

GOD'S GIFT OF GENEROSITY

Gratitude beyond Stewardship

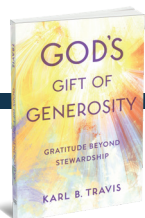
By Karl B. Travis

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Talking about stewardship, and money in general, is a difficult conversation to have in the church, whether within leadership teams or with the congregation as a whole. Karl Travis' book *God's Gift of Generosity* aims to help us rethink our approach to stewardship, focusing on the generosity of God, ourselves, and our church community. Based on key points in chapter 11 of the book, this study guide provides a framework for church leaders, the generosity committee, and all church members to explore the biblical principles and practical applications of generosity. By delving into the teachings and perspectives shared in the book, we aim to deepen our understanding of why generosity is essential to our faith and how it can transform our lives and the life of the church.

This study guide can be utilized in different settings. The primary setting for the full four sessions is intended for leadership teams and the generosity committee in order to provide guidance on how to not only encourage and promote generosity within the church, but also to formulate plans that the church will put into action. However, the questions being asked and the ideas being proposed should not be limited to these select teams. Encourage all participants in those groups to bring the questions posed in the first three sessions to other church members of all ages, fostering open conversations throughout the congregation. As Travis states on page 116, these conversations should be happening “during every church school class from the middle school class and older; then, at choir practice, at the meetings of men’s and women’s groups; then, at a Zoom gathering for people who have yet to attend one of these conversations.” It is only through this openness that you can move beyond the stagnant approach of a “Stewardship Sunday” and toward a church community focused on a spirit of generosity.

Together, let us embark on this study with an open heart and mind, seeking to understand the *why* behind generosity and discovering how we can collectively embrace a lifestyle of giving that reflects God’s love and grace.



Group Discussion Guide for *God's Gift of Generosity*,
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SESSION 1

In what ways is God generous with you?

OPENING DISCUSSION

Begin the session by exploring the concept of God's generosity and how it is manifested in the lives of individuals. Encourage participants to reflect on the ways in which they have experienced God's generosity, both in material blessings and intangible gifts such as forgiveness, love, and guidance. This transition from material blessings to intangible gifts can take time, especially with younger participants, so be sure to allow enough time for the breadth of responses.

CONNECTING . . .

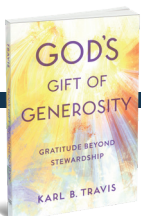
- **To Scripture:** Ask participants to provide examples and stories from Scripture that illustrate God's generosity, such as the feeding of the five thousand.
- **To Each Other:** Encourage participants to share their personal experiences of God's generosity and discuss how it has impacted their faith and relationship with God.

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How does recognizing God's generosity influence your perspective on material possessions and blessings?
- How does God's generosity shape your attitude toward giving and sharing with others?
- In what ways can we cultivate a mindset of gratitude for God's generosity?
- How can we encourage one another to recognize and appreciate God's blessings in our lives?

TAKE-HOME ACTIVITY

Encourage participants to keep this focus during the next week, paying close attention to moments when they see God's generosity in the world around them. Ask them to write these down either in the moment or at the end of each day. Invite them to share these moments with friends, family members, and other church members. Ask them to notice how they feel and what thoughts come up for them as they share these moments with others.



SESSION 2

In what ways might you be more generous with others?

OPENING DISCUSSION

The focus of this session shifts to personal generosity. Begin your conversation for the session by brainstorming different forms of generosity, including financial giving, acts of service, and sharing one's time and talents. Explore as a group how these different forms of generosity create a positive and growing impact.

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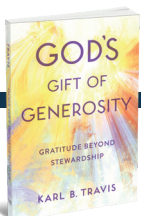
- **To Scripture:** Ask participants to provide examples and stories from Scripture that illustrate the generosity of individuals such as the parable of the good Samaritan.
- **To Each Other:** Ask participants to reflect on a time when someone's generosity made a significant impact on their life. How did it inspire them to be more generous towards others? Have them share their story and discuss the ripple effect of generosity.

