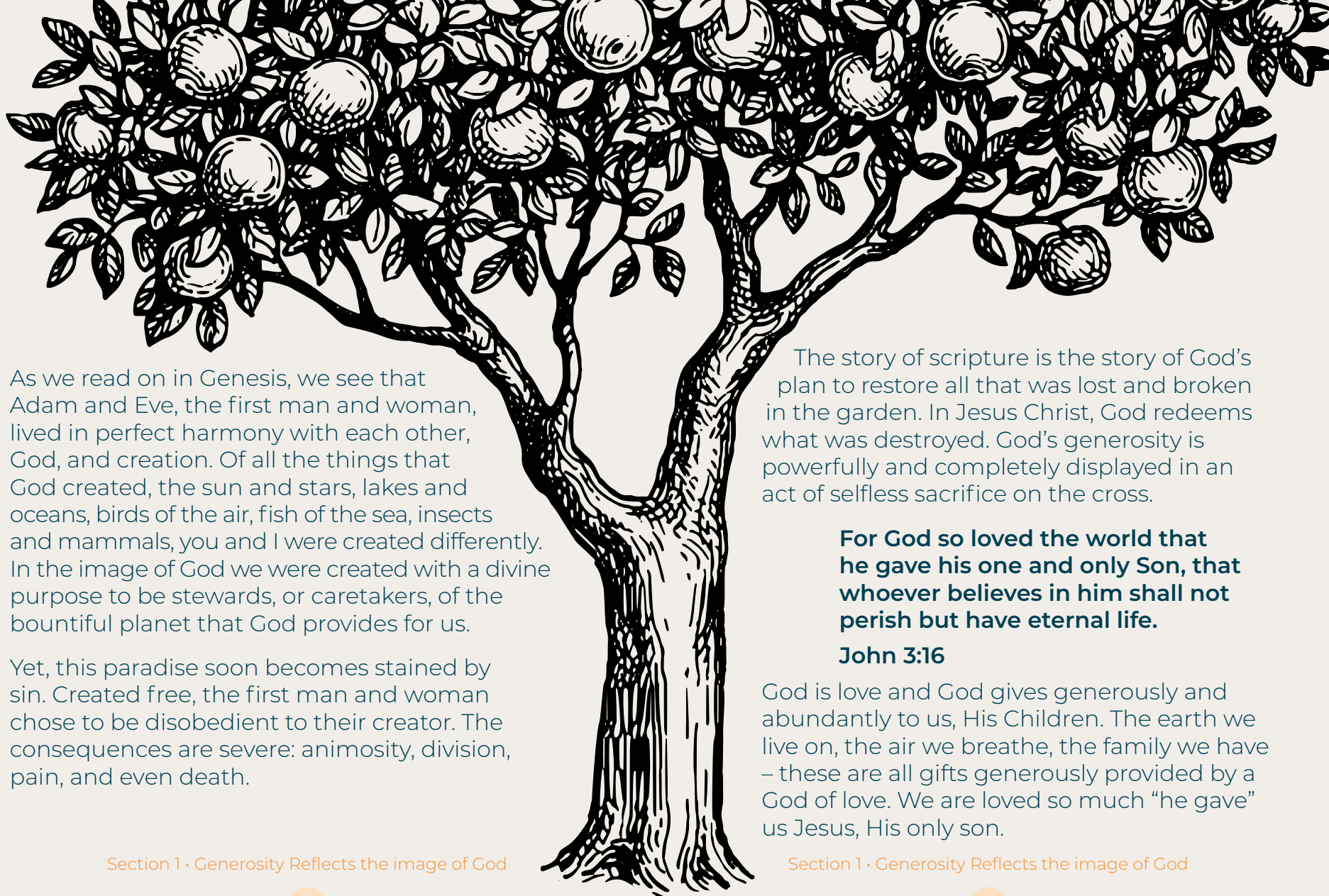
1 John 1:8 says,

“Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

At the core of who God is, is love. Because God is love, you were created to love. Because God is merciful and kind, you have the capacity to be kind. Because God is generous, you too are called to be generous.



GENEROSITY REFLECTS THE HEART OF GOD.



As we read on in Genesis, we see that Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, lived in perfect harmony with each other, God, and creation. Of all the things that God created, the sun and stars, lakes and oceans, birds of the air, fish of the sea, insects and mammals, you and I were created differently. In the image of God we were created with a divine purpose to be stewards, or caretakers, of the bountiful planet that God provides for us.

