

# GOD'S GENEROSITY

## Joyful Generosity Devotional



Have you ever looked at the night sky on a clear evening, witnessing the beauty of thousands of lights scattered millions of light years away? It's enough to make you seem small and insignificant compared to the magnitude of the universe. Take a moment to ponder the scale of yourself within God's creation, looking up to the sky if you can.

### Read Psalm 8 (NIV)

*Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens. Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

This Psalm may be short, but what it lacks in length it more than makes up for in height: God's glory set in the heavens; God's handiwork brought to light in the moon and the stars; the presence of the angels; the generous creation.

Ponder some of the names used in Scripture to depict God's exalted place and greatness. Note down as many as you can think of, saying them aloud as you write.

Now reflect on verse 4:

*"what is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?"*

This is the pivotal point where the Psalmist's thoughts bring us back down to earth with a bit of a bump. The insecurity is tangible... and so familiar. Haven't we all asked this question of God at some time in our lives? Why would God have any interest in me?

This unease is resolved in verses 5 and 6. Our place in God's creation is not an accident but affirmed: we are positioned just 'a little lower than the angels' and we are 'crowned with glory and honour'. Just think about that for a moment.

This place of honour, however, is not a noble position in a cosmic hierarchy. Rather, it calls us to use our position to look after the earth and everything in it (verses 6-8). It is God's creation, and we are the care-takers. What faith God has in us to appoint us stewards. What a privilege! What a responsibility!

### Prayer

*Generous God,  
thank you for the many blessings you bestow on me.  
Forgive me for the times when I have failed to  
acknowledge your goodness.  
Thank you for giving me a place and a purpose – for  
involving me in your work. May I respond as a  
faithful steward, reflecting your generous and caring  
nature in my daily living, in my relationships and in  
my decision-making.  
Amen*

Continue this time of prayer by listening to Psalm 8 set in song eg 'The Majesty and Glory of your Name' by Tom Fettke; 'How Great Thou Art' CH4 154; or to a favourite piece of music which speaks to you of God's majesty.

# THE JOY IN RECEIVING GENEROSITY

## Joyful Generosity Devotional



### Read Colossians 2: 6-7 (NIV)

*So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*

Do you remember being a small child and being so excited on Christmas Eve that you took ages to get to sleep? Or do you recall the thrill of receiving a longed-for gift?

Children know how to receive with joy. But many adults don't remember how to receive openheartedly.

A friend of mine was taught "Children who ask, don't get!" This misguidance was intended to protect her from pain and disappointment but it really stemmed from the unresolved pain of those who taught her. This pattern can be generations deep.

Another common saying is, "There's no such thing as a free lunch" which conveys the message that you are unworthy to receive a gift with no strings attached. There must be some trap that will demand something in return.

For many adults, receiving is challenging and they do it with reluctance and suspicion. Society has taught us that we have to earn gifts or praise or compliments. It is not enough, we are led to believe, just being me.

In Colossians 2: 6-7, Paul shows us how we are to keep our love for Jesus as fresh and vital as when we first accepted his Lordship over our lives. It may be that disappointments in life or regularly giving in to temptation or settling for a routine, safe version of faith has dampened our early enthusiasm or blighted us with doubt.

We must not swap Jesus for misguided philosophies or idols. We must continue to study Jesus in the Bible, praying and listening for his guidance every day. This relationship is rooted in Jesus and is daily being built up and brought to maturity by God working in us.

And what is our responsibility? In response to God's ongoing, loving care we are to be thankful.

Practice gratitude by taking a photo every day of something you are grateful for. For example, a lovely tree, the sunset sky, your dog, the local kirk building etc.

### Prayer

*Generous God,  
thank you for all the many blessings you give me  
including (name them....)  
Change me, by your Holy Spirit,  
into someone who is willing to receive with joy.  
May I know deep in my heart that I am precious to  
you.  
May I gratefully receive all that you have to offer.  
Also, may I become a person who provides others  
with the joy of giving to me.  
Amen*

# THE JOY IN GENEROUS GIVING

## Joyful Generosity Devotional



As you sit, hold a coin in your hand. Take a moment to concentrate on that coin, how does the shape and the texture feel in your hands. Does the temperature change as you hold it? What is the worth of that coin and what could you do with it? The coin that you are holding has a value; whether it be 2p or £2. In life so much of what we do is based around the value of these coins; saving up for the latest gadget, our next holiday, even just focusing on paying the bills. And we can get caught in this endless cycle of always needing more, so much so that the idea of being generous can get side-lined. So much of our energy goes into saving up and ensuring our own prosperity.

Wealth and possessions are not a bad thing, but we need to make sure that we keep a healthy and balanced perspective of the place these things have in our lives.

