

## Some Reflections on Generosity

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*Andreana:* For us, generosity is about giving freely, beyond expectation. It's about a kind of 'anti-bean counting' – looking away from ledger lines and balance sheets. Generosity is about trusting that there will be enough – more than enough, in fact. Generosity believes in abundance: in fishes and loaves that multiply and feed multitudes; in wine that never runs out and wells that never run dry.

*David:* Generosity cannot be confined to a single act, but is a mindset, an attitude, or a way of life. Generosity can permeate all of our resources: time, energy, love, presence and money.

*Andreana:* We can even have a generous faith. At the moment we are discussing the Brian McClaren book *Generous Orthodoxy* which, amongst other things, suggests that we can have a faith that is generous to others; a faith that is wide enough and deep enough to embrace all kinds of people and all kinds of ideas, generously giving and generously receiving.

*David:* We have also realised the importance of being generous with ourselves: enjoying life and the pleasures offered by good meals, holidays and concerts.

*Andreana:* Work itself can be an act of generosity. While working as a researcher at RMIT University, I have experienced what it is like to work generously, as well as ungenerously. I know there is a problem when I just view my work as a job that pays the bills, and I can feel the difference when I decide to put my heart into it.

*David:* Whether it is working somewhere that you earn less than you could, so you are able to give through your work, or simply in the attitude you bring to work—seeking to give wholeheartedly to both the organisation and the people you work with.

*Andreana:* Living generously requires that you be open to receiving generously too. In fact, we often find that it's in the very moment where we think we are generously giving, when we find ourselves being asked to generously receive! I, like many others, have found that to be the case in Credo Café which, if you don't know, is a place that welcomes some of our more marginalised neighbours for a free meal in the basement of this church. I have spent a lot of time over the years working and volunteering there, but find time and time again that it is *me* who is welcomed, and *me* who comes away with a big smile and a big heart, having been blessed by the very people I set out to help. Similarly, I recall a time on my trip to the Solomon Islands last year when a woman with five children and a husband who left her took me up on the hill adjacent to the church where we were worshiping, and pulled out sweet potatoes that she had planted months before, to feed her family. Then she gave them to me, and I had no choice but to humbly receive. I gave her bread and cucumbers in return, and thus the cycle of generosity – on which this poor Christian community thrived – continued, but I will always remember that it was initiated by the poor.

*David:* My