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What gifts do you personally have and how do you share them with others?
- What are some practical ways you can be more generous with your time, talents, and resources? How can you incorporate acts of service and giving into your daily life?
- Discuss the barriers and challenges that may prevent individuals from being more generous. How can we help each other and ourselves to overcome these obstacles in order to create a lifestyle of generosity?

TAKE-HOME ACTIVITY

Encourage participants to first continue paying close attention to moments when they see God's generosity. This week, instead of asking them to write these moments down, ask them to respond to what they are seeing by setting goals for increasing the generosity they provide. Invite them to be specific in their goal-setting, taking note of the steps needed to implement their generosity.



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SESSION 3

In what ways will our congregation be generous in the coming year?

OPENING DISCUSSION

The focus of this session shifts to the collective generosity of the congregation in order to begin shaping a plan for your church's campaign of generosity. Begin your conversation for the session by discussing the various ministries and initiatives that the congregation is (or has been) involved in and discuss how generosity plays a role in supporting and sustaining these efforts.

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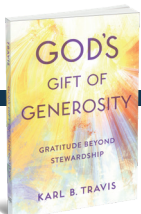
- **To Scripture:** Ask participants to provide examples and stories from Scripture that illustrate the generosity of communities such as the generosity of the Macedonian church in 2 Corinthians, chapter 8.
- **To Each Other:** Ask participants to reflect on times when they felt the generosity of a church community in their lives, whether at this current congregation or a past one. Ask how they were affected by this connection to the community.

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Discuss the importance of financial stewardship in supporting the mission and vision of the congregation. How can we encourage and educate members about the significance of giving and the impact it has on the church's ability to carry out its work?
- How can we involve the entire congregation in this process and create a culture of generosity within our church community? Share ideas for engaging members and fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for the congregation's financial health.
- Brainstorm ideas for new initiatives or ministries that the congregation can undertake to demonstrate generosity. How can we extend our generosity beyond the church walls and make a positive impact in our community?

TAKE-HOME ACTIVITY

Following the conversations that result from the discussion and reflection questions, ask participants to volunteer to do further brainstorming regarding one of the three aspects of creating a congregation focused on generosity: 1) educating members on the importance of generosity; 2) involving the entire congregation; and 3) brainstorming new initiatives or expanding current ones. Have people think through who should be involved in creating the plan, communicating the plan, and assessing and modifying the plan. Also ask that they brainstorm what generous resources are needed, including not only financial gifts, but also gifts of time, talent, service, and other resources.



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SESSION 4

In what ways will we share and report our generosity throughout the year?

This session will be different from the previous three as the focus will be on creating plans and assigning roles to members of the generosity committee. You may want to leave more time for this session or break it into two or more sessions depending on your needs.

INTRODUCTION

Recap the previous sessions and emphasize the importance of ongoing generosity and sharing within the congregation.

SETTING THE FRAMEWORK

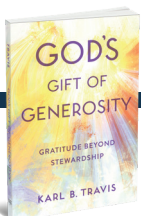
Begin your conversation for the session by having participants report on the brainstorming they carried out following session 3. Take time with each aspect of the plans, providing both positive and constructive critical feedback, refining details, and discerning what additional questions need to be answered to move forward.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

- Assign responsibilities to individuals or groups within the congregation to ensure the smooth execution of sharing and reporting throughout the year.
- Discuss the practical details of your generosity campaign (collecting pledges, sharing totals, and the like), connecting this process to your framework of generosity.
- Create a schedule for your teams to check on the progress of your campaigns as well as your communication strategies. Determine what the goals of these meetings should be, who should be involved, and how you'll relay the outcomes of these meetings to the congregation.
- Discuss how you will implement the act of weekly storytelling in worship and/or other areas of church life, where specific ministries of the church are highlighted and celebrated. Set a timeline for collecting stories and preparing presentations.

NEXT STEPS

It is also important to recognize that all programmatic efforts, even those focused on generosity, can lose momentum. Work to avoid this stagnation by choosing new people each year to renew the conversation and be sure that all of your efforts are being shared with and responded to by the full congregation and communities you are aiming to serve. Ensure that you are creating opportunities for all individuals in the congregation to share their personal stories of generosity and the impact it has had on their lives.



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