

An Uncommonly Generous Church: A Call for Uncommon Generosity

Participant Study Guide

Thursday, June 11th and 18th, 2020

Series: P.U.R.S.**U**.E. Excellence | Unit: Uncommon Generosity

Uncommon Generosity occurs as we exceed expectations in the areas of financial gifts, hospitality, and presence. We go beyond the norm to demonstrate God's graces in this world for all people. Acts of uncommon generosity are our acts of faith.

As the name suggests, uncommon generosity moves the conversation about being generous from a normal, familiar standard, toward an understanding that surpasses the familiar. A primary definition of 'generous' is *liberal in giving or sharing; unselfish*.¹ The root word that produces the term *generous* connotes 'a noble birth' and speaks to the beginning or elemental nature of a person. Thus, to be generous is to possess a natural giving character. A generous person is one who gives from the heart, and generosity suggests something given from the supply of one's heart. With this in mind, it can be said that a generous church is one that has a heart for giving.

In this unit of our P.U.R.S.U.E. Excellence series, we recognize the call to engage in uncommon generosity. That is, we are called to exceed what is expected of us, to engage with actions that surpass what comes to us naturally. We are called to demonstrate that we are stewards of God who exists in abundance and not lack, in resourcefulness and not scarcity, in connection with those in need and not disconnected from lived experiences. We are called to uncommon generosity.

From Generosity to Uncommon Generosity

We begin with another definition. Having defined generosity above, we find that uncommon generosity is rare, exceptional, above the ordinary. Uncommon generosity moves the conversation beyond or above that which is natural by requiring something higher than standard. That which is natural, while still potentially good, must not be confused with that which is uncommon. Moving from natural to uncommon is an act of faith in God who supplies and cares for those whose trust exceeds normal and natural responses.

Properly understood, uncommon generosity takes its cue(s) from what can be considered generous, and progresses from there. To be sure, uncommon generosity should represent progress in our approach to giving. As such, we recognize at least four noteworthy characteristics to help us further understand what can be considered uncommon.

¹ Source: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/generous?s=t>, accessed 6/9/2020.



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1. Progress from natural inclinations to faith-informed actions (*Lk 19:1-10*). _____

2. Unrestricted by social norms (*Lk 10:25-37*). _____

3. Works toward the highest and best use (*Acts 4:32-5:11*).

4. Concern for equal sacrifice above equal giving (*Mk 12:41-44; Lk 21:1-4*). _____

How does uncommon generosity look?

This portion of the lesson is enhanced by the essays, articles, devotionals and sermons contained in the edited volume entitled, *From Proclamation to Practice: A Unique African American Approach to Stewardship*, Clifford A. Jones, Sr., editor. The numbers that appear in parentheses below refer to the page numbers in the book where you can read more of what the contributors have to say.

Uncommon generosity takes on diverse forms. Included in this diversity are money, hospitality, and presence. In these and other forms, uncommon generosity has some striking features that we would do well to note and apply to our own stewardship. Among the most noteworthy of these features is that they are often in striking opposition to the ways we have experienced popular culture and society. Let's see what the Bible has to say about generosity and what makes uncommon generosity so attractive.

- **Leviticus 27:26-34** → Acknowledges God's ownership (*p. 104-106*). _____

- **Deuteronomy 14:22-29** → Reverences God (*p. 92-95*). _____

- **Luke 12:13-21** → Demonstrates wealth in God (*p. 68-71*). _____

- **Acts 3:1-10** → Recognizes God's potential (*p. 60-67*). _____



To summarize, uncommon generosity displays a **progression from ownership to stewardship**. Again, this is countercultural, so in many ways it may seem strange or feel awkward in practice. Though unnatural for some, viewing ourselves as stewards of God's blessings positions us well to embrace the concept of uncommon generosity.

Uncommon generosity & Money

Jesus has some striking things to say about money and how we are to engage with it. So striking are Jesus's views of money, that when He talks about it, sometimes the effect is that people turn away from Him.

1. Give people what they ask for (*Matt 5:38-42*). _____

2. What you do with money reveals the condition of your heart (*Matt 6:19-21*). _____

3. Gifts of faith are more valuable than gifts of convenience (*Matt 12:41-22*). _____

4. Be satisfied/content with what you earn (*Luke 3:12-14*). _____

5. How we manage money reveals our trustworthiness of God's graces (*Lk 16:1-13*). _____

6. Failure to sacrifice reinforces an allegiance to material goods (*Lk 18:18-25*). _____
