

## GENEROSITY – GIVING AND GETTING

# Life With God In Recovery

## STAYING STRONG: Generosity



*The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.*  
(Proverbs 11:25 NLT)

What does generous living have to do with recovery? For numerous years, each of us lived a dysfunctional, self-centered lifestyle which eventually became our typical way of life. We seldom thought of God let alone desired to know Him. We were focused on ourselves and how we might fulfill our need of the moment. To satisfy our selfish desires, we used whoever or whatever was available. We gave little thought to the consequences of our actions or the impact they might have on another person.

In recovery, we are now learning to live in a way that is both rewarding for us and which creates a healthy environment for those around us. The lifestyle we are being taught is one of generous giving. However, we can only give from what we have received. God has generously made provision, through His son Jesus, for our forgiveness and freedom from sin. When we receive God's lavish gift we are empowered to live faultless in His sight. In view of our former dysfunctional lifestyle, that is a very generous gift indeed.

***And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.*** (Ephesians 2:6-9 NIV)

Jesus once told the story of a son who humiliated his father in the community, squandered his inheritance on wild living, and then ran out of money. He became homeless and destitute. When his money was gone, his friends disappeared and he ended up alone. He spiraled downwards and was subsequently employed as a hired hand feeding pigs for his employer. Although his relationship with his father had been broken, he decided to go home. He knew his father was a kind and just man and so he planned to ask his father if he would hire him as a lowly servant in the household. Upon arrival, his father generously welcomed him back, not as a hired servant, but as a beloved son.

Taking the son back after he had humiliated him would have been considered an extremely generous act by the father. Nevertheless, the father did not stop there. Because of his unconditional love for his son, the father restored him to his former position within the family. It is unclear if the son was washed after he came from feeding the pigs. The father, however, was not deterred either by what he had done or how he looked. He immediately dressed him in the attire of a beloved son and called for a feast to celebrate his return. This is how God lavishes His extravagant grace on us when we repent and turn to Him. We become children of God and are dressed in robes of His righteousness. The angels of God rejoice in heaven over one sinner who repents.

God's love is unconditional and generous towards those who trust in Him. God's love and generosity is based on who God is, not on how we think He might be. It's not about anything we deserve. It's not about what we can do to earn His favor. It's about God making provision for us to be free from the power of sin and restoring us to eternal life with Him. We could never achieve this for ourselves, it is a gift of God. God waits patiently for us to see the error of our ways and admit that on our own we are powerless to change. God invites each of us to embrace His generous gift by turning our will and our life over to His care. Believing in this generous love of God for us is the foundation upon which we successfully build a new life in recovery.

***If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*** (Matthew 7:11, John 3:16 NIV)

Many of us, who have been living in poverty because of our addictive lifestyle, assume we have nothing to give to others. We are waiting until we feel better about ourselves or until we get a job and have money etc. This may take time because of our commitment to recovery or a work training program. When we receive God's lavish grace, we are already fully equipped to give to others from what we have received. What does it cost to smile and welcome a new comer to a recovery program, an AA meeting, or invite them to the church we are attending? If someone is feeling guilty or anxious about their past actions or circumstances, what is the cost of listening to, and encouraging that person? We are only limited in our generosity by what we are unwilling to do.

***Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to.*** (Deuteronomy 15:10 NIV)

God has promised to bless us if we make ourselves available to bless others. Sometimes we choose not to be generous to someone because we judge they are unworthy. They may have done something which we do not approve of. They may have differing opinions on politics, cultural politeness or perhaps are just rude through not having been taught how to behave in the company of others. These are things, which through love and patience, can be overcome. Everyone, no matter who they are, needs compassion and we are in the care of a God who is generous and full of compassion and will impart these gifts to us.

***Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment. Don't condemn those who are down; that hardness can boomerang. Be easy on people; you'll find life a lot easier. Give away your life; you'll find***

***life given back, but not merely given back—given back with bonus and blessing. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity.*** (Luke 6:37-38 MSG)

If we feel we are lacking in generosity and unable to care for others, we need to come before God and ask Him to fill us up with whatever we need. Are we lacking in love, joy, peace, patience, compassion or something else? God has promised to meet all our needs but we cannot fill up with what God gives and then withhold what we have received from others. We are blessed to be a blessing! Generosity is not just about blessing with money and possessions. It's about loving the Lord with all our heart, soul and mind because He first loved us. As we fill up on the love of God, we in turn, will have more than enough to share with and care for our neighbour.

***Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.*** (1 Timothy 6:17-18 NIV)

When we were in our addiction and least deserved God's grace, He sought us and generously poured out His love on us. God did not wait for us to love Him first before He acted on our behalf. He now calls us to generously do the same for those we interact with each day. ***But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*** (Romans 5:8 NIV)

#### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. In recovery, how do I receive another's generosity towards me?
2. How difficult is it for me to give generously to my family, my friends, my enemies?
3. What difference has the unconditional love of God made in my life?
4. How has my attitude, my reactions, and my behaviour towards others changed because of my receiving God's unconditional love?
5. Is there an area or relationship in which I would like to extend my generosity this week?
6. What am I willing to change so that I can be generous with others?

**Lord Jesus, Thank you for demonstrating the true heart of a servant for us. Thank you for taking on the humble position of a human and for being obedient to death, even death on a cross. Help us to seek the plan of God for our lives and to be willing to do all that He asks of us. In humility, help us to be generous and look out for the interest of others rather than seeking after, and tending to, our own interest. We ask You to bless us so we can be a blessing to others. Thank You for enriching us in every way so that we can be generous on every occasion. We pray that Your name will be glorified in all that we undertake to do. AMEN**