

Sermon Title: Living Generously—Join in God’s Activity through Giving

Sermon Scripture: [Acts 11:19-30](#)

Introduction:

One of the defining marks of a follower of Jesus is generosity! Generosity is a dynamic that applies to every area of life. It is important to recognize what generosity in the life of a believer looks like. Here are some hallmark characteristics of the generous Christian:

- The Christian is Generous with Forgiveness. ([Matthew 18:21-22](#))
Jesus makes it clear that for the Christian, there is no limit to forgiveness!
- The Christian is Generous with Encouragement. ([Hebrews 10:25](#))
The “all” in this verse means “so much or so great.” The scriptural point is that Christians bear the responsibility of encouraging others more and more as we go through life.
- The Christian is Generous in Sharing the Life of Jesus. ([2 Corinthians 2:14](#))

Sharing knowledge of Jesus is like a fragrance that fills a room.

Let’s look specifically at this principle as it applies to giving. In Acts 11, we find a community of believers who lived generously! (Read Acts 11:19-26.)

They were called “Christians.” This word (Cristiana) means “belonging to Christ.” William Barclay said about this title, “It was a half-mocking, half-jesting wholly contemptuous nickname.” Their lives so demonstrated the person of Jesus the nonbelievers around them mockingly called them Christians or “Jesus People.” Now, let’s explore what made this community of “Jesus People” unique in their generosity:

I. Everyone Gave.

One aspect of their lives that demonstrated the person of Jesus was their generosity—they were a giving community! (read Acts 11:27-30) The Bible deliberately details that every one (‘ekastos)—every one— gave. This practice was not relegated to the leadership or to the mature Christian...it was for everyone! As a matter of fact, most of the believers here in Antioch had been believers less than a year! Can you imagine what impact a church could have if that were true today?

Illustration: According to the Barna Research Group, nine percent of born again Christians gave at least 10% of their income through a local church. Statistics went on to say while nine percent professed to give 10% of their income, the study revealed that only 2-3% actually did!

Let’s think about this practically as Southern Baptists—Next year if every Southern Baptist (we profess 16 million members) gave \$10 to Lottie Moon offering we would have given the largest offering in the history of our denomination!

If every SBC member would give \$75 we could give over \$1 billion to missions!

What we have in our churches is not a giving problem, we have a Christlikeness problem. When we are conformed to His image, generosity is the overflow.

II. Everyone Gave From the Heart. (v. 29)

The Bible declares that each of them “determined.” The original word (*orizw*) means “to decide or settle something conclusively.” This word implies an internal investigation before there was an outward response. Let’s look at three principles that reveal giving to be a matter of the heart:

1. God doesn’t need our money. ([Psalm 50:10-12](#))

The reality is that God owns everything and we own nothing! Why, then, do you suppose God wants you to give?

2. Giving is God's invitation to join in His activity.

Illustration: The Philippian church "shared" (joined in God's activity through Paul's life) in the work of Paul ([Philippians 1:3-5](#); [Philippians 4:15-16](#)).

In our text, the believers in Antioch heard from God (v.28 'by the Spirit') about an opportunity to be involved in His activity...they recognized this as an opportunity to join God at work!

God doesn't need us but He has chosen by His grace to involve us in His activity, and one of the ways we get involved is through giving. Pastor Charles Stanley said, "God provides for His people, through His people."

3. God is pleased by our attitude about giving because it reveals our heart towards Him and His activity in the world. ([2 Corinthians 9:7](#))

Notice what the Bible doesn't say—it doesn't say God loves giving. He loves a cheerful giver! It brings God great joy when we give with a cheerful heart! No other type of giving brings Him pleasure.

Illustration: This truth is captured beautifully in a story from the life of Jesus found in [Mark 12:41-44](#).

If you give for any other reason other than a heart full of gratitude for what Jesus has done for you, don't give!

III. Everyone Gave According to their Ability. (v. 29)

This verse shares two important phrases:

1. "in the proportion" (*kaqws*)—according as
2. "that any of the disciples had means" (*euporew*)—tense implies that which has been given to you

These phrases give insight to two vital general principles:

- General Principle #1: God's people have always regularly given a portion of what God has given to them...always a portion!

Some believers have the idea that the Old Testament Law instituted giving a portion of one's income to God. The reality is that although the Old Testament Law included giving, it did not institute giving.

- Giving was instituted long before the law was given
 - **Abraham** gave a tenth to God 400-500 years before God gave the Law to Moses. ([Genesis 14:20](#); [Hebrews 7:1-17](#))
 - **Jacob** gave a tenth to God. ([Genesis 28:22](#))
- Giving was expected under the Law. ([Deuteronomy 16:17](#))
 - The Law required the children of Israel to give a percentage of what they had to the Lord—starting with 10%, but actually ended up being about 23.5%.
- After the Law, giving is still our opportunity. (Today's text)

Throughout the history of man's relationship with God, people have given to the Lord out of what the Lord has given to them. So the question now is, "Where do I start?"

Illustration: People debate whether tithing is for New Testament believers. Randy Alcorn said, "Every New Testament example of giving goes far beyond the tithe. However, none falls short of it."

A good, basic guideline to consider when examining your own giving:

- **Tithe:** The first 10% of your income belongs to the Lord. As Randy Alcorn said, "*If you can find a gateway to giving that's better than the tithe, wonderful. But if not, why not start where God started His First Covenant people.*"

- **Offering:** As an expression of my love for Jesus and my gratitude for all He has *done in my life, I give offerings over and above the 10%.*
- *General Principle #2: “God’s people have sometimes sacrificed to give beyond their ability.”—SOMETIMES A SACRIFICE. ([2 Corinthians 8:1-5](#))*

IV. Everyone Gave as an Act of Service. (v. 29)

The word for relief is “*diakonia*” which comes from the root meaning “service.” They saw their giving not as giving to the church, but giving through the church in service to others. When you give to a church, you are not giving to a church, but through a church to serve others and expand God’s kingdom!

Conclusion:

Does your giving demonstrate the person of Jesus in your life? Today, commit to giving from your heart, according to your ability, as your reasonable act of service through your church for the benefit of God’s kingdom. God loves a cheerful giver, and you will be blessed by giving in a way that reflects to others what God has freely given to you.