Yet, this paradise soon becomes stained by sin. Created free, the first man and woman chose to be disobedient to their creator. The consequences are severe: animosity, division, pain, and even death.

The story of scripture is the story of God's plan to restore all that was lost and broken in the garden. In Jesus Christ, God redeems what was destroyed. God's generosity is powerfully and completely displayed in an act of selfless sacrifice on the cross.

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

God is love and God gives generously and abundantly to us, His Children. The earth we live on, the air we breathe, the family we have – these are all gifts generously provided by a God of love. We are loved so much “he gave” us Jesus, His only son.

GENEROSITY JOINS US TO GOD'S WORK IN THE WORLD



Generosity reflects Jesus. When we give, we share the resources needed to advance the kingdom of God. God has a laser precise purpose for the church.

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In Luke 15, Jesus tells a series of parables to illustrate God's redemptive purpose in the world. Jesus is being criticized for spending time with the wrong people. The Pharisees (the religious elite of the day) mutter, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

He tells them some parables. (A parable is simply a story with a lesson.)

It's like this, he says, a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and he loses one. A good shepherd is going to leave the 99 and go after the lost sheep until he finds it. When he finds this little lamb, he will rejoice and even reach out to his family and friends and celebrate, because what was lost has been found! Jesus says heaven is like that, the whole heavenly host rejoices when one sinner comes home.

Or it's like a woman who loses one of ten silver coins. She lights a lamp, cleans the house, removes the clutter, turns over every inch of her home until she finds it. When she finds it, she celebrates because she has found what was lost.

Or, more famously, he tells a story of a son that was lost. Fed up with his father, the son demands his inheritance early and takes off and squanders everything. In his riotous lifestyle, he soon finds himself penniless and starving. He makes his way home hoping his father will show him a sliver of mercy and let him come back as the lowest servant.

His father spots him coming down the road. Overcome with emotion, he hikes up his robe and runs to embrace his son. He orders his household to prepare a feast and throw a party, because his son who was lost has come home.

The father also has an older son. The older son is angry and resentful of the mercy shown to the younger son, but the dad pleads with his oldest son and in Luke 15:31-32 it says,

“you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found.”

God's love, forgiveness, and mercy are extraordinary and extravagant, yet they do not always make earthly sense. Grace can seem unfair. Why should the younger son get a party when the older son always did the right thing?

Section 2 • Generosity Joins Us To God's Work In The World



**“GOD, I AM
TRUSTING
YOU WITH MY
FINANCES AND I
AM PARTNERING
WITH YOU IN
YOUR WORD TO
SHARE YOUR
SALVATION PLAN
IN JESUS WITH
THE WORLD.”**

The reason is that in God's kingdom economy, the highest good, is for that which is lost to be found. That which was broken and separated by original sin in the garden, God desires to redeem and restore. That is God's purpose in the world, to save that which is lost.

As the church, we gather together to do many important things, feed the hungry, worship, teach our children, care for the sick, baptize, marry, and bury the dead. All those things are all about the main thing: to know Jesus' saving love. That's it. That is our purpose.

Like grace, generosity doesn't always seem to make earthly sense. God asks us to give out of our first fruits. When you gave, you displayed an act of faith and said, “God, I am trusting you with my finances, and I am partnering with you in your word to share your salvation plan in Jesus with the world.” Generosity doesn't always seem fair. We are taught to take care of ourselves, make sure we have what we want, and then, if anything is left over, to give. But God, who gives first, calls us also to not live by the world's economy, but an economy of Grace.

GENEROSITY IS A MATTER OF OUR HEART



Giving releases the grip that sin has on our hearts.

1 Timothy 6:10 says,

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

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Money is not the problem, Greed is. Greed is a bi-product of our selfishness. Selfishness is another way to name sin. Sin is when we curl into ourselves and our hearts become hardened to others, the world around us, and God.

Jesus taught about money a lot. In fact, 11 of the 39 parables he told had to do with our finances. Why? Does God want or need your resources? Not in the slightest. God, after all, already owns everything! Jesus talked about money so much because he knows that of all the things that compete for our hearts, money is at the top of the list, and God wants your heart.

He deeply loves you. He desires to pour out His blessing through the Holy Spirit unto, into, and through you.

Jesus said the greatest command is this:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ Mark 12:30

Generosity, unleashes generosity, that unleashes generosity, that unleashes more generosity.

