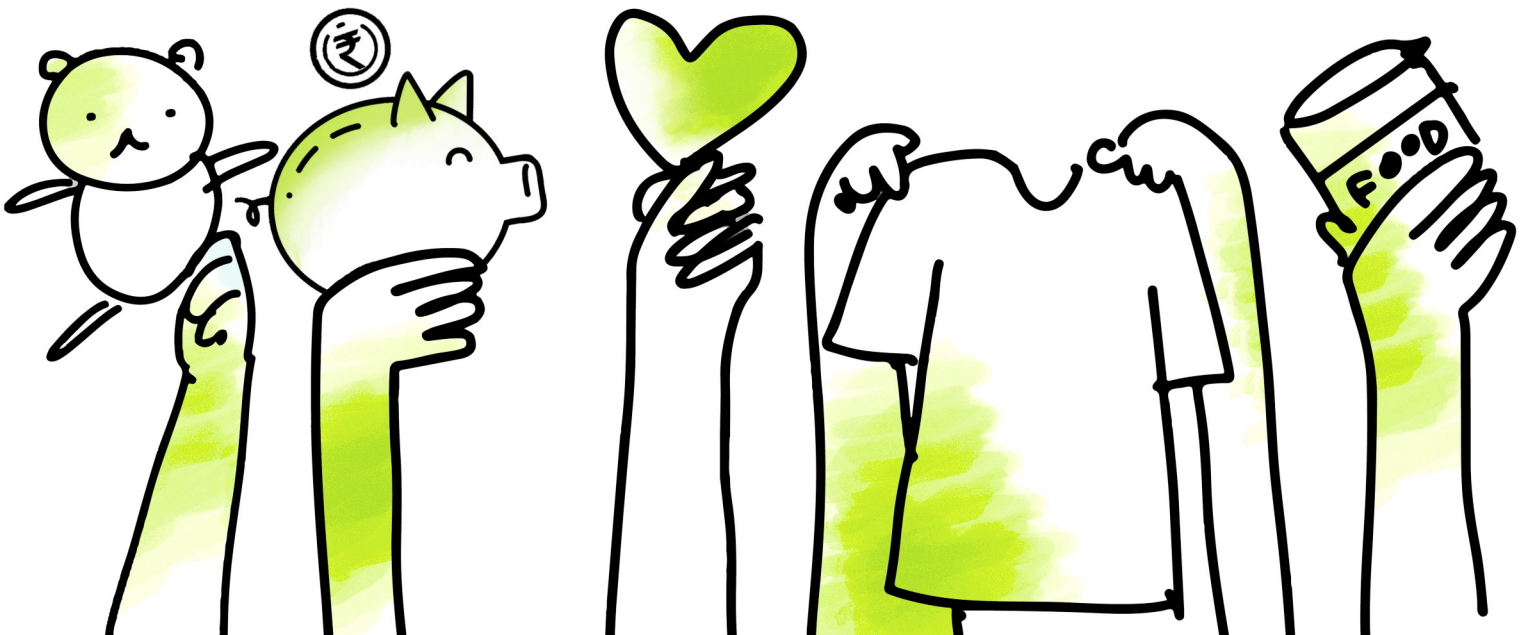


वेदिश्लोकः

Issue 1, 2023

Evangelical Perspectives on Mission and Ethics

Generosity



“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.”
2 Corinthians 9:7 New International Version (NIV)

Drishtikone means perspective or viewpoint in Hindi. The magazine seeks to provide a space in which Christians can share their perspectives and points of view on wholistic mission in India.

Our Vision is that **Drishtikone** will motivate change in readers. The experiences of development practitioners, theologians, grassroot workers and others demonstrating God's love in a practical way, will influence and encourage Christians to join the struggle for peace and justice in this country.

Drishtikone seeks to present a Biblical perspective on social issues and provide readers with information and models of engagement in wholistic concerns. It is a forum for evangelical reflection and dialogue on development issues in India.

Drishtikone is published three times a year by EFICOR to mobilise Christian reflection and action. Financial contributions from readers are welcome to support EFICOR in its efforts to influence the mind towards action.

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Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor,

The articles in Drishtikone magazine on Gender Justice are really good and highlight crucial concerns of our society. The cover story 'How can this be? (there is no man)' written by Sushila and Sanjiv Ailawadi is an essential read for every Christian man.

Sincerely,
Mr. Lalchuangliana
New Delhi

Dear Editor,

I received your magazine, Drishtikone on the theme of Gender Justice.
This is a very comprehensive issue focussing on gender equality in a world of differences.
I sincerely believe that it will be a great sensitization tool for many people through this publication.

Sincerely,
Mr. John Seldow
Deputy General Manager (Finance) BSNL
Mumbai

Dear Editor,

There is huge gender disparity and women in our society faced multiple forms of discrimination in our modern world. Thank you for bringing out this insightful and relevant publication on Gender Justice.

Sincerely,
Preeti
New Delhi

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Editorial...

Generosity is giving without expecting anything in return and is an expression of concern for others. It is closely related to the concept of altruism.

In this publication of Drishtikone on 'Generosity,' the concept and act of generosity have been discussed from two distinct threads that are interwoven throughout the publication and reflected in each of the articles. One is about the human heart and how we as humans relate to each other when it comes to giving and receiving. The second is the practical aspects of generosity encompassing both the giving and receiving. We believe that this issue would help us to examine our own hearts on this topic as well as give us practical tools on how to make our decisions in our giving, receiving, fund-raising, etc.

Corporate philanthropy in India has been enhanced by the provision of CSR under Section 135 of the Companies Act in 2013, which mandates that 2% of all company profits be directed to corporate social responsibility (CSR). This CSR law has brought a great impact on the field of development, especially in India. India has culturally distinct practices of charity and giving embedded in our ancient traditions and culture. The articles have highlighted the need to re-invigorate this 'old' version of philanthropy in our society so that our generosity would further empower the poor and needy. In this context, how can the church model generosity as a value to wider society? This publication seeks to address this by basing it on the Biblical teaching of generosity which is driven by the spirit of altruism and a humane heart to usher in transformation for the poor and marginalised.

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Generosity - A Lifestyle

Mr. Emmanuel Sandeep

The word generosity has a broad meaning. Jesus gives a command, *“Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* John 13:34-35. Usually we talk about loving one another, but we conveniently forget to emphasise that God wants us to love another just the way He has loved us.

India as a community always cared for one another. When you are travelling in a train, someone opens their tiffin box, they make sure they share the food with everyone around them. Today we are becoming a self-centered culture, even within the Church. If someone is eating a snack, we quite often won't even offer it to the person

who is right beside us. Aakar Patel said, “We are a very opportunistic culture. One good way to judge a society is to see it in motion. On the road, we observe the opportunism in the behaviour of the Indian driver. Where traffic

halts on one side of the road in India, motorists will encroach the oncoming side because there is space available there. If that leads to both sides being blocked, that is fine, as long as we maintain our advantage over people behind us or next to us.”¹ If not for this, we see it as an opportunity to do whatever we can easily do to get our way and get what we want in life. Others don't matter much. This is so harmful to our society, thus it is important that we start teaching generosity.

We as Christians sometimes fail to emphasise in our sermons that we ought to love the way Christ loved. We can always love one another the way we want and that becomes a selfish love. Paul says in Ephesians 2 that Jesus love was full of two things, mercy and grace. These two attributes make the foundation of generosity. We are called to follow the same pattern.

Jesus teaches about mercy and grace and the classic example of mercy is given in Mathew 18 and grace in Chapter 20. Let's look at simple definitions of these two words. **Mercy** is God not punishing us as our sins deserve and **grace** is God blessing

us despite the fact that we do not deserve it. In other words, **mercy** is not getting what you deserve and **grace** is getting what you do not deserve – unmerited favour. So, how can one demonstrate mercy and grace in relationships and lifestyle? Why is this understanding important? Jesus said, *“Just as the Father sent me, so I send you”* and that becomes the key not only to love one another the way Christ loved, but we ought to go with the same mission that Christ gave.

How do I demonstrate mercy and grace? Christians have the habit of praying before we eat and that's a good thing to do. Now when we go to a restaurant, before we have a meal, we pray, and during the course of time, we do not get the service the way we want it. What do we do?

We cut the tip that we plan to pay the waiter. We may always argue that he did not deserve it because he did not provide the service the way I wanted it. Now, if we are people who show mercy and grace, we will still give him the tip because that is exactly what Christ did for me. Did

“Mercy is God not punishing us as our sins deserve and grace is God blessing us despite the fact that we do not deserve it. In other words, mercy is not getting what you deserve and grace is getting what you do not deserve – unmerited favour.”

I deserve the salvation, did I deserve him dying on the cross? No. But Christ still gave even when I did not deserve it. I am challenging us to demonstrate His love. When we have to show grace, don't measure by what they did or whether they deserve it or not. You are called to generosity as that is something unique about what God has done.

