

Generosity with Gary Hoag

Generosity and giving must go hand-in-hand. In this episode: what generosity is, Rob and Gary's journey of generosity, and 10 shifts you must make to see generosity unfold in your life.

Introduction

Rob: I'm here today with Dr. Gary Hoag. And, we are going to discuss why he calls himself the generosity monk.

And how does generosity fit into the community of giving and receiving.



What Does it Mean to be a Generosity Monk?

Gary: This whole idea of generosity monk was simply this. A monk has a commitment, right?

And so for me, on June 26th, 2009, I dedicated the rest of my life to encouraging Christian generosity.

And so what does it mean to be the generosity monk? 'Cause a monk has a daily office or a daily routine.

Everyday since June 26th, 2009, I've gotten up early and it's to the point Rob, where I can't not do it. Like it just happens.

I get up early, I spend time with Jesus, I spend time in the scriptures and I spend time reading what one of the saints through the centuries, early church, church history, modern day, what one of the saints of the century said about generosity.

And I do a daily little post at generositymonk.com. And it's been over 10 and a half years in a row.

And I never dreamed through the process, that God would help me realize that being the generosity monk really is just in my day, saying, you know, I wanna encourage all people who are living, reading, following this to realize.

'Cause I never dreamed to be thousands of people around the world reading it daily.

I wanna encourage people to realize that the people to change the world in their day, they understood this amazing idea which we're going to talk about today, generosity. That's the story.



What is Generosity?

Rob: Okay, put generosity in the context of, because this three-part series that we've done concluding with generosity now on the communion of giving and receiving. Put generosity into the communion of giving and receiving.

Gary: Sure. So if I put my PhD hat on, you know, my biblical scholar hat, the Greek word, *agathosune*, which is translated generosity, appears in one of the most famous verses which illustrates the communion of giving and receiving.

And that is the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness. And that next word often translated goodness, is *agathosune*. It's better rendered maybe in NRSV in other translations, generosity.

So the fruit of, watch this, the fruit of God's work in a person's life is openhandedness giving and receiving. It is generosity. So when the world's looking and they see someone willing to give and receive freely, they see God.

They see, wow! God's at work in this setting. So generosity is an outward reflection that God's at work in a community.

So in the context of your beautiful idea, which I love, Rob, I love the communion of giving and receiving.

Because when we realize this is what God made us to do, he made us to be people who give and receive, we do it functioning with the operating system of the spirit, which sends a message to the world.

Everything we have is this gift from God and we're using it in a way that is faithful and demonstrates our interdependence. And when we use it with obedience in an ongoing way, his ministry flourishes and the result is sustained interdependence.

Rob: And we will define that in a future program.

Gary: I'm sure you will.

Rob: We're still working on it. Generosity is often thought about, some would think of it in terms of hospitality. And the giving of your time, the giving of your life, the serving of someone that's in trouble.

In light of these broadcasts, these podcasts, we're looking at fundraising and giving. So we're actually talking about money, this transactional thing that if done right, becomes transformational.



Rob's Journey of Generosity: Importance of Generosity and Discipleship

Rob: For me, generosity started in a very unusual way because I became a Christian at a late age. I was 33.

I mean, late for most people. Statistically it's the older a population gets, the less you see people converting to Christ.

And I found the Lord in a dramatic way. In my life, dramatic to me when I was 33 and I was soon working in the kingdom. I mean, every job I've had since that day has been on the tithing of others in one form or another.

And so working for a philanthropy like [First Fruit](#), which I do, it's literally the tithing of a family from the resources that they have in a sense, working for a righteous, rich family that is moving into generosity at all times with their giving and such.

And so, I'm new as a Christian and I'm volunteering at this work and it wasn't paying the bills. And so I get a job and then pays me my first paycheck, first money that I got after being saved and doing some volunteer work at this rescue mission.

I get \$600. And though I hadn't heard a sermon on tithing or giving or even generosity at that time, I'm struck by the idea that I'm supposed to give some of this.

Now I'd been working at the mission and I'd seen people giving, but now I'm confronted with giving. And it brought in, as I described in the book, a slithering, selfish mood. I didn't wanna give any of it away. I needed all of it.

And I began to realize I was in a struggle. Why didn't I wanna give any of this away?

And you know, this selfish mood just sort of overwhelmed me and I started accounting for my life and I realized, I haven't given money to anything anytime. I mean, not even \$10 to the Red Cross to help a hurricane victim.

I mean, I could not remember being generous. And I'm thinking, what's holding me back here? And I came to this idea after a long walk. I took a long walk and I'm just debating myself and trying to figure this out.

