

EXTRAVAGENT GENEROSITY
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Today we are on the last Core Value – EXTRAVAGENT
GENEROSITY

Does everyone see the cup of rubber bands at the end of the pew?
Pass them down the pew and everyone take one.

Please be advised....These are not for shooting at me when you
don't like what I am saying.

These are not for shooting the person in the head who is sitting in
front of you...

Everyone try to control your impulses and just hold the rubber band
like this....loosely like I am.

And now, lay it gently down in the palm of your hand.

You will notice as you look at this rubber band that it is lying there
sort of limp and circular.

Now ask yourself....

What are rubber bands meant to do?

They are NOT meant for shooting people in the head you don't like
And lying there limp and circular is not there best use...

They are meant too *hold things together*

To connect things, to keep things from falling all over the place, right?

In order for a rubber band to do what it was meant to do, it needs to
be stretched...

(picture of fingers stretching out rubber bands)

So without breaking your rubber band, stretch it back and forth for a
moment, like this...It takes a little effort but its not that hard to do,
because rubber bands were made to be stretched.

(the word stretch...keep up)

Great...

Now tuck that rubber band away somewhere – maybe in your Bible or
the pocket of a jacket you wear all the time – or hang it on a hook by
the door or off the rearview mirror in your car.

So that when you see it you will remember this...
When it comes to Extravagant Generosity... God is calling
us to stretch....

Because as people we are not naturally extravagantly
generous...we often worry we wont have enough
Or that we are being unwise if we give too much – stretch
ourselves beyond the norm

Now we don't want to be unwise, but I think we err to much
on this side of things and we forget that

Jesus was always calling people to go beyond the ordinary
in their giving whether it was time, talent or treasure,
To stretch, to do the extra thing, the hard loving thing, the
noble thing...the thing that goes beyond, beyond...much like
what Jesus did for us on the cross.

Jesus call is not to just exist in this life, like a limp circular
rubber band ...

Rather in order to find our purpose and live abundantly, we
are called by Jesus to stretch ourselves trusting that in so
doing he will be faithful to us...

He will give us more than enough time – when we give our
time away

He will give us more than enough talent/energy – when we
share our gifts with others

He will give us more than enough financial resources – when
we trust him to provide and share what we have with
others...

Here's some things to know about EG

1. **Extravagant Generosity comes from a heart that is filled with gratitude. Gratitude is a way of life that freely gives all things.
“God loves a cheerful giver.”**
2. **Extravagant Generosity comes from a life perspective that believes that all we have in this life belongs to God in the first place and we are just his stewards, commanded to give out liberally**
3. **Extravagant Generosity becomes easier as we practice it, once we begin to see that God gives back to us what we give out in faith “pressed down, shaken together, and running over.”**

2 Corinthians 9:11 t “You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity.”

As one of my friends once said, **“When you hold back from God you cheat yourself out of a blessing.”**

I like that.

...

This isn't a “should” or an “ought”

Extravagant Generosity is a way of living that stems from a state of the heart that comes from spending time with Jesus; When you know who Jesus is; when you understand how extravagant God's love is for us; how out of the ordinary, how lavish, how extreme his sacrifice was on the cross for you, you become deeply grateful.

And as you spend time with Jesus, you become more and more like him...

Jesus was the most Extravagantly Generous person who ever walked the earth...He was completely invested in

people's lives, in sharing with them what God was like; and it all ended with him pouring out his life....no holds barred...he gave it all.....

And during his earthly ministry...

He touched lepers no one would touch

He talked to Samaritans no one would speak to

He ate with tax collectors everyone else was mad at

He took time with children who in that culture were deemed unimportant

He lifted burdens off of the common people – (those who lived below the poverty line were the majority of the crowd who followed him) – the common people no one else cared about...Jesus healed and spent time with them...

Jesus was Extravagantly Generous.

What's the most memorized verse in the Bible...John 3:16

“For God so loved the world that he...what?”

GAVE

His only son....made that ultimate sacrifice out of the generosity of Divine love....

Frederick Buechner noted that “to sacrifice generously is to make something holy by giving it away in love.”

Isn't that a great quote....?

We belong to an extravagantly generous God....and if you are truly a child of God...

You will resemble your Divine Parent, as children resemble their own parents in character, by living out Extravagant Generosity.

And sometimes it takes a stretch. A stretch that might demand risk, sacrifice and faith.

I was talking to Linda Dickson this past week, and she shared with me how Marvis and Don Eldridge, founding members of this church, brought the family together when she was still a child, and told them, that God said in the Bible that 10% of all income belongs to him and it was called a tithe. And that they were committing to tithe their money – give it away to God first – and that it would mean that they would all need to make sacrifices. Linda remembers her Mom grocery shopping and coming within 4 cents of what they needed that week for food. Yet, she said, it taught her a valuable lesson about stretching, and she said now she gives easily. It's a lifestyle because she was taught about the importance of giving at a very young age...And look at the church you helped built today!! Thank you...

There are some wonderful people in this church who are truly stretching or have stretched in the area of Extravagant Generosity and I want to acknowledge them today.

One newly formed group I want to recognize is the Young Adult Group – 18-30-something that meets right after this service in room 7.