Studying in Bible college at the age is 25, actually God put in a burden about the concept of generosity. I had a classmate whose fees were not paid by their organisation and he was asked to leave the college. God prompted me that I need to pay his fees with whatever little I was getting. We paid the fees and he continued his education. One thing that kept troubling me. Why is it that even a Christian organisation was struggling financially to take care of their own people? It is often the case that it is not the shortage of money, but it is all about people not giving generously to make a difference in other people's lives. We give to buildings and projects but not towards people's empowerment. There is enough money in this country with the believers and the church to support the missions and the needy in this country. However, it is the mindset issue of Church leaders not owning up missions. Instead of saving our money in purposeless fixed

¹ Aakar Patel, *Why Indians don't give back to Society*, Mint, July 4, 2009. Retrieved from <https://www.sikhphilosophy.net/threads/the-brahma-dilemma-why-dont-indians-give-back-to-society.28879/>

deposits, it would be much more worthwhile to use it for serving others.

Tricky Issues of Expectations and Accountability

In our self-centered world today, we fall into the trap of expecting returns in different forms for the favour we show to the church or to other individuals. Generosity simply does not expect any returns. Don't expect your name to be put in the bulletin or published for everyone to see or written on the gifts or put on the walls. Those are all the expectations. Another check for us will be to see if we get upset if our name is not called out during the vote of thanks. At times, there is an expectation that the person whom you have helped should be grateful to you or indebted to you all their lives. This is a twisted thought process. The Bible says it is more blessed to give than to receive. So, the blessing is purely in giving and if you're expecting a return, then it becomes a transaction.

“The biggest obstacle of generosity is this fear, “What if people take advantage of me?” People constantly take advantage of our kindness. We do not lend due to the fear of being cheated. ...We are accountable to God for what we are called to do. That is, to give generously.”

that no one likes hand-me-downs. But I'm not saying it's wrong to give old stuff. I'm just saying that when you give in the name of Christ, please make sure that you're giving the best. In our churches when offering bag comes our way, I always try to give the highest denomination

note in my wallet, because we want to give the best in faith. Our heavenly father sacrificed his only begotten son on the cross for us. He gave the best.

The biggest obstacle of generosity is this fear, “What if people take advantage of me?” People constantly take advantage of our kindness. We do not lend due to the fear of being cheated. Let me suggest a shift in our thinking. If someone cheats you and takes advantage of you, that's actually not your problem. God will hold the person who has cheated you accountable or has taken advantage of you. We are accountable to God for what we are called to do. That is, to give generously. And if somebody has cheated you, that person is accountable to God for what he has done. Will God hold you accountable for not being generous?

Giving in the New Normal

In the last three years, the pandemic has changed our lifestyle a lot. We all talk about a shift to the new normal at work, at church and in the way we live as well. So, what does this new normal look like, especially from a Christian perspective or from a generosity or a giving perspective? During the pandemic, I had attended few funerals as I was helping out our friends who lost their loved ones. In our culture when somebody dies, either at the graveyard or at home, we generally go and hug the person who lost their loved one. One of the shocking things I have seen during the pandemic is that no one was even going to shake the hand of the person who is mourning. Now I know that we were all paranoid and scared. In the new normal, as we started going back to church, how have we changed in the way we relate with one another? Do we still have barriers? We were all scared. We



As mentioned, Indian society is a very giving society. In the example about people sharing food in the train, you will notice that sometimes they will not eat until they give a piece of *chapati* or half *chapati* to everyone around. When I was young, we used to give food to the beggars at home. I was very happy that we are giving food to the beggars on a daily basis. When we give food to the beggar, later what I realised is that we give the

were all paranoid.

Many lost their jobs and are without money. We generally help people, especially those who ask for money, but what about people who do not ask? A lot of people do not ask and keep praying to God to provide. I think it becomes important for us to be sensitive to what God is saying. Pick up the phone and talk to people, text people, ask them how they're doing, what is happening in their life. Do they have enough money to take care of their family needs? This will help you get to know people who have a genuine need. Usually those who ask for money get the help they need, which is okay. I am sure there are a lot of people who do not ask openly. I believe conversations help. There are people who cannot go out. There are people who are struggling to get basic groceries or need someone to take them to the hospital. During this pandemic, there is a small vendor who was helping a lot of people in our locality. We decided that it is always good to buy from him so that we can help him grow in his business. Most of us want to step in to help only when tragedy strikes, but a generous person will foresee a tragedy and invest in helping people to prevent it. Most of the time this requires love and concern to be shown to people in our areas of influence.

We don't need wealth, but a heart to love people even though they don't deserve it and this comes with understanding of two words mercy and grace. Generously opening homes for people, forgiving quickly and building bridges. One of the things I observed during the pandemic was that everything is going online. Many of the elderly just do not know how to transfer money, how to handle a Gpay or a Paytm or cannot go to an ATM booth. They are being cheated by others who claim to help them transfer money on their behalf. You will see these charged services at the telephone booths and a lot of them have set up shops to transfer money. For a church to be a blessing in their community, we can ask members to provide these services

for those in their community. It requires a lot more time. The amount of help you can provide to people is proportionate to the risk that you are willing to take. After the pandemic, I have learned that if you are willing to take a risk and invest your time, you'll be able to help people all the more.

Finding Purpose can start with Generosity

A common question in youth camps is "How do I find purpose in life?" I say that you will find your purpose in life when you start helping your neighbour. There is so much of need in our country, and sometimes we act as if we don't know anything about it. When you are looking for purpose in life, it starts with trying to

help the person next to you. And there is no other better way to find one's purpose. More you start investing, more you start relating, the more you start exploring, God will start putting a burden

in your heart and you will find a direction. Each one is burdened about different things. Some are burdened about children's education, some are burdened about justice movements, some are burdened about being a voice to the voiceless. As we start investing in people's lives, God will give direction to our giving as well. A clarity of vision will guide us as to where we need to invest, whom we need to build and whom we need to encourage.

Young people are always asked by parents or elders these questions: What do you want to become in life? Where do you want to go? What is the ladder you want to climb? So young people talk about becoming someone with a lot of money or going abroad and settling down with luxuries. These are self-centered questions posed at them.

While teaching Career guidance, I tell young people not to ask self-centered questions but to ask themselves: What is it in life that you want to build? What is it that you want to change? What is it that you want to eradicate? What is it that you want

We don't need wealth, but a heart to love people even though they don't deserve it and this comes with understanding of two words mercy and grace. Generously opening homes for people, forgiving quickly and building bridges.



to influence? Where is it that you want to make a difference in this world? These are purpose questions. They are important as Christians since we are called to be salt and light in this world and we are called to bring change. We see so much of injustice around us.

House helpers and drivers do not get paid enough. Even some ministries, Christian organisations or NGOs, do not even pay the minimum wages as prescribed by the government. If you ask any expert in law, he will say that it is illegal not to pay them as per the minimum Wages Act. We need to fairly invest in people so that they can give the returns that we expect of them. It's also part of loving people. If we believe that we are led by the Spirit and not by the law, we will give and pay beyond what the law prescribes and that gives us an opportunity to be generous.

Networking Community and Investing in Others

Christian community has a good network. When somebody needs help, even if we can't do it, we can connect them with people in our network who can provide that help. The Church is a large network of people who are always willing to step in and help one another. When life was tough for me, it was my Sunday school teachers who stepped in to speak into my life. It was the church members who stepped in to help me, to direct, to guide and pray for me. Not just talking to me, but also financially investing in me. That is a tremendous act of generosity that I learned from people who have invested in my life.

Another area of generosity that I have seen is people willing to trust me. I worked under a few great bosses. I was pushed to be a general manager of the company because of the trust placed on me at a very young age. Later on, I was made a Senior Pastor of a church because somebody took a chance and trusted me. I was made a CEO for Asia because few people took a chance and they saw something in me and then they trusted me. I count all

“It's also part of loving people. If we believe that we are led by the Spirit and not by the law, we will give and pay beyond what the law prescribes and that gives us an opportunity to be generous.”

that as generosity because it matters when you see somebody's strengths and invest in them so that they can grow. Now, is that a risk? Yes. Does it come with chances of failure? Definitely. But the leaders I worked under, consistently started trusting me. For

me, this is generosity in relationships.

I did not have a father in my life. When my daughter was born, I still remember stopping at a signal, I stalled the car and I was crying. I stopped the entire traffic there because, nothing was working in my head. Quickly getting a grip on myself, I realised that my fear was that I did not know how to become a father because I did not experience my father's love.

God made me look at people who have invested in me, my Sunday school teachers, my friends and my family. They are only three or four people but they made a huge difference. When I look at

them and what they have done, it encouraged me to do what I do today. When you start giving, when you start pouring into people's lives, sometimes we do not see the results. But it makes a huge difference and it changes their lives. Many times, we want everything measurable. We want it like a report. 100/200 lives changed. The truth is all changes cannot be quantified. That is why, it is important for us to

be sensitive to what God is telling us so that we can be people who can help others.