And of course, I'm unpacking all kinds of things in my life, sort of exposed all sorts of issues of selfishness and wounded victimhood and other things that I had felt.

And I'm walking and I think, "Wait a second, I know what this is about. "This is about, is God real?"

Gary: That's exactly what it's about, Rob.

Rob: And I go, "Wow! "So is this new life "that I'm experiencing, "this new worldview than I'm learning, "this new faith that I have, "is it real or an illusion?"

Because if it's an illusion, "I'm not gonna give it a dime." Look, I understand giving at a church so that the bills are paid, the pastor's paid, the lights go on, the musicians have their amplifiers.

I get that. But that's sort of like, paying your dues to make sure that the thing that you're enjoying or getting something out of gets to operate. That wasn't what I was feeling. I was actually feeling, "Are you real God?"

"And if you're not, "what the heck am I doing giving money to this?"

Gary: So can I share a similar story?

Rob: Let me just finish, Gary.

Gary: Okay.

Rob: 'Cause I wanna hear your story. At that moment, I decided you're real. Not only are you real, you're the deepest reality of my life and I gave that day.

And have since like all the brothers and sisters, most of the brothers and sisters that I know. And what I realized is, I think that was the day I became a disciple.

So this goes deep for me. So generosity and discipleship are completely linked.



Gary's Journey of Generosity: Importance of Generosity and Being a Blessing to Others

Gary: You know, my story, it's a similar conversion experience if they use that word. So picture, it's 2006. I know a fair bit about what the Bible teaches on the handling of money.

So I got asked to be one of the reviewers of the Stewardship study Bible, the content reviewers, you know. You ever wonder who helps with the study Bible?

It's this person whose name is this big in the front of the Bible and they get paid like \$1,000 stipend to do like two and a half years of work, right?

But I was really convicted when, so you're doing the notes for the Bible and I mean, and I'm only responsible for the New Testament and I'm only in Matthew, chapter six. And I read, do not store up treasures on earth, store them up in heaven.

And I went to my wife and I just said, "I don't know if I can do this." She's like, "What do you mean?" And I said, as I unpacked the teachings of Jesus, I was working on a PhD. I was working on these study notes.

I said, "I have strategically ignored. "As if these passages don't apply to me. "I've ignored them." And I said, "I don't think Jesus is trying to rob us. "I think he's trying to help us take hold of life, "which is generosity."

And so, I went to my wife and I said, "I think all these wealth we've stored up on earth "following an earthly contract, "we need to give it away."

My wife's like, "Who lives this way?" Right? By the way, marriages, if you're married, listening to this, marriages are not like two people skipping blissfully through a field, always in tandem on every decision, especially when it comes to things like generosity.

Sometimes you or your spouse are way ahead of one another. I said, "Honey, just pray about it." Took her six months. She's like, "You know, you're right. "We're totally ignoring Jesus and we're not like generous." We actually went to a website, listeners go to this website, www.globalrichlist.com.

And when you type in your income and you compare your income to the other seven plus billion people in the world, you start realizing, and this is what my conviction was, Rob. I realized, yeah, maybe I tithe but I'm not generous.

Like the Old Testament law was this obligation, I was like tithing a tenth and treating the other 90% like it was mine. And I'd look just like the religious leaders and it's humbling to admit, I was a prideful lover of money just like the religious leaders in the Bible.

And it wasn't until I realized God blessed me to be a blessing. And for me, that conversion was when we let go. And when we let go, that's when like all heaven broke loose. We realized, oh, we're not a container, we're a conduit.

And so generosity is when a person comes to grips with, just like you did on that day when you started to give, you start realizing, I'm not just the end user of all that I'm blessed with materially, spiritually, even knowledge or insight.

I'm here to be a blessing to others. That's generosity.



A Biblical Example of Generosity

Rob: Yeah. Wow. Beautiful. Thank you, Gary. Thank you for your wisdom in this. We'll be covering this topic more in future episodes, particularly when we get to the sustained interdependence.

We'll have some testimonies from people who have started philanthropies and what helped them get this going in their life and how they view generosity.

We'll be looking at philanthropic trends of generosity for those of you that are fundraising and wanna know how to encourage generosity authentically, not just for the purposes of your mission, but for as the pastoral function in fundraising to help people be all they can be before God and to be those sustaining pillars of the things that God has shown them to help.

And how that can strengthen them even as they deplete resources for someone else and how they can give. You know, we look at the story of the widow. It's one of my favorite stories because there's the spirit of generosity and then there's the act of generosity.

And Jesus calls his disciples together. He's got them. And I'm just picturing in the colonnades of the temple, these guys, you know, the 10, 12 guys looking like old fishermen and stuff and

they're all standing behind a pillar and there's this widow going up to whatever box you put your money in, in the temple, and she's got a couple of pennies.

