

Baby Steps toward Generosity

REV. DR. AMY LITTLE

Living a life of generosity is a mark of discipleship for many. It is a process in which we learn to appreciate that all we have is a gift God has given us. Just as an infant goes from rolling to sitting up, to scooting and crawling, then walking, so we, too, go from a limited understanding of stewardship to being fully committed to sharing what we have with others for the sake of Christ.

For my husband and me, it began when we were first married. Each of us had just earned a college degree. We were making just over minimum wage, yet somehow we had everything we needed! Our giving to the church was \$7 a week — just half an hour's pay from each us. After our church had a presentation on generous living, we had all the usual questions: "Why should we give?" "Can't those whose income is higher be the ones to support the church?"

The Holy Spirit began to work in us. Our pastor quoted Malachi 3:10: **"I am the LORD All-Powerful, and I challenge you to put me to the test. Bring the entire ten percent into the storehouse, so there will be food in my house. Then I will**

open the windows of heaven and flood you with blessing after blessing." Put me to the test, said the Lord. Try me out, and see if I will bless you!

So in faith we took a baby step, doubling our offering the next week and for many weeks thereafter. We still had everything we needed! Over time we grew our giving to a tithe because our love for the Lord and our trust increased. This was a huge leap in our spiritual journey.

FIRST HOT POINT: Luther taught that all we have comes from God's divine generosity: "I believe that God has created me and all that exists, that he has given me and still preserves my body and soul, my eyes and ears, my reason and all my senses, together with food and clothing, home and family, and all my property. Every day he provides abundantly for all the needs of my life. He protects me from all danger and guards and keeps me from every evil. He does this purely out of fatherly and divine goodness and mercy, though I do not deserve it. Therefore I ought to thank, praise, serve, and obey him. This is most certainly true!"

How often are you generous

with thanksgiving and praise to God? Do you stop throughout your day and thank God for everything he provides you? What baby steps can you take this very day to pause and praise God for your life and everything about it?

SECOND HOT POINT: Paul urged believers to walk in a manner worthy of the calling placed on our lives by Christ. This happens by faith. As we learn to trust God with all we have, we take a baby step towards living a life of abundance rather than scarcity. What is your default — abundance or scarcity? Do you live with the fear that there will not be enough or do you trust God will provide for your every need through your faith in Jesus Christ? Where do you need to grow in letting go?

THIRD HOT POINT: What does generous giving look like in your life? Living generously often starts with small steps. Try trusting God completely and grow in generosity to five percent, seven percent, and then a tithe — ten percent of your income.

How might you and your family put the Lord to the test? Try him out and see how faithful he is!