We are the hope of this nation. We are called to be a light of this world. Our generosity is a great tool to let people of this nation understand Christ's love.

(Mr. Emmanuel Sandeep is the founder of The Flatfish Network and Interblend Support Services. He can be reached at es@flatfishnetwork.org)



Abraham – A Generous Life

Mr. Richard Samuel

In the cover story article titled ‘Generosity: A Lifestyle,’ Mr. Emmanuel Sandeep has rightly mentioned that we as Indians, have been a caring and sharing community since the ancient past. This sharing and giving is pure without expecting anything in return. The Church as a community is called to love others unconditionally and be generous in our lifestyle.

In addition to what Mr. Sandeep has discussed, I would like to further elaborate on the concept of generosity by basing it on one prominent and generous character in the Bible - Abraham, who is truly a generous person. One cannot live a generous life without God in it. Being generous is not something that you do; it is something that you are. It is in the deeper journey with God that we are invited, enabled, and begin to open our hands. There are three incidents in the life of Abraham that encourage us to a deeper journey with God and also remind us that generosity is an outcome of a deep relationship with God.

God calls Abraham from his country to a land far away where He would bless him. And so, in obedience, Abraham goes forth from Haran to Canaan, and there God appears to him again and says that He will give this land to Abraham.

In Genesis 13, we see that there is strife between the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot, so Abraham offers basically half of his promised land! He invited



his nephew Lot to choose the land of his choice as his own and that thereafter Abraham would relocate to the other side, away from Lot. We have to step back to see the enormity of this posture. He is a man of promise and now giving away the land of promise to Lot! Imagine the conversations at the tents that night, beginning with Sarah, all the way to the herdsman who would have been upset and angry - seeing this as having been shortchanged. Enter the tents of Lot and his herdsman - what would have been the general conversation that night? It would have been upbeat and may have even been one of having outsmarted Abraham. Enter Abraham's own mind that night - it would have been one of the questions, perhaps even doubt. Lot naturally chose the watered ground that is so needed for the flocks, leaving Abraham with hard, rocky,

wilderness places for his flocks - what a turn of events! His own nephew whom he took under him, is now taking care of himself - not even thinking of Abraham.

All of this weighs on Abraham, and soon his eyes are looking down, despair was written over his face. In his strongest generous moment, he is also in his weakest place with doubts and perhaps even fears - and God knows that. And knowingly enough, God shows up, as if to say, “You did well, Abraham!”

As soon as Lot leaves, God outdoes Abraham's generosity and says, “I am making you the center. All four directions are yours from where you are! Everything that you see

“One cannot live a generous life without God in it. Being generous is not something that you do; it is something that you are. It is in the deeper journey with God that we are invited, enabled, and begin to open our hands.”

is yours.” Then He says to Abraham, “Walk all over this place, claim this, mark all over it, it is yours.” It is almost like Abraham and God are trying to out-give each other!

In Genesis 14, where four foreign kings defeat

Sodom, and Lot and his family and possessions - who are living there - are captured and taken away. On hearing this, Abraham immediately leaves his shepherding grounds and takes his men along with his allies and chases - at great risk to himself - the four victorious kings and their troops and defeats them beyond Damascus. Abraham brings Lot and his family - and in fact all the captives along with their possessions. And the king of Sodom offers him the entire possessions of his people - in return for the people. But Abraham says that he will take nothing from this and that His provider is his God! He came for Lot and his welfare. His own provision will be from the hand of his Lord God alone.



All else, he would not touch - not even a thread or a sandal thong! What a high road. God alone is his provider, and no man should

...it is no coincidence that God's only Son was sacrificed on that same mountain Mount Moriah. God gave His greatest gift, His own greatest treasure - His only Son - for mankind's sins. God had to go through with that - for there was no ram to replace Jesus!

even come close to claiming that role!

And yet, imagine the inner condition of returning back home. He is an alien in this land and basically a shepherd, yet has defeated four kings and their armies and further

offended the king of Sodom. He has now made five kings his enemies for his nephew's sake!

Yet before Abraham lets fear take over, God speaks to him in intimate words never heard before: *“Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward”* (Genesis 15:1).

God is again saying, “Do not regret doing this but keep on obeying me and I will take care of the rest. Continue to take the higher ground—don't settle for less! You can do this, Abraham. You are secured.” Then we see God give him even more territory than promised before, all the lands from Egypt's river all the way to the river Euphrates – first, it was Canaan, and now all the lands surrounding Canaan!

Genesis 22:1-3 mentions how Abraham gives it all away, even his only son - the most precious gift in his life he holds with open hands! Abraham did not know, but God was testing if he would withhold Isaac from God. This delights God and He blesses Abraham's generations as He has never before or since blessed any man. He says in Genesis 22:18 *“And through your offspring, all nations on earth will be blessed because you have obeyed me.”*

Further, it is no coincidence that God's only Son was sacrificed on that same mountain Mount Moriah. God gave His greatest gift, His own greatest treasure - His only Son - for mankind's sins. God had to go through with that - for there was no ram to replace Jesus!

It is almost like God and Abraham were out-giving each other!

In conclusion, let us ask God to give us the strength and the courage to trust in Him alone and live our lives with open hands as Abraham did - which is indeed a truly generous life.

(Mr. Richard Samuel is the Chief Executive Officer of Compass India.

He can be reached at samuelpostoffice@gmail.com)

Generosity - Seven Biblical Imperatives for Christian Living in Challenging Times

Dr. Gary G. Hoag

Mr. Emmanuel Sandeep has highlighted crucial points about leading a truly generous lifestyle. In response to his article, I would like to present my own remarks and present seven Biblical imperatives for Christian living in challenging times. My remarks may be seen as seven actions that the New Testament instructs followers of Christ to do to encourage generosity in today's time.

1. "God wants us to love one another just the way He has loved us." Sandeep rightly notes that at the outset that we "conveniently forget" to emphasize this. When we do, our lifestyle reflects cultural patterns rather than distinctly Christian practices.
2. "Mercy and grace are the foundations of generosity" Amen! Because Christ extends mercy and grace to us, we get to live likewise toward others.
3. "We fall into the trap of expecting returns." As we live and give generously, the selfish cultural patterns of expecting a return sometimes creep in. Sandeep keenly notes that this reveals that our heart or motives are not right: generosity expects no returns.
4. "The biggest obstacle of generosity is the fear of this, 'What if people take advantage of me?'" – I concur that any kind of fear marks a big hindrance to generosity, as fear is the opposite of faith. Without faith in God, we cannot exhibit the fruit of generosity.
5. "Indian society is a very giving society." I liked Sandeep's stories of people sharing food and clothing. Building on that, I liked how he implied that the lifestyle of Christian generosity is not just giving: it's giving our first and best to the least deserving.

6. "The pandemic has changed our lifestyle a lot." – That's the truth! The status quo is no more. We live in challenging times. God shook the earth with the pandemic. People now have new choices and opportunities to live generously with greater intentionality.

7. "Trust" – He wrote of the importance of "trust" in individuals and institutions. As I pivot to my remarks, I will suggest ways to build trust, so generosity grows in India (and around the world) and so people see Jesus in our living, giving, serving, and loving.

These seven Biblical Imperatives for Christian Living are presented based on what the early church did during and after a hard season, much like the pandemic we experienced.

“God wants us to love one another just the way He has loved us.”

Let me put these Biblical points in their historical context. In A.D. 30, Jesus rose from the dead. Forty days later he ascended into heaven, and ten days after that the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost. The church began to grow. But by A.D. 31, the persecution began. Stephen was stoned at the hands of Saul and others. Then in A.D. 34, Saul who would later be known as Paul was converted. By A.D. 42, Barnabas was sent to Antioch, where Agabus predicted famine would ravage the world in the reign of Claudius, whose reign spanned from A.D. 41-54. So, by the 40's, in addition to persecution, Christians in Jerusalem were starving. These were difficult and disruptive times. So, what did Christians do in these challenging times? Paul urged them to collaborate to reflect a consistent and generous Christian witness. These seven points reflect a sampling of what we can learn by looking at Paul's letters to the Corinthians and the Romans. I present them in the form of seven questions with seven answers.

Q1: How much should I give? A1: Share your margin.

Related to financial giving in this first-century example, stewards in the ancient Mediterranean world must have been asking this question, so Paul gave an international answer. He was sitting in Ephesus and writing the church in Corinth and told them to follow the same directions he gave to the Galatians (c. A.D. 54), as mentioned in 1 Cor. 16:1-2.

In a phrase, Paul instructed them to share their margin. Their “extra” would supply someone else’s “not enough.” Each church was to collect the funds for sharing with those in need. Paul wanted stewards everywhere to live simply to have a margin to give generously.

