

# GENEROSITY



Craig Rees

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The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor.

Proverbs 22:9

**'The generous' is literally, 'the good of eye'. In Proverbs, having a good eye is not the same as having good eye sight. It's possible to see properly without seeing clearly.**

Do not eat the food of a begrudging host, do not crave his delicacies; for he is the kind of person who is always thinking about the cost. “Eat and drink,” he says to you, but his heart is not with you. You will vomit up the little you have eaten and will have wasted your compliments.

Proverbs 23:6-8

The stingy are eager to get rich and are unaware that poverty awaits them.

Proverbs 28:22

Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: “The seventh year,  
the year for canceling debts, is near,” so that you do not show ill  
will toward the needy among your fellow Israelites and give them  
nothing. They may then appeal to the Lord against you, and you  
will be found guilty of sin. Give generously to them and do so  
without a grudging heart;

then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.

Deuteronomy 15:9-11



## **1. Close Our Mind**

**Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: “The seventh year, the year for cancelling debts, is near.” (v9a)**

**A holistic theology of generosity goes beyond the tithe to explore  
the connection between grace, giving and living.**

## 2. Close Our Eyes

Do not show ill will toward the needy among your fellow  
Israelites and give them nothing (v9b)

**‘Keep your eyes open’ reminds us to be vigilant. Being encouraged to not close our eyes invites us to be aware of a need but also to be wise in how we respond to it.**

**Deuteronomic 'no pity' formula (7:16; 13:8; 19:13, 21; 25:12).**

**1 Timothy 5:3-16**

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# Paul's Advice to the Ephesian Church

## **DISCERN** (verse 3)

Listen carefully, asking questions. People long to be understood.

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## **DETERMINE FAMILY RESOURCES** (verse 4)

God has designed His world so that family of origin is the primary source of physical and emotional support.



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For continued ongoing support, recipients should have a valid connection to the church.

## **DETAIL CRITERIA** (verses 5, 9, 11)

Put into writing the necessary minimum benchmarks for consideration. That helps remove from the table claims of favoritism.

# Paul's Advice to the Ephesian Church

## **BE REALISTIC ABOUT EXPECTATIONS (verses 11-13)**

Younger widows remarry and may even do so out of the faith; drug addicts may return to their addictions; someone with a repetitive sin may fall. It is wise to clarify from the beginning the parameters under which aid can be received in a given case.

## Paul's Advice to the Ephesian Church

**RECOGNIZE THAT HANDOUTS ARE NOT ALWAYS HELPFUL (verses 13-15)**  
Instead, they may encourage dependent idleness rather than resumption of a responsible life. Idleness is a tool well exploited by Satan.

# Paul's Advice to the Ephesian Church

## **ENLIST OTHERS** (verse 16)

Churches are blessed with generous members who are privileged to assist in support situations. They find great joy in being used by God. Discourage the idea that the institution itself is to provide all assistance, as if it were divorced from the actual saints who make up its people.

## Paul's Advice to the Ephesian Church

### **TEACH AND ENCOURAGE CHRISTLIKE SELF-RELIANCE (verses 1-16)**

Jesus spent years working with stone or wood. Paul made tents. Lydia dyed cloth purple. From the beginning of creation, God designed work to be part of the fulfillment of mankind on earth. From the outset, teach self-reliance that depends on God's enabling. It is biblical.

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- 2. DETERMINE FAMILY RESOURCES (verse 4)**
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- 5. BE REALISTIC ABOUT EXPECTATIONS (verses 11-13)**
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### **3. Close Our Hands**

**“I command you to be openhanded” (v11)**



**“If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”**

**1 John 3:17-18**

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