They have agreed to give of their **time** to “own” the Cityteam Service Project this month for Service Worship. These are students or working professionals. They don't have a lot of TIME. But they are giving it generously...

We currently have about 10-12 people attending and we are talking about how its not just about making a meal for those guests – many of them homeless - who come to Cityteam to eat. Its not just about flipping burgers and giving out drinks.

We know that the hunger and the cold are not the most difficult factors in being homeless.

The most difficult part of being homeless is the loneliness – no one will talk to you. And this what we are discussing... What did Jesus say about Poverty...AND How can we stretch ourselves at CityTeam to actually go and do the uncomfortable thing – take the TIME and make the effort to mingle. Talk with the guests who come off the street. Engage in their worlds.

I am so glad this group is willing to take this on.

Today in the group we are discussing, what do you say to someone who is living on the streets? You can't ask the normal questions – Where do you live? Where do you work? How's your family since many have been estranged from family.

How do you engage with them? What are the ways we can listen and empathize? How do we best assuage the loneliness. We're learning about that...

Obviously, this takes stretching, but it's a way we can practice extravagant generosity that goes the extra mile and moves us out of our comfort zone giving of our TIME.

Another couple people who give of their TIME so generously to our Crash Zone program are Terri Dias and Bill LEWIS – THANK YOU!! Every Wednesday afternoon they come and engage with out Jr High youth here at Crash Zone. So grateful for both of you.

A couple weeks ago Terri had this project where everyone made a fairy garden in a little bowl and the kids were so excited. What an extravagantly generous thing to do...And I just think about these kids from so many different cultures and religious backgrounds in this program and what their association to the Christian Church will be years down the line...and how if their association is positive because some Christians decided it was worth their time and effort to engage with them, that might be the exact seed that needed to be sown for them to come to Christ someday.

Right now, I also want to acknowledge all the Deacons who have taken on so many in our church who need care.

You have shown extravagant generosity again and again by offering your time, and also your talent...your giftedness in listening, praying and reaching out – as well as doing the memorial receptions for so many grieving people. I am so grateful. If you are a deacon, will you please stand. Thank you so much.

Someone who has been giving of their talent over and above (and also of their time) to this church recently is Bill Day. Bill is our buildings and grounds person. And half the time I have no idea what he is talking about – he knows what he is talking about – but he knows this building and its needs inside and out and he also has a real job somewhere else – but he has been giving of his engineering talent in ways that boggle my mind. And when Bill does something...he does it right. I don't know how to thank you enough.

Such a generous giver of time and talent. So grateful to you...

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Extravagant Generosity - Treasure

I want to talk with you now about someone who is no longer with us but who was one of the most extravagantly generous people I have ever known....and I know we are talking about treasure now...but the way that this person lived her life – her entire personality overflowed with generous praise and affirmation, ongoing support and love for people – a kind of abundance just seemed to flow out of her...

Some of you knew her, and some of you did not...but she was a long time member here and her name was Pat Moore. **(picture of Pat Moore if possible)** She loved this church and she was such a champion of growth and change and what we were doing here. So encouraging!

She was one of those people who would never say a bad word about anyone – don't you love those people?

She went through a long illness – cancer – never complained - that had her bedridden at home for about six months at least, and during that time I visited her again and again. Her children just asked me to pop in whenever I could, and I did.

And one time Bob Harrison came with me and sang Amazing Grace and How Great Thou Art – and she just put her head back on the pillow, closed her eyes with a sublime smile on her face and soaked it in.

Pat went to be with the Lord this past May – and two weeks ago two of her children – Sue and Tom - came to see me

and with tears of gratitude, handed me a check for the church for over half a million dollars.

Pat had wanted us to have this with all of her heart and had spoken to me earlier before she died about how much she wanted this to be used for ministry.

Her children gave this to me complete and total delight. Enjoy it! They said. Use it for ministry. Its what Mom wanted. No strings attached. If you can, spend it now!! Bob Harrison was also with me as they gave this gift...he was sorry he could not be here this Sunday but he wrote the following for me to read to you about this encounter:

I have never been a part of a meeting when such a large monetary gift was given to a church. The joy the children had in gifting their mom's money was remarkable. It could have been a part of each child's estate, but it wasn't. They could have been upset, but they weren't. It was as if it was a gift from all of them - the four children and Pat—they were all happily and joyfully a part of it—Here take it, use it, spend it all tomorrow if you wish. No restrictions. Just use it however you wish. But most of all, joyfully use it. That's what Pat would have wanted. It's a free gift.

It was out of pure gratitude that they gave it – Extravagant Generosity does that eagerly, joyfully, abundantly.

(They had two requests – that Pat's name be put on the window where her husband Tom Moore's name was – I think there are six windows that commemorate him – and also that the wall outside here be finished in brick...and of course we are doing that).

What a blessing this is to us right now and how grateful we are for this. In addition, Session voted to tithe this money-give 10% away to missions – about 50,000 - and we are in active dialogue as a Session about the best way to do this.

May we as a church be inspired by the example of so many to live Extravagantly Generous lives with our time, our talent and our treasure – so that Christ might be made known and his kingdom on earth might flourish to the glory of God.