For Christians today in India (or anywhere else in the world), this means that we need to keep track of our spending of God’s money. We do this by living on a budget. This means we say “no” to some expenses so we can say “yes” to giving. And, as Sandeep noted, we do this to show the same love to others that God showed to us. We sacrifice for them like Jesus sacrificed for us. By this intentional action, we show Christ’s love to a watching world. Do you live on a budget? Do you share your margin with the poor and marginalized?

Q2. Who should handle the money? A2: Find credentialed servants.

Whether you work at a church or ministry and/or give to one, you want trustworthy people handling the giving. That was Paul’s perspective too. For him, faithful gift administration was as important as bold gospel proclamation, which is why he added this additional statement to his instructions. (1 Cor. 16:3-4)

To be “approved with letters” in antiquity meant having a credential that qualified a person to handle money. It would build trust. Today this might point to a C.P.A. or Chartered Accountant. Engaging these professionals enhance trust and encourage giving.

Does the church or ministry where you serve and/or to which you give enlist the paid or volunteer service of such skilled servants? It’s not an insignificant question to ask because when money starts flowing, it’s God’s reputation that gets muddled in cases of corruption.

For Christians today in India (or anywhere else in the world), this means that we need to keep track of our spending of God’s money. We do this by living on a budget. This means we say “no” to some expenses so we can say “yes” to giving.

Finding credentialed people is extra work and may come at an expense, but the cost of God-honouring administration is always less than the price paid for cutting corners. Again, as Sandeep noted, trust is a vital component for generosity to flow.

Q3. What if we give ourselves to God? A3: Tell generosity stories.

Notice that in Paul’s second letter to the church in Corinth (c. A.D. 57), when he reopened the topic of their generous giving to help the poor and needy, he told a story. He wanted them to know that God had enabled people in difficult circumstances to give (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

Consider the significance of this. It’s common to think that giving is someone else’s job. It’s their responsibility, not mine because I am facing hard times. What Paul did here mirrors what Sandeep did. He told stories which showed that even ordinary and poor people can give.

When we tell stories, it stirs people. They see themselves in the story. It inspires them to join the story and play their part. Today in India or wherever you live and serve, tell generosity stories. And don’t just feature wealthy people. For example, remember the widow who made the bread for Elijah (1 Kings 17:7-16)? I love that story. Her flour did not run out and her oil did not run dry. Stories of ordinary people remind listeners that each person’s gift matters.

Q4. What is an “acceptable gift” to God? A4: Give God what you have willingly!

The idea of “acceptable giving” can be traced to the earliest Biblical history. God saw the heart and the offering of Cain and Abel but only Abel’s was acceptable. Why? Read Hebrews 11:4.

Many scholars interpret “better offering” as bringing His best to God from a willing heart. This is the same kind of giving Paul describes as acceptable (2 Corinthians 8:12).

Jesus celebrated when people gave what they had. Consider the boy with “five small barley loaves and two small fish” (John 6:1-13) or the widow with “two small copper coins” (Mark 12:41-44). Neither held back anything. Do we?

Acceptable giving is giving God what we have with a willing heart. What does God see when he looks at your giving?

An example of “give God what you have” is transforming a nation through a Movement spreading across Malawi (watch the Palmful of Maize video). This movement was inspired by Handful of Rice, a video that celebrates how the Mizo Christians of Mizoram and some of the Zo Christians of Manipur in Northeast India are able to sustain their ministry by giving God what they had: rice.

Q5: Why do collection standards matter? A5: Preserve God’s reputation.

Back then and now, people point fingers and blame each other during challenging times. Paul knew this so he outlined collection standards with financial controls to exhibit integrity, to avoid the temptation and opportunity for theft, and to keep the effort above reproach (2 Corinthians 8:20-21).

The same holds true today. If we manage financial giving at a church or ministry, we must preserve God’s reputation by doing more than just avoiding breaking laws. We must follow standards, implement controls, keep good records, and submit to independent financial auditors as a testimony to a watching world.

Does the church or ministry where you serve and/or to which you give follow any standards of responsible stewardship? This builds trust in individuals and institutions, and more importantly, it protects God’s honour.

Q6: What does God want to see? A6: Sow generously and cheerfully.

God watches our giving closely. To be sure the Corinthians understood this, Paul used common agricultural language to teach them (2 Corinthians 9:6-7).

How much we reap is up to us. This is not prosperity gospel thinking (giving to get), but rather how participation in the gospel works. In my life, I have found that you don’t figure it out until you live it out. Serving as a conduit of generous blessing is entirely up to you. When you don’t give, you miss out. Thus, Paul urged them (and us) to sow bountifully and cheerfully because God loves it! The world sees what we give. God looks at what we don’t

give cheerfully and what that says about our hearts. God does not need the money. He wants our hearts, and He loves resourcing cheerful conduits. What does He see when he looks at your heart and your giving?

Q7: What if all ministries affixed a seal? A7: Support trusted ministries.

Scholars estimate that Paul spent six years in the prime of his career orchestrating the international campaign for needy Christians (c. A.D. 53-58). Part of his routine was affixing a seal to verify the integrity of each collection. We learn this from his letter to the Romans written from Corinth (c. A.D. 58). (Romans 15:28-29 NASB).

After the pandemic, the economic implications last far beyond the discovery and distribution of a vaccine. Financial experts say: “The rich get richer and the poor get poorer.” So, to whom should we give in such challenging times?

Support trusted ministries accredited by peer accountability groups like EFAC in India or ECFA in USA. Around the world, these groups of churches and ministries follow stewardship standards and affix a seal to verify compliance. Give confidently to them knowing the money will get where it is supposed to go. Why? The last thing we need in challenging times is another financial scandal linked to a church or ministry!

Conclusion

Generosity must be a lifestyle. That’s for sure. And if we follow Biblical imperatives for Christian living in challenging times, our collective example will reflect a consistent witness. What if Christians across India and around the world observed these seven imperatives? I think our generosity would trickle down and have a great impact. People would see the love of Christ through our living, giving, serving, and loving.

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Christian Generosity

Mr. Prem Kumar Lee

Introduction

The gospel is often seen as a means of reaching heaven, and not as a new style of living on earth. Living on earth is often seen by Christians as chasing after the world while following the Ten Commandments or in a legitimate manner. Wealth, success, reputation etc. become the prime movers of the Christian society, however, the essence of the gospel is loving God and loving man. Jesus' issue with the Pharisees was that they seemed to love God, but did not seem to love man. The concept that the Laws were to teach how to show love to God and man was foreign to them. For them, it was how to show loyalty to God and love had no role to play. Love is seen as irrational and obedience to the Law as a rational commitment to God. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount brought out how love for man is more important than mere obedience to the Law.

Generosity flowing from love is the essential response to the gospel. The gospel is not a means of getting to heaven, but a means of experiencing heaven here, through the love flowing through our hearts and lives. While the fullness of heaven may be in the future, we enter into heaven now and begin to experience the new life of love and generosity now.

Isaiah 32:1-8 describes the Messianic Kingdom, where righteousness and justice reign. In this kingdom, the evil and wicked are caught in their web of deceit and those who are generous are established because of their generosity (Vs.8). This is not karma; it is human nature as detailed by Jesus in His statement, "Do unto others what you would have them do unto you." When we are generous, others are generous to us and so by the sharing of resources within the community, the generous are established in their life.

In an interesting picture of heaven, a scene is presented of a feast table and people seated around it, but each person has a stick tied to his arms so that he cannot bend his elbows. However, it is not a problem as each person feeds the other. But, in hell, where each tries to feed himself, they all go hungry.

Generosity as the essence of the gospel

In Luke's gospel, Jesus launches His ministry with a manifesto from Isaiah 61:1ff at the synagogue in Nazareth. Many Christians tend to interpret the passage in a symbolic manner, taking the passage as referring to the spiritually poor and spiritually blind. But the subsequent sections of Luke chapters 4 and 5 would seem to indicate that Jesus meant this literally as well. We see Jesus casting out an evil spirit (Luke 4:31-37), healing Peter's mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-39), casting out spirits (Luke 4:40-41), preaching the gospel (Luke 4:42-44), directing Peter where to catch fish (Luke 5:1-11), healing a leper (Luke 5:12-16), forgiving sin and healing, (Luke 5:17-26) and teaching (Luke 5:30-39). Thus, we can see that Jesus addressed all kinds of issues - spiritual, physical, emotional and psychological.

Similarly, in Matthew 11:1-5, when John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He was the Messiah, He told them to tell John the Baptist what they had *seen and heard* – the blind received sight, the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, the dead were raised up and the poor had the gospel preached to them. Everyone received a visible solution to their problems that John's disciples could go back and report about. That obviously means that the gospel was also a visible solution to the needs of the poor, not just a spiritual one.

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There are three ways in which the gospel is a solution to the poor. Firstly, it causes them to give up bad habits and stop wasting resources. Secondly, when they turn to God, He blesses whatever they do. But, for

those trapped in structures of poverty, these two solutions alone are often inadequate. For them, the third way is required, where Jesus changes the heart of the rich and makes them willing to share with the poor.