And Jesus said, "Look at that. "Look at that woman. "That's everything she's got. "And she's giving it to the temple "for God." And he says, "And she now becomes "the most admired giver in all of history. "The most talked about."

We're talking about her as in years from now. And what I love about that story, not only the message being one of those disciples peeking around the colonnade and looking at this widow and trying to figure out what's Jesus saying about her being the most generous.

We don't see a picture of Jesus running up to her as her money is about to trickle out of her hands into that box and go, "No, no, darling. "Your desire to give is enough. "You need those pennies. "Look at this temple. "It does not need your money."

And he didn't do that because she needed to be generous.

That was her act before God of his Lordship in her life. And she gave the gift.

It was represented through the temple and it had less to do with the needs of the temple. And of course, the temple needed giving and every little piece helped. But that's not what Jesus was saying to her.



10 Shifts You Must Make to See Generosity Unfold in Your Life

Gary: Can I conclude this episode with, there used to be, I remember when I went to seminary, there was a show called Late Night with David Letterman.

He had a routine. So this is with apologies to Letterman. He had a routine that was a top 10 list.

So when you say we're gonna talk about generosity, I wanna rattle off a top 10 list because I mean, I've been asked from everybody from [National Christian Foundation](#) to give a basic theology of generosity to a number of groups.

And I have come up with a quick top 10 list that if you wanna see generosity unfold in your life, you gotta get these 10, like shifts that need to happen in your mind.

You're ready? Here they are.

10. Shift Generosity From Law to Love

Number 10, counting down. You need to shift that giving needs to be from law, like I have to do it. To love, I get to it.

9. Shift Generosity From Merit to Mercy

Number nine, you're giving these to be measured not by merit, which is what the world says is deserving.

But by mercy because mercy is us not getting what we deserve. It's like it's just this beautiful, God idea. So merit to mercy.

8. Shift Generosity From Favoritism to Fairness

Number eight, from favoritism. Most giving, I realize in my spiritual journey, most of my giving was rooted in favoritism. I gave to the things I cared about.

When we shift in our faith, we start giving according to fairness, which is, we start demonstrating justice and we start giving to make sure we give to all the things God cares about.

7. Shift Generosity From Percentage to Proportion

Number seven, counting down. We measure our giving not any longer by percentage as if the other part is ours, but by proportion.

As we're blessed, proportionately, we're a conduit of blessing.

6. Shift Generosity From Donor to Distributor

Number six, again counting down, I've actually started to abandon the word donor 'cause it kind of takes ownership.

I like to tell people, you're not a donor, you're a distributor. Why? Because every good and perfect gift came from God to you. So number six is donor to distributor.

5. Shift Generosity From Surplus to Sacrifice

Number five, surplus to sacrifice. So much of the world's giving is, "Oh, I'll just give out of my surplus."

The only kind of giving Jesus celebrates, the only kind of giving he modeled was sacrificial.

4. Shift Generosity From Guilt to Grace

Number four, counting down, is our motivation for giving, is no longer guilt like, "Oh I have to do this."

It's grace. Out of the all that's been lavished upon us, we get to give.

3. Shift Generosity From Obligation to Opportunity

Number three counting down, our care for the poor shifts from obligation to making the most of every opportunity.

2. Shift Generosity From Sporadic to Standard

Number two, and we're almost there. How we do our giving is not, excuse me, how we administrate giving is not sporadic.

But it follows standards, standards of responsible stewardship. And you know I care deeply about that.

1. Shift Generosity From Earthly to Eternal

And lastly, number one, when you see generosity happen, generosity is people who aren't focused on living for the earthly, but they're living for the eternal.

So if you get those 10 shifts, in my little top 10 lists, you are going to exhibit in your life in a rich, profound way, generosity.



Closing Thoughts

Rob: Gary, thank you for that. And as we sign off, are there some resources that you'd like us to highlight on the website that they can go to and can they find that list somewhere?

Gary: Sure. You know, first of all, generositymonk.com has a boatload of resources on it.

So you can go there and there are links to articles such as, "Four Fundamental Shifts," which is four of those 10 shifts I just mentioned.

This little theology of 10 things is something I just came up with for NCF as I told you this. I don't even know if it's on their website yet, but bottom line is it was on this podcast.

Rob: Right. And the [Stewardship Bible](#) is also available and we will send a link. There'll be links on the website for that as well.

Gary, thank you. Thank you for your time. Thank you for your inspiration. Look forward to the next time we're on the air together.

Gary: Thanks so much.