### Read Proverbs 11: 24-31 (NIV)

*One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.*

*A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.*

*People curse the one who hoards grain, but they pray God's blessing on the one who is willing to sell.*

*Whoever seeks good finds favour, but evil comes to one who searches for it.*

*Those who trust in their riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.*

*Whoever brings ruin on their family will inherit only wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise.*

*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and the one who is wise saves lives.*

*If the righteous receive their due on earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner!*

When it comes to money, the cycle of never having enough can weigh us down. However, this passage tells us that we can be offered relief from this cycle. By using what we have, we can refresh

others and ourselves; *"A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed."*

Giving and living generously are not limited to how much we give, but also impact on our attitude when we give. Whether we share money with others, or donate our skills, time or friendship we can be blessed by blessing others.

God is the ultimate generous giver, giving us the Earth and everything in it. God has also bestowed upon us many spiritual blessings too, the greatest gift of all being his grace and our salvation through the death of His Son Jesus Christ. This was the ultimate act of generosity. Jesus gave his all and through this sacrifice he brought God's Kingdom on earth and showed us what God was like. Joy comes when we set aside our pursuit of building up our own treasures and live a life of generosity.

Take hold of that same coin again. Consider how it has two distinct sides – heads and tails, just as God's generosity can be seen in both physical and spiritual blessings. Now flip the coin. If it lands on "heads" think about a physical blessing, or if it lands on "tails" focus on a spiritual blessing, that God has given you and how you might generously share those blessings with others. You may want to do this more than once to contemplate the different ways we can share generosity.

### Prayer

*Generous God,*  
*thank you for the generosity you have shown me.*

*Forgive me for the times when I keep my eyes on building up earthly treasures for myself instead of keeping them on you and your will for me.*

*I pray that in my efforts to live more generously, that I find the joy and refreshment in that generosity that you find too.*

*Amen*



# THE IMPACT OF GENEROSITY

## Joyful Generosity Devotional



As you settle for a few moments of reflection think about how you are feeling? Is the sun shining? Are you content? Perhaps things in your life are going well – a new opportunity has arisen, success for a family member or good news from the hospital. In these circumstances it's easy to be thankful for all those things that God has blessed us with, but what about when that's not how your day is going? Maybe it's the good old Scottish weather that's making you feel gloomy or more serious issues like loneliness, health or money worries. Perhaps life just hasn't been going how you would like it to.

It's easy to get bogged down when it feels like the weight of the world is on your shoulders. It is important to take time to acknowledge how we are feeling before God; to pour out our heart with an expectancy that God will hear and help us work through things with perfect timing.

Whatever life throws at us we can seek solace in God's Word. What we read there has the power to change our perspective.

### **Read 1 Chronicles 16: 11-12 (NIV)**

*Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always. Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced.*

### **Read James 1:17 (NIV)**

*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.*

We are reminded that we have a loving and generous God who pours out blessings upon us. God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today and forever, and that doesn't depend on how we are feeling.

God's love for us and His desire to see us flourish and grow more like Jesus never change; yet we often get so overwhelmed with worldly concerns that we don't take time to reflect on God's blessings. The vastness of all we have been given can get lost under a pile of 'life'.

Take some time to appreciate the abundance of God's generosity. Make a list of some of the things God has blessed you with. The big things are often obvious but write down the little things too: the early morning birdsong, a good night's sleep or a chat with a friend perhaps.

Take a few moments to reflect and thank God for everything on your list.

Listen to the words of the old song 'Count your blessings'.

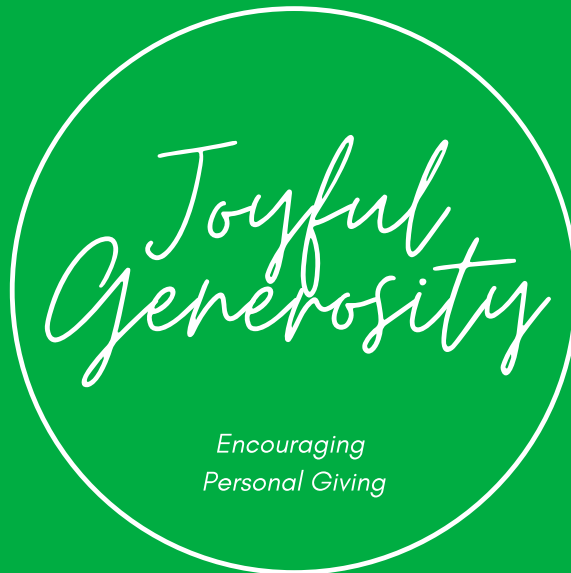
What impact does it have on you as you reflect on God's goodness and generosity? Do your troubles and worries seem a little lighter, a little less consuming? Does it change your perspective? Look at your list every day this week and add to it as you go along. Remind yourself that, despite your circumstances, God will never let you down and wants to keep pouring out His abundant generosity on you.

### **Prayer**

Loving and abundant God,  
thank you for each and every gift you bless me with. Forgive me when I get too wrapped up in worldly things  
to fully appreciate your unlimited generosity and grace. Prompt me to remember your goodness every day, even when I'm feeling low and life is challenging.

Help me to use all you have given me to be a blessing to others, reflecting something of Your generosity as I do so.

Amen



The *Joyful Generosity* programme sits within the Money theme under the umbrella of the wider *Narrative of Generosity*.

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