We see this lived out in the early church in Acts 4:34,

"Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold."

This principle is emphasised right through the New Testament

John 13:35 – *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another”*

Ephesians 4:28 – *“... rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.”*

The gospel makes people generous.

What prevents us from being generous?

According to James 4:1-4, we lack generosity and have animosity towards people because of our love for the things of this world. That is why, repentance becomes the first step in the gospel message.

Jesus and the apostles do not tell us what we have to repent from. They only say, Repent! The idea that we are to repent from sins comes from the Old Testament and John the Baptist, where the Israelites were repeatedly asked to repent from their wicked ways. While repentance from sins is required, the primary emphasis of both the Old and New Testaments is actually the command, “You shall have no other gods before me.” The actual repentance required of us is repentance from other gods and a turning to Yahweh. It is only after we come to God that we are called to repent from our sins to maintain our relationship with Him.

“For anyone of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who separates himself from Me and sets up his idols in his heart and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, then comes to a prophet to inquire of him concerning Me, I the Lord will answer him by Myself.” (Ezekiel 14:7-8)

The other gods that we may have are not always physical idols. They can be invisible attitudes in our hearts. For example, Matthew 6:24 says that we cannot worship both God and money. Here, the other god that we need to repent from is money. What does it mean to worship money? It means trusting money to provide for our needs instead of trusting Yahweh.

Other idols of the heart could be status, education etc., but the most powerful with the largest following is money. Most people seem to accept Jesus as their saviour from sin but retain their

trust in money as their saviour for life. As long as we see money as our saviour for life, we cannot be sacrificially generous. Not only that, our Christian life will not be as victorious as it should be.

1 Timothy 6:10 says that the root of evil is love or trust in money or the things of this world. If we have not repented from trust in money for our life, sin will not leave us. Repentance from money or material things must precede repentance from sin. Repentance from the world leads to salvation and the subsequent repentance from sin leads to sanctification and the victorious Christian life.

Once we repent from trust in the material, we can then be generous with the material things we have. But if we trust these material things in our life, it becomes difficult if not impossible to be generous.

Generosity and the Law

Once we have established the base of generosity through the gospel, how is generosity to be manifested? The Law was given to us to show how generosity is to be manifested by us. It was an error to see the Law as a means of salvation. It never was one. Exodus 19:1-6 makes it clear that it was the lifestyle to be followed by the saved.

Let us look at one example, and I trust that you will read the rest of the Old Testament Laws with the same generous eyes.

It is written in Deuteronomy, that *“At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts.” (Deut 15:1)*

The passage goes on to say that those who have, should lend money to those who are poor without interest. That means there should be no profit motive

for taking advantage of the financial distress individuals find themselves in. Instead, the Old Testament made it mandatory for the well-to-do to give loans to help the poor tide over the financial difficulties they were facing.

The Bible also teaches against laziness, and being unwilling to work, so the poor need to be understood as those who were victims of misfortunes like illness and natural disasters, and not as people who do not work. Paul makes it clear in his epistle to the Thessalonians that if a person does not work neither shall he eat.

What was to be done if they could not repay the loan? The Bible says that such loans were to be written off in the year of

“...we lack generosity and have animosity towards people because of our love for the things of this world. That is why, repentance becomes the first step in the gospel message.”

the Jubilee, which took place every seventh year. Because of the jubilee of the seventh year, it could become difficult for the poor to obtain loans near the year of the jubilee. In Deuteronomy 15:9-10, the Bible warns against such thinking.

“Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, ‘The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,’ and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the LORD against you, and it became sin among you. You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand.”

The Bible commanded the rich to give loans freely, knowing fully well that these loans may never be paid back.

Today, for most of us, such requests for loans come from the poor around us.

How do we respond to these requests? While the Bible does not encourage irresponsible living (2 Thessalonians 3:10), the Bible asks us to have a generous and compassionate outlook towards the poor, even giving repeated loans which are not repaid.

Generosity in forgiving

The Bible says, *‘But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.’ Matt 6:15*

Another area where we need to be generous is in forgiving others, irrespective of what they have done to us. In a parable in Matthew’s gospel, Jesus narrates how a person is forgiven a large debt but is unwilling to forgive a small debt someone had with him. For this, Jesus says that he is condemned. We must recognise the huge debt that God has forgiven us and reflect our gratitude to God by forgiving the people around us. Our realisation that we ourselves are sinful people should lead us to be forgiving of others.

In the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:9-15, Matthew ends the passage with the statement that if we do not forgive others, then God will not forgive us. This almost makes it appear that we earn our salvation by forgiving others. But that is not what Jesus is teaching here. What Jesus is saying is that if we have experienced the forgiveness of God, we will forgive others. If we are unable to forgive others, we have not experienced the forgiveness of God in our lives.

One of the reasons for the inability to forgive is that we still

love the things of the world and the person we cannot forgive has made us lose something we love very much. One of the disciplines I have in my life is to identify what it is that makes me upset with people. I then release that to Jesus, it may be peace and quiet being shattered by noisy children. I tell God, “I am having a love for peace and quiet that is disturbing my relationship with the noise maker. I release that need into your hands. Teach me to live without it.”

When we have faith in Jesus for everything, we do not worry about material things, and so we do not fight over material things.

Closing thought

The Bible teaches that everything belongs to God and has been entrusted to us for His purposes. Deuteronomy 12:6 is an important verse that makes today’s teaching on

tithes inadequate. In the Old Testament, they gave a lot more than the tithe. To restrict people in the New Testament to give only a tithe for ministry is an error. They need to give as they are able and as God challenges them.

If the wealth we have belongs to God, then at our deathbed, it needs to be allotted as per His will. One of the challenges I give people, is to include God in the division of the inheritance, so that God gets an amount equal to what the children or other inheritors get. Such a practice forces us to recognise that the assets are not mine, but God’s and He is given recognition of that.

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“We must recognise the huge debt that God has forgiven us and reflect our gratitude to God by forgiving the people around us. Our realisation that we ourselves are sinful people should lead us to be forgiving of others.”

Costly Generosity

Mr. Tom Delaney

“Yahaa koi sunwahi nahi ho rahi. Please, tumhe aana hoga”
(Nobody is listening here. Please, you’ve got to come)

It was an important decision.

Aliya,¹ 16, had just undergone a major abdominal surgery, cutting out a section of her bowel. Two days later, she tested positive for COVID-19. Aliya was shifted to the COVID ward but the facility proved to be little more than a jail - locked doors with meals slid in three times a day, and a lack of specialist attention. 24 hours in, Aliya’s surgery wound had not been dressed.

Now Aliya and her mother were pleading with me to join them in the COVID ward. This was August 2020, the early days of the pandemic when the very word ‘Corona’ still struck a fearful note. I was anxious about the prospect of exposing myself to this pathogen. It was one thing to help Aliya with money and time, but to put my health on the line was a harder decision.

Costly Generosity

Generosity can be costly. Indeed, perhaps it is by its costliness that genuine generosity can be known.

The Bible has numerous examples of costly generosity. In a great drought, a widow who is anticipating her family’s starvation feeds Elijah her last remaining food (1 Kings 17). A woman gives two coins in the temple offering – the last she has. A boy shares his two loaves and five fishes with Jesus and his disciples, fully expecting that he will miss out on lunch as the meager rations are shared around (Matthew 14).

In these stories, God responds to the costly generosity of the poor with His own miraculous generosity. But what of the times when prayers are not answered when miracles are not performed, when the generous poor are left with empty stomachs? Jesus did not promise an easy life to his followers - rather, he told us to expect persecution and hardship.

The costly generosity of the poor is as profound today as it was in

Biblical times. I was born and brought up in slums by Western parents who wanted to relate deeply with the poor. We used to be puzzled by the fact that many beggars, fakirs, and sadhus would wander through our slum. Surely they would be better off sharing their sorrowful songs and stories in wealthy neighbourhoods. But when I asked one, he informed me matter-of-factly that he earned more begging in a *basti*² than the posh suburbs.

When foreign guests come to our slum they are often confronted by the generous hospitality that is a way of life here. My guests feel guilty that our hosts - who may not even have two square meals themselves - spend lavishly on snacks and chai for us. I ask them to respect our hosts by accepting the snacks but to sit with us and dwell on the discomfort that receiving costly

generosity causes us.

False generosity

Western society largely ignores the challenge of costly generosity. Consider foreign aid budgets. Most Western countries aspire to the UN target of donating 0.7% of GDP overseas, but the world’s largest economy (the US) spends below 0.2%.³

My home country of Australia is a little better, spending 0.22%, a reduction from about 0.3% a decade ago. Australia proclaims its role as a benefactor of the Pacific region - even though we have among the highest per-person carbon emissions in the world, causing climate change with devastating consequences for our island neighbours. This is false generosity - continuing to oppress the poor with one hand while ostentatiously giving them the crumbs from our table with the other.

