



The Virtues and Character Development Project

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

I Thessalonians 5:24

BOOK REVIEW

The Generosity Habit:

How Daily Giving Can Change Your Life and Transform the World

Matthew Kelly

The Generosity Habit: How Daily Giving Can Change Your Life and Transform the World by Matthew Kelly is written in three parts. In Part 1, the author describes 17 perspectives on generosity. In Part 2, he offers 101 suggestions of ways to live out generosity. Part 3 is a place for the reader to write personal insights and reflections on generosity.

Kelly presents background information to build a perspective on what is the meaning of generosity, how it impacts the person who becomes generous, and what the effect is in the community. It is important to realize that generosity is about more than only money. Generosity is a focus on human flourishing in the lives of the members of the community. *Every act of generosity ennobles everyone involved, and each act of generosity changes the course of someone's life, and therefore, the unfolding of human history.*

The viewpoint that a single person's contribution might be too small is countered with the recognition of the impact on others. *When one person acts generously, it inspires both the recipients and observers of that generosity to be generous to others later.*

The impact on the giver is clear. *It brings out the best in human beings. It ennobles us in a world where so many things debase us.* In fact, *there is evidence of a link between moral and physical beauty* since generosity increases happiness, confidence, self-esteem, and even physical health. It leads to living *life to the fullest*. The evidence shows improved physical and mental health, as well as increasing longevity. This has been associated with an increase in oxytocin, which induces feelings of warmth, euphoria, and connection with others. As a result, our view of life becomes more open to ourselves and to others, leading to an increase in the number and depth of our relationships.

Generosity is defined as the virtue of giving plentifully. It is living out what is in one's heart. As such, there is variation from person to person as to how generosity looks. This allows each individual to be very creative in its expression. (The ideas in Part 2 are meant to reflect this.) It is intriguing to learn that a person has *a much greater need to give than someone needs to receive*. This is because generosity is rooted in the heart. Unfortunately, we often confuse *needs* (what is essential to survive) and *wants* (desired, but can live without). In reality, *we need so little and want so much*.

Generosity is the opposite of being greedy, selfish, stingy, or fearful. Either generosity or one of these vices will dominate within a person. Kelly calls the reader to the nobility of a meaningful life that is a generous life. This will lead to human flourishing. Generosity is by its very nature re-humanizing, because it announces to the world: *I see you. I hear you. I am with you. I care. When we celebrate generosity, we ennoble others and embrace our own nobility.*

In Part II, Kelly provides *101 Creative Ways to be Generous*. These cover the wide range of all three aspects of generosity: *generosity of the mind, generosity of the heart (spirit), and generosity of resources*. Here is a selection of 10 examples.

Generosity is Exceptional...	Praise someone publicly
Generosity is Lavish...	Be generous with your time
Generosity is Proactive...	Be proactive by meeting a need before being asked
Generosity is Compassionate...	Visit the lonely
Generosity is Courageous...	Stand up for someone who is being treated unjustly
Generosity is Helpful...	Surprise someone with help
Generosity is Friendly...	Pay for the next person in line
Generosity is Dignified...	Hold your tongue
Generosity is Understanding...	Look beyond what someone is saying when they are rude or hurtful

Part 3 contains blank pages for personal insights and reflections. Kelly encourages the reader to put into action the ideas presented. He begins by having the reader reflect on what has been presented as a first step to becoming generous.

This very short book contains practical content to help anyone who is interested in learning about generosity and how to live it out. The call to living generously is a journey in human flourishing, in both the person who is generous and the community. Since being generous is contagious, the world becomes a better place for everyone.