Let me explain: God demonstrates His generosity to us, while we are still sinners, by giving us Christ Jesus who dies for us (Romans 5:8.) The generous forgiveness, salvation, grace, and love we find in Jesus shatters the chains of sin and selfishness in our lives. This results in an outpouring of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

This outpouring opens our hearts and lives to more blessing from God. That blessing pours out to others in acts of love and generosity, which point them to Jesus.

**GENEROSITY IS
AN ACT OF LOVE.
IT IS A RELEASE
OF THE CHAINS
AND CAPTIVITY
OF SELF-
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AND AN
EMBRACING OF
THE GIFTS OF GOD.**

This is God's supernatural math:
small acts of generosity unleash
huge amounts of blessing
in our lives and in our world.
Generosity is the work of the
church to fulfill our purpose to
bring the Good News of Jesus to
the world.

**When we give, we live out and
experience the heart of God.**



GENEROSITY PRODUCES PEACE



God provides.

Paul reminds us in Philippians 4:19:
And my God will meet all your
needs according to the riches of
his glory in Christ Jesus.

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we remember that it is God who provides us our daily bread. Our daily bread is the food, shelter, work and purpose we need for the living of each day.

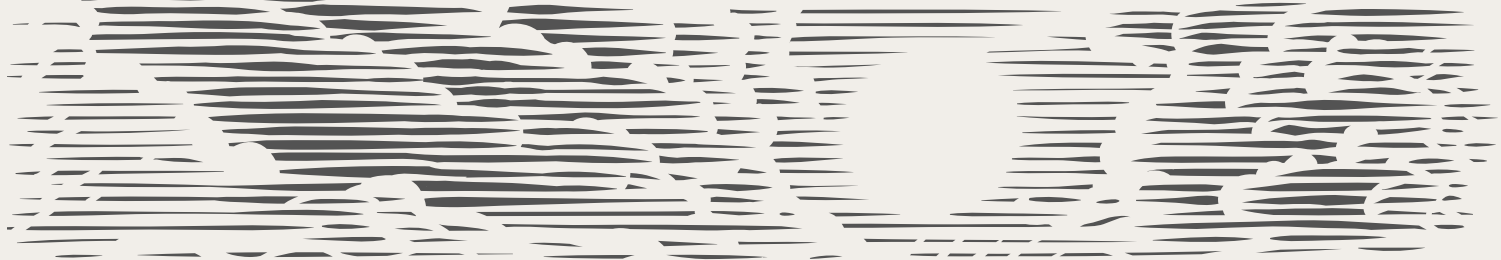
Generosity unleashes God's abundant blessing. We discover purpose, we partner with God in His work, we are gifted with joy and peace, and we place our trust in God's provision.

We do not give because we always think that God will give us a financial blessing in return. Rather, we believe that the greatest blessing of God is not financial, it is His Grace.

God's peace in Jesus Christ is our greatest treasure. Jesus reminds us in Matthew 6:19-20,

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.





We falsely believe that if we have more, we can eliminate worldly worries and stress from our lives. The truth is we just have more to worry about, and we will never have enough. Earthly treasure can never really satisfy the longing of our heart.

Only God can. His provision is perfect, and His love is complete.

Generosity is the only path to gain this important perspective. Jesus invites us paradoxically to empty ourselves to be filled, to place ourselves last to be first, and to give our lives away to find them. Peace is discovered when our hearts trust and know this truth. We invest in eternity. Nothing can come and take this away from us. We know Jesus words from John 14:27:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Chasing after the patterns of this world is the path to more stress, emptiness, and discontent. King Solomon in the Old Testament discovered this. He was the wealthiest person alive, he had everything. At the end of his life he wrote in Ecclesiastes 1:1-3 about all that he had:

¹ The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:

² “Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher.

“Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.”

³ What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun?

Generosity shifts our heart from trying to acquire more for yourself to providing more for those in need. This change in perspective is no small thing. It can change your life and the lives of countless others.

Your act of giving is an investment in eternity. A deposit in the bank account of heaven. The impact is eternal and unshakable.

**WE DO NOT GIVE
TO BUY OUR WAY
TO HEAVEN OR
TO EARN OUR
SALVATION. WE
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ARE GRATEFUL FOR
ALL THE GIFTS OF
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AND LOVING GOD.**



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ACT OF GENEROSITY!**



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