The false generosity is not limited to governments but is also reflected in sparse personal giving. Amidst tremendous material abundance, people’s conception of what they ‘need’ has today become so bloated that there is little space in the budget to give. Further, individualised independence has become an idol such that the idea of relying on the generosity of anyone else is anathema. A generation ago, people might pop around to their

“...false generosity is not limited to governments but is also reflected in sparse personal giving. Amidst tremendous material abundance, people’s conception of what they ‘need’ has today become so bloated that there is little space in the budget to give.”

¹ Name changed

² Hindi word for slum

³ Wikipedia. List of Development Aid Sovereign State Donors

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_development_aid_sovereign_state_donors

neighbours' to borrow some appliances. Now everyone has their own. There is little space to practice either giving or receiving with generosity.

In mission circles, too, the idea of costly, sacrificial generosity is losing ground, in favour of a softer gospel which emphasises 'self-care'. Of course, it is important to care for ourselves – though this can happen without the use of copious resources, instead spending quality time alone and with family or in nature. Still, our self-care needs to be tempered with self-sacrifice. We follow a Messiah who told us to 'pick up your cross' not 'pick up a coffee'.

Self-care and Self-sacrifice

Jesus is a remarkable example of both loving himself and loving others. To sustain himself during his ministry, he would regularly leave the crowds and go to a quiet place to pray alone (e.g. Mark 1:35). Yet when his efforts at self-care were interrupted, he responded to the crowds with incredible graciousness and generosity. Jesus was fond of feasts and celebrations – so much so that his enemies called him a glutton. Yet he made the ultimate act of self-sacrifice, by laying down his life.

So, how best to integrate self-care and self-sacrifice in our lives? Here are some processes that are helpful for me:

- I hold some highlights of my weekly schedule very tightly, not sacrificing them except for medical emergencies – soccer with friends on Saturday afternoon, a call with my brother on Sunday morning.
- I try to keep my own needs in perspective, by comparing them to the needs of others around me. I may need some rest even while someone else needs to be taken to hospital. Both needs are valid and deserve attention, but sometimes I will prioritise others' needs as more urgent than my own.
- We are called to be cheerful, rather than resentfully generous. If I frequently feel resentful and reluctant when giving myself to others, it probably means I need some time alone to reflect and recharge.
- I try to involve others in finding solutions. When a neighbour shares a problem with me, I first ask: 'Is there someone else who could help resolve this?' rather than jumping straight to trying to solve the problem myself.

Giving and receiving generously

The question of how generous to be runs deeper than a tension between self-care and self-sacrifice. I'm thinking again of the discomfort caused by receiving the poor's generous hospitality, and of our reluctance to ask anyone for help. Not only are we, the wealthy, unwilling to give generously, we are also reluctant to receive generously. We want to look and feel independent, and are afraid to be indebted to anyone.

Perhaps if we open ourselves to receive more deeply – from God and people both – then we will be more willing to give more generously to others. Let's strip away our illusions of independence, instead acknowledging our interdependence with each other. What would happen if we live by Jesus' words: 'freely you've received, now freely you shall give' (Mt 10.8)?

The undeserving poor

Perhaps the hardest category of people to give freely to are those we regard as the 'undeserving' poor. We may be willing to give to innocent children who bear no responsibility for their plight. But we are loathed to respond graciously to those whom we deem have caused their own problems – drinkers, addicts, loafers.⁴

For the wealthy, 'the poor are lazy' is a comforting theory – as it implies that we, the rich, must be hardworking. Branding the poor as 'undeserving' is often a convenient defense, protecting us from guilt about our own wealth and stinginess.

Indeed, there are many good development theory reasons to be careful who we give to, and how we give. The classic 'Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime' is worth pondering. Heartfelt generosity is not a substitute for rational analysis – the two must go hand-in-hand.

But Jesus' words are deeply challenging: 'Give to those who ask of you' (Luke 6.30). No ifs, no buts. Surely he doesn't mean this literally? We cry. How can Jesus be so naïve and simplistic? What about those who don't deserve it?

But it's worth remembering that we are also undeserving of God's generosity and grace to us. So maybe it's time to stop sorting the poor into false dichotomies of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' – after all, everyone bears some responsibility for their own decisions, but there are also many factors outside our control. It is time to freely receive the gracious, undeserved generosity of God, and in turn to pour ourselves out for others, even when doing so may be costly.

So what happened with Aliya? In the end, I said yes and joined her in the COVID ward that night. We went through a lot together over the next week, but she pulled through. I tested positive for COVID too but suffered no ill effects. Looking back, I feel grateful for the chance to take generosity one step deeper.

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⁴ Craig Greenfield. There's No Such Thing as the Deserving Poor. In A Life Overseas <https://www.alifeoverseas.com/theres-no-such-thing-as-the-deserving-poor/>

Philanthropy and Social Justice

Brig. Rajiv Williams, YSM

Social justice is the act of implementation of generosity endowed upon a community, which can bring about that desired change. This is true only when there is a direct connect between 'head and heart'. It is the relationship built on trust that needs to be factored in all philanthropic activities and must to be understood by all stakeholders i.e. the Government, the Corporations and civil society.

With my experience in the area of Corporate philanthropy and Social responsibility, I believe that most philanthropic work in India, has a coloured perception of 'doing good' with the hidden agenda of building brand value of the individual or of the Corporation to which the individual belongs. The act of charity is hinged upon a public credit tool, where people as well as the Government machinery, miss the point that such work, though perceived by beneficiaries as beneficial is short lived unless the relationship is built on trust and respect and if found wanting will surely weaken the very fabric of a social system. My reason for such an observation is that over-dependency on just philanthropy or doles, impart giving out subsidies, which weaken the community at large. Being generous may not necessarily bring long term sustainable relationships or for that matter sustainability of a social system. For what you give should be from the heart and not from the mere surpluses, which is being used for philanthropic work. It is equally important that the 'spend' should be referred to as an investment toward social needs, without publicizing the 'how much.' If the intent is good and righteous, then the giving is blessed and strengthens the social cause.

Christian Perspective on Generosity

I am reminded of two scripture passages often referred at Church sermons and discourses.

The first is about the widow giving all that she had and Jesus said and I quote from the scriptures of St. Luke Chapter 21: 1 – 4 "And He looked up and saw the rich men casting their

gifts into the treasury. And He saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And He said of the truth I say unto you that this poor widow had cast more than they all: for all these have their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she out of her penury had cast in all her living that she had."

...what you give should be from the heart and not from the mere surpluses, which is being used for philanthropic work. It is equally important that the 'spend' should be referred to as an investment toward social needs, without publicizing the 'how much.'

The second passage is about the boastfulness of giving and references can be found in the Gospel of St. Matthew 6:2, 3 - "So when you give to the needy, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in

synagogues and streets to be honoured by men. But when you give the needy do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing."

Being generous may not necessarily imply giving much as I would rather think that generosity tilts toward the fact of giving with a clean heart and without any preconceived notion or biases. Generosity and establishing goodwill are two sides of the same coin, which although helping in the overall development exercise, yet if not applied appropriately may well be short sighted and dangerous. Hence, we need to understand the 'Art of giving' and apply our minds to acknowledge the good out of such generosity.

Transitioning from Corporate Philanthropy to Corporate Social Responsibility

The missing link of yesteryears was the social connect with the 'Giver', wherein large corporations wanted to 'feel good' by 'doing good.' I believe it should have been in the reverse order of 'doing good' and in this bargain, feel good because the act of giving in most cases was from the surplus available for charity work. Such surplus funds were channelled into 'Family trusts,' which were used to fund development activities. Charity which became a means to an end gave a feeling of being responsible. However, the point missed was that the generous giving in a way was de-linked from being connected with the receiver in a more personal way. For instance, the

generous act of contributing towards making a charitable hospital or a school has a tag attached on branding making the funder feel honoured and important. A kind of cheque book philanthropy. This has since undergone a change, when Corporations have realised the importance of being connected with the people and making charity more accountable by measuring outcomes through impact assessments.

This brought about a change in the outlook of being generous and responsible towards strengthening of the social system. The concept of 'Beyond business responsibility,' has been mandated later by an Act passed by the Government of India in 2014 called as "The Company's Act." This Act makes it mandatory for all businesses to invest a minimum 2% of the companies' profits in social causes through the surplus funds available and give it to charity. While a caveat has been initiated on corporations to invest, with very strict controls and reparations on doing less, yet I debate the intent itself, where money has become the key to community development, rather than making the rich feel their responsibilities towards poverty and reducing the gap between the rich and the poor.

India's Development Agenda

India needs to remain inclusive in its development agenda and incorporate the changing dynamics of the present day socio-cultural and economic context of the country. The aspirations of India and its citizens require institutional reforms in governance and dynamic policy shifts that will ensure a holistic development. Our demographic dividend has to get the desired impetus, by both the Government and the Non-Government machinery and the focus must remain on education, skill development, elimination of gender bias and employment. However at the heart of all such focus areas should be towards environmental sustainability.

