



The Virtues and Character Development Project

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

I Thessalonians 5:24

Generosity – Post-Activity Curriculum

Note – before reading the content in this portion of the module, it is important that the *Generosity Pre-Activity Curriculum* and the *Generosity Activities* have been reviewed and completed.

Now that the third virtue, *generosity*, has been formed, it is important to reinforce this in daily living. Paul writes about giving generously in II Corinthians 8 and 9, especially in 9: 6-11, where he concludes with, *You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God* (verse 11). He is pointing out that Godly character development leads to becoming more like Jesus, which leads back to a focus on God. While our project logo depicts virtue formation and character development as a tree, it might be better to think of the process as a fountain that flows back to its source.

Parents need to remember that they are modeling what their children will first learn (what is *caught*). Then, as they work on their children's habits (what is *taught*), the family will live out being generous to others (what is *sought* to help others). Practicing generosity in the mind, heart, and resources will become natural. However, it also is likely that children will be recognized and praised for what they are doing. While this is natural, and part of being in a community, if a child is not taught how to accept praise, it might become a dominant source of their self-identity. This will become a serious challenge since our self-worth ought to come from Jesus, who taught that we ought to live for Him to say to us, *Well done, good and faithful servant* (Matthew 25:21, 23). Peter was able to walk on water as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus (Matthew 14:28-30). However, when he began to look around him, he started to sink. Similarly, when people remain secure in their relationship with Jesus, and understand that He will provide in any and every situation, then they are able to be generous in many ways.

To strengthen generosity as a virtue in one's life, there are some simple activities that will help. Since one understands the significance of living out virtues in a community, activities can be carried out that serve the community. For example, a family can regularly set aside time to go throughout the community to pick up trash. Also, a family might help neighbors by doing tasks for them, including running errands for them, assisting with taking care of their home and property. In areas of the world where leaves fall, helping rake leaves makes the neighborhood a better place to live.

One can expand one's community to include the entire world. Engaging with the Global Generosity Network (<https://worldidea.org/global-generosity-network/>) provides insights of needs in other parts of the world. It also provides information regarding how generosity is lived out in other cultures.

Connecting families across generations also can be a means to strengthen generosity in children. Some families have stories in their history where generosity was lived out. These may be very

small ways (like the widow's mite), or they might be major contributions to a global project, or anything in-between. Families might develop ways to establish acts of giving now, which will create stories for children to pass along to their children.

We need to view generosity as *a way of being conformed to God, whose nature is self-communicative goodness. These acts of charity (giving) should in principle extend to all, in the sense that we should be ready to do good to anyone at all, including strangers and enemies* (Thomas Aquinas). While today our culture associates the word *charity* primarily with charitable giving to the poor, we will learn in the next module that *charity*, is an outflow of generosity, which leads to a much broader understanding.

There are some cautions that need to be kept in mind. First, the people with whom you and your children associate are important. Paul reminds us, *Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character"* (I Corinthians 15:33). Here, we are reminded that character development continues throughout one's lifetime. So, it is important to continue reinforcing generosity. Second, a generous heart has an impact in this life and in eternity. Again, Paul wrote about this in I Timothy 6:17-19.

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. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Sometimes, a person loses sight of these cautions and begins to develop an attitude of wanting to be served instead of wanting to serve others. In addition, some people seek to develop a reputation for being a generous person. It is important to remember that true *prosperity* is being in the center of God's will. Scott Rodin reminds us in his book, *Christ-Centered Generosity: Global Perspectives on the Biblical Call to a Generous Life* that, *The world tells us that money is the solution to our problems. However, God is a giver; He is an abundant, gracious, lavishly providing, sovereign God.* To help people focus on God as our provider and not ourselves or our resources, he suggests *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*

You should continue to learn about *generosity* by reading books and papers, listening to talks, and joining discussions about generosity. Some recommendations are available on the project website (<https://www.virtuesandcharacterdevelopment.org/>). If you have resources that you find helpful, please share them with us.