



## The Virtues and Character Development Project

*The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.*

I Thessalonians 5:24

### BOOK REVIEW

#### ***Christ-Centered Generosity: Global Perspectives on the Biblical Call to a Generous Life***

R. Scott Rodin

R. Scott Rodin writes in his book, *Christ-Centered Generosity: Global Perspectives on the Biblical Call to a Generous Life*, regarding the role of generosity in the lifestyle of Christians around the world. He points out that generosity is not about wealthy Christians in the West who give some of their small change to poor people in impoverished countries. It changes us and it changes others. It is a form of worship of the One who sent His Son to die for our sins, which is the ultimate example of generosity. While the secular world thinks in terms of giving money to improve the life of others, Christ-centered generosity arises from a heart committed to serving others.

Rodin describes Christ-centered generosity for a viewpoint that *everything, everything, belongs to God and God alone*; we are just stewards. When we joyfully obey God, we are following the deepest desires of our heart. We recognize that all of our good work in this world is a participation in the great work that Christ has already done for us. Christ-centered generosity is the disposition of a heart that is rich toward God and is a defining characteristic of the life of an obedient and joyful steward. It is in giving that we become free from the bondage connected with pettiness in character and mind. It is the *freedom that comes through Christ that results in the heart of an obedient and joyful steward*. P.K.D. Lee states that *every decision you make in life is ultimately a decision between serving God or serving money*. The Holy Spirit will transform us, so generosity becomes a disposition of our spirit, not just an act. Rodin presents this in *Seven Victories of the Generous Spirit*.

1. *In the Battle for My Love between God and Money, I Choose God*
2. *I Trust God to Be My Provider*
3. *It's All His – I Will Not Pretend I'm the Ultimate Owner*
4. *I've Been Set Free to Give with Joy*
5. *I Want to Worship God with All I Have – No Withholding*
6. *Money Has No Hold on Me!*
7. *I Worship a God of Abundance, and I Can Never Out-Give Him*

*The loving God who created you has an amazing vision for your life, and it includes a heart of a faithful steward that is opened up to the world through Christ-centered generosity.*

A series of explorations of Christ-centered generosity are presented by authors from around the world, including Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America. Each one provides a perspective on the challenges that various cultures face in overcoming the inclination to focus on self, resulting in a lack of generosity. Central to the matter is that God is becoming less and less recognized as Creator and ultimate owner. Randy Alcorn writes, *One of our central spiritual decisions is determining what is a reasonable amount to live on*. As we become aware that we do not belong to ourselves, we become able to turn our attention to using what God has given to us, so we are able to serve others. We receive everything from God. We owe everything to Him.

Christ-centered generosity is distinguished from philanthropy in that it is motivated by obedience to Christ and an attitude of joyfulness, not just a response to human needs. This enables Christians to reflect the God we serve to the world. God's grace transforms us from being self-centered people to being others centered.

P.K.D. Lee points out that the concept of Karma hinders generosity in India. This is evident in giving for personal benefit, not from compassion. Sacrificial giving comes from compassion that flows out of our love for Christ. To address this, the National Generosity Network in India teaches that generosity is *a response of love in recognizing God's ownership of all things, and His grace to us in giving salvation and blessings, and this generosity leads to a positive view of people and situations resulting in putting others before self and a sharing of time, money, and resources*. Lee addresses the problem of having *an attitude of wanting to be served instead of wanting to serve*. *Christ-centered generosity counters this*.

Edison Querioz delineates the challenge of humanism in Brazil, i.e., *the humanistic idea that human beings are the center of everything: God is the supplier of all our wants and needs, everything is about us and God exists for our benefit*. In contrast, Scripture teaches that God is the center of everything. We are temporarily stewards of what God owns. Secular culture imprints on people's minds that ownership and happiness are synonymous, i.e., the more we have, that happier we will be. Romans 12:2 teaches that our minds need to be renewed. This will result in a change in behavior. We understand that *God owns everything and lends us the goods, the titles, and positions for a short time, and we must be responsible in properly administering these benefits for His glory*.

Rodin proposes a Seven-Day Generosity Challenge, with the following daily goals: freedom, trust, courage, action, readiness, change, and risk.

- **Day One:** *Today I ask God to set me free from the love of earthly things.*
- **Day Two:** *Today I ask God to help me give up control and begin to trust Him to be my Provider.*
- **Day Three:** *Today I ask God to give me the courage to name my "all" and hold*
- **Day Four:** *Today I choose one person or ministry, and I will make a sacrificial gift of time, talents, or treasure as God leads.*
- **Day Five:** *Today I will look for one new opportunity to live generously, and I will act on it as God leads.*
- **Day Six:** *Today I will change one habit so that my life will better reflect my love for my neighbor through my care for God's creation.*
- **Day Seven:** *Today I will take a risk and act generously in a new way as God leads.*

At the end of the book is a *Generosity Declaration*, which includes an affirmation that God is incredibly generous. As a result, Christians should be servants who are generous as they live lives of stewardship to God. This *Generosity Declaration* also is a way to commit to fostering a culture of Biblical generosity personally and globally.

This book gives a global perspective on Christ-centered generosity. It identifies the Biblical principles involved. It also shares challenges that arise in various cultures around the world. The content may provide an understanding of how the virtue of generosity may develop. As a result, the reader is more prepared to exhibit Christ-centered generosity in their lives in their local community and the global community.