To achieve such a tall bucket list in the development space, not only funds need to be harnessed from various stakeholders, but the intent without any malice and suspicion on religion, caste or creed must be encouraged, especially under the governance framework. Hence, biases must be removed from all development activities and equity and equality should remain the driver of change.

The Government of India has replaced the Planning Commission with NITI Ayog, which has been given the responsibility of development through a shared vision of

national development priorities, sectors and strategies. The need is to enhance collaborative federalism through structured support initiatives and mechanisms and bringing at par those communities at the margins who could not have access for development.

Conclusion

To conclude, I would like to once again reiterate that all development work, supported by either the Government or the private sector must be in sync with the needs of the community and not merely based on the agenda of just feeling good the work. This will ensure that the

by initiating outcomes are sustainable and the people at large are benefitted from the schemes and projects launched. The impact of such initiatives will be measurable and development carried out in the true sense. It will be axiomatic to assume that such growth will be inclusive and productive and in the process bring about the desired change. While all such endeavour should be aligned to the policies enunciated by NITI Ayog in India's context, yet the work has to be executed in a manner which is not tantamount to party lines and along the lines of the priorities listed by the political dispensation of the time.

Although generosity with a purpose may have a strong social bond yet unless the effort is monitored at various levels, the change will be stunted and short lived. Hence, all giving must stem from the heart and without any kind of branding attached. Problems ensue when the 'giving' is linked to an individual or corporate donor or for that matter to a particular power centre because people are rather well-informed of their rights and can gauge the intent of such generosity.

The Christian community must continue to be at the fore front in the development space and the driver of all efforts be singularly "Love and respect". We should help in furthering the overall development agenda and demonstrate our efforts through the process of encouraging and sharing.

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Working with the Poor

The Commission India Church was set up by Pastor Satyabadi Mandika in 2018 at Karlaghati village, Rayagada district in Odisha. Pastor Satyabadi started this Church with the vision to serve the needy by living out the faith and showing love in action. It was after attending EFICOR's Parivartan training that he became fully convinced of doing good work for the community. The Pastor was introduced to the Parivartan model of working along with the community in Church ministry. This motivated him not just to work for the poor but also in working along with the community and local Government officials for the community's development. With this motivation, the Church started working with the community and was able to see a lot of change in the lives of the people.

A thorough understanding and conviction of integral mission which is grounded in Scripture motivated the Church to put its belief into practice through many avenues of work in order to bring wholistic transformation to the communities. Having this conviction in heart and a deep passion to serve, the Church with the support of the local administrative officials have done tremendous efforts in various community development work as mentioned below:

- **Solar water tank installed at Ajingapadar**

After several visits and meetings with the community in Ajingapadar Village, the Pastor organised a meeting with them. The community informed him of their urgent



In frame: Solar water tank installed

need for water and good toilet facilities. A committee was formed and they met the Sarpanch. He connected them with an organisation called Harsha Trust which dealt with solar drinking water project. Every family was mobilised to contribute Rs.500/- for the project and they gave the Harsha Trust the amount collected. The company completed the water installation work in 15 days. The community were very happy that they have sufficient water for drinking and sanitation purposes. With the help of the Church facilitators, 10 solar water tanks have been installed in Rayagada and Kandhamal districts.



In frame: Public Toilet before complaint letter was filed

- **Toilet doors fixed**

In Ajingapadar village, under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan scheme, some public toilets were constructed. However, many complaints were received from the women that the toilets are useless because they did not have fixed doors. The Church helped them by writing an application to the Block Development Officer and the Collector. In the application, they requested to complete the work in



In frame: Public Toilet door fixed after complaint letter was filed by the women themselves

a month's time. The doors were then fixed and many of them are usable now.

- **Accessing Government schemes**

The Church also helped the community in receiving Old age pensions, widow pensions and death benefits under Harichandra Yojana. There were many widows in the village who did not get pensions. The Church helped them to resolve these issues. Women in Ajingapadar village were given training on how to write applications and approach concerned Government officials. Gradually, their confidence grew while approaching the authorities and the Church also advocated on their behalf. So far, 50 persons have been able to receive various kinds of pensions with the help of the Church.



In frame: The newly constructed road in Rayagada district

- **Construction of roads**

The community faced a lot of commuting problems especially during monsoon as they could not go the nearby towns in cases of medical emergency. The Church helped them in approaching concerned officials. After few weeks, road construction and repairing work started from Buduni to Sahada in Rayagada district and another new road constructed from Sana Galiguda to Sarupadu, Chandrapur block in Rayagada District during February 2022.

Besides all the above, several community development work have been done by the Church such as – construction of bridges and ponds, providing financial assistance for treatment of critical patients in the hospital, installation of rice mill machine, providing aid to orphans who are in need of school fees, loans given for running vegetable business, helping mentor school going children in a school which was run by one of the Church members and so forth.

The efforts of the Commission India Church have therefore significantly impacted the lives of the community in and around Rayagada and Kandhamal districts in Odisha. With the support of the local Government officials, the Church has been able to empower the community to work for their own welfare in terms of accessing Government schemes and in repair and maintenance of Government hospitals, schools, roads, etc. Just as Christ has shown us through his life, the Commission India Church truly has portrayed a selfless life of living out the faith by demonstrating it in action.

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Books on our Desk

The Spirituality of Fund-Raising

By Henri J.M. Nouwen, Published by the Upper Room Ministries,

Henri Nouwen Society, 2004. www.HenriNouwen.org

Mrs. Joan Lalromawi

This booklet by Henri Nouwen is an edited work based on Nouwen's unpublished lecture series. The contents of the booklet seem short, yet they are powerful and deep. The Preface starts with a narrative about how Nouwen was generous to someone and later was rewarded with similar kindness. His generosity grew from a larger generosity of self and his desire for authentic relationships which further stirred this desire in others.

Nouwen encourages us to see fund-raising from a spiritual lens and to look at it as a pleasant activity to support spiritual things. To do this, he opines that fund-raising is first and foremost a part of ministry. He said fund-raising is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission. He warns us to not let ourselves be misled into thinking that fund-raising is only a secular activity.

Fund-raising is a call to experience a deep shift in how we see, think, and act. To be renewed with this in focus is to be clothed in a right mind, to come to ourselves the way the prodigal son did when he was starving (Luke 15:17-20). It is a shift of attention in which we set our minds on divine things. It is therefore quite crucial that one must be in line with the donors to have the same vision and not lose direction of one's mission. Otherwise, the relationship would be merely about one begging for money and the donor merely handing out cheques. Nouwen pointed out that both teams belong together in their work because Jesus has brought them together, and their fruitfulness depends on staying connected with Him.

Nouwen rightly said that if we raise funds for the creation of a community of love, we are helping God build the Kingdom. He said when we give ourselves to planting and nurturing love here on earth, our efforts will reach beyond our own chronological existence. Fund-raising must always aim to create new, lasting relationships based on love. Our own call must be deepened and strengthened as a result of our fund-raising. By calling us for a deeper commitment to our particular ministry, fund-raising helps to make visible the Kingdom that is already among us.

Nouwen also highlights an important aspect of personal

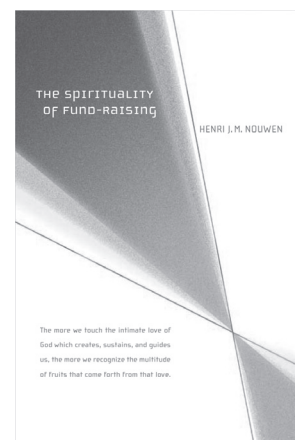
attitude towards money. He said that money touches our relationships and also reaches our inner life since we equate it with power and self-worth. It is also considered taboo to discuss money and very hard for many people to talk about it since it is related to our need for security. This is evident when one needs to do fund-raising. Nouwen makes an important point that if our security is totally in God, then we are free to ask for money. Only when we are free from money can we freely ask others to give.

Prayer is the spiritual discipline through which our minds and hearts are converted from hostility or suspicion to hospitality towards people who have money. Prayer allows us to see ourselves and others as God sees us. In prayer, we seek God's voice and allow God's word to penetrate our fear and resistance so that we can begin to hear what God wants us to know. Once we realise that God is well pleased with us, we will feel free to approach people, whether rich or poor, in the freedom of God's love. In prayer, therefore, we learn to trust that God can work fruitfully through us no matter where we are or who we are with. When we approach fund-raising in a spirit of gratitude, we do so knowing that God has already given us what we most need for life. Therefore our confidence in our mission and vision, and our freedom to love the person to whom we are talking about donating money, do not depend on how that person responds.

Nouwen's booklet provides valid justifications for doing fund-raising. It helps us gain in-depth spiritual insight into finances or relationships. It is motivating and is a relevant reading for all whether one is involved in fund-raising or not.

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Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet

By Mark Lynas, Herper Perennial, London, 2008

Mr. Samuel Lalremruata

The book under review titled 'Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet' by Mark Lynas charts the earth's increasing warming temperature to a perilous degree. The author investigates the scientists' claim that the next century will see global temperature rise. The temperature scale as mentioned by the author is based on the IPCC's landmark prediction of a 1.4 to 5.8 (6) degree increase in surface temperature, published in its 2001 Third Assessment Report. Lynas outlines what to expect from a warming world, degree by degree, which is presented systematically in the six chapters. In the first chapter, he attempts to make the readers understand how one degree of temperature rise has an impact on the environment. Lynas mentions that global warming is making the hydrological cycle more intense, causing extreme weather and rising levels of greenhouse gases making the worst to happen more frequently. He takes us through till the sixth chapter warning us of an alarming 6-degree rise. He stated that if six degrees of cooling were enough to nearly wipe us out in the past, six degrees of warming would have a similar effect in the future and would eliminate most life on earth, including humanity.

In the concluding chapter, Lynas mentions interesting ideas on how one could take care of the environment. He argues that with foresight and intelligent strategic planning such as 'carbon rationing,' people could simply trade carbon as a parallel virtual currency.

Six Degrees is an informative and interesting read. It highlights crucial issues concerning the environment. Lynas however admits one drawback of his study which is the case studies used would have different underlying assumptions so comparing the case studies is not accurate. Despite this, he has been able to put across the idea that one cannot afford to ignore the worst which could happen in the future and each one of us has a role to play as stewards of the environment.

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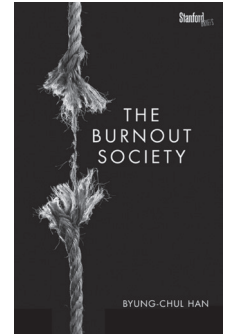


The Burnout Society

By Byung-Chul Han, Stanford University Press, California, 2015.

Mr. Paulal John Khuptong

The book, 'The Burnout Society' written by a Korean-born German philosopher, Byung-Chul Han, is a critique of modern contemporary society. The author points out that our obsession with hyper-positivity, self-gratification and self-discovery caused mental health disorders such as mental exhaustion, depression, borderline personality disorder (BD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).



According to Byung-Chul Han, the primary concern of societies in the previous century was related to immunology as people suffered from bacterial illnesses and infections. He stated that modern society is determined by a quest for information, productivity and achievements that are driven by the ideology of neoliberalism and there is no end to the pursuit of optimism. He argues that the 20th century was governed as a disciplined society in which citizens conform to certain norms such as prohibition and restriction on how citizens ought to behave in the society. However, the 21st century has a different paradigm, shifting from a 'disciplinary society' to an 'achievement society,' which Byung-Chul Han referred to as "entrepreneurs of the self." This is some kind of mass psychosis, informing people to pursue more, be more productive and achieve more, which have all become the symbol of success. On the other hand, he revealed the notion that the pursuit of excessive productivity is the root cause of mental health issues within society.

This is indeed a riveting and engaging book that critically analyses concerns in our modern culture. The book provides an entirely novel perspective and new ways of engaging and viewing the world around us. It would be beneficial to those who are stressed out by the enormous effects of digital media in today's society.

(Mr. Paulal John Khuptong completed Master of Divinity from Grace Bible College in New Lamka, Manipur and currently pursuing Master of Philosophy at IGNOU. He can be reached at Kngaihthuam@gmail.com)

Generosity - A way of life

Dr. (CA) Sanjay Patra

Generosity is a virtue that is celebrated in many cultures and religions. It is the act of giving freely without expecting anything in return. Generosity is particularly important in the Christian faith, as it is seen as a way of expressing gratitude for the gifts that God has given us. In this article, we will explore the concept of generosity in depth, looking at its biblical roots, its practical implications, and how it can be practiced in our everyday lives.

Biblical Roots of Christian Generosity

The Bible has many references to generosity. The Old and New Testaments emphasise the importance of giving to others. In the Old Testament, the concept of tithing is introduced, which involves giving a tenth of one's income to the church or to those in need. This practice is still observed in many Christian communities today, and it is seen as a way of demonstrating one's commitment to God and to helping others.

In the New Testament, Jesus himself is portrayed as the ultimate example of generosity. He gave up his life for the salvation of others and he encouraged his followers to be generous in their dealings with others. "Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you." (Matthew 5:42) This passage emphasises the importance of giving freely to others, without expecting anything in return. It is a call to be generous in all aspects of our lives, not just in our financial dealings.

Practical Implications of Christian Generosity

There are many different ways that Christians can demonstrate their generosity to others, both within and outside their communities. Below are a few examples:

1. **Giving Financially:** One of the most common ways that Christians demonstrate their generosity is by giving money to those in need. This can take many forms, from tithing to the church to donating to charitable organisations. This giving is done freely, without expecting anything in return.
2. **Giving Time:** Another way that people can be generous is by giving their time to others. This can involve volunteering at a local charity, spending time with the elderly or sick individuals, or mentoring young people.
3. **Giving Talents:** One can also be generous by sharing their talents with others. This can involve teaching others a new skill, offering to help with a project, or using their creative abilities to create something that benefits others.
4. **Forgiving Others:** Forgiving others is a great act of generosity. This can be difficult, especially in situations

where one has been wronged, but it is an essential aspect of generosity. By forgiving others, it can be demonstrated that they are willing to let go of their own anger and hurt in order to build stronger relationships with those around them.

Some helpful pointers

It is true that Indian society has its share of problems, but it is important to acknowledge the good as well. There are many people in India who are generous and go out of their way to help others, both within and outside the Church. It is important to recognise these positive examples as well.

Moreover, while individual acts of generosity are important, they are not enough to address the root causes of poverty and inequality. The Church and society at large need to address structural issues such as corruption, unequal distribution of resources, and discrimination based on caste, gender, and religion.

Generosity should not be seen as a transactional act. While it is commendable to be generous without expecting anything in return, it should not be the sole motivation for generosity. Generosity should come from a place of compassion and a desire to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

In conclusion, teaching and practicing generosity is an important aspect of Christian living. While there is much work to be done, both individually and structurally, to promote a more generous and compassionate society, it is a worthwhile goal to strive towards. Generosity is an essential aspect of the Christian faith. It is rooted in the biblical teachings of giving freely and sacrificially, without expecting anything in return. By practicing generosity in our everyday lives, we can demonstrate our gratitude to God for the blessings we have received and make a real difference in the lives of those around us.

Dr. (CA) Sanjay Patra has an experience of 30 years in Non-profit management and accountability. He has led Financial Management Service Foundation (FMSF) as its Executive Director for 24 years. He currently runs an audit firm M/s SPRM CO & LLP as Senior Partner. He also provides oversight to CPA Services which is a consulting organisation for non-profits in South Asia.

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IDEAS FOR ACTION

AS AN INDIVIDUAL AND AS A CHURCH

- **Start Small:** You don't have to give away everything you own in order to be generous. Start small by giving a little bit of your time or money to someone in need. As you become more comfortable with the concept of giving, you can increase your giving as you see fit.
- **Give Joyfully:** Generosity should be a joyful act, not a burden. When you give, do so with a spirit of joy and gratitude. Remember that you are blessed to be able to give and that your generosity can make a real difference in the lives of others.
- **Be generous with your time** by volunteering to organisations, church activities and giving time to people. Be generous with your words and encourage others, kind words may mean a lot to people around you.
- **Be Intentional:** Giving without any expectation of receiving something in return is a key aspect of generosity. When we give with the expectation of receiving something in return, it can undermine the spirit of generosity and turn it into a transaction.
- **Give Sacrificially:** Generous people are called to give sacrificially, which means giving beyond what is comfortable or convenient. This doesn't necessarily mean giving away everything you own, but it does mean being willing to make sacrifices in order to help others.
- **Give in Secret:** Jesus taught his followers to give in secret, without seeking recognition or praise. This means that we should give without drawing attention to ourselves, but rather out of a genuine desire to help others.
- **Give to All:** We are called to love and serve all people, regardless of their race, gender, or social status. This means that our generosity should extend to all people, not just those who are like us or whom we feel comfortable helping.
- **Give as God Directs:** Ultimately, our generosity should be guided by God's direction and leading. We should be open to God's promptings and follow His guidance in how we give and serve others.
- **Give with Love:** The Bible teaches that all of our actions should be motivated by love (1 Corinthians 13:3). This means that when we give, we should do so with a genuine love for the person or people we are helping. Our generosity should not be driven by a desire for recognition or a sense of obligation, but rather by a deep love for others and a desire to serve them in the way that Christ has served us.
- **As a Church,** encourage and demonstrate generosity for people to learn how to lead generous lives. The Church could actively work towards building a generous culture in order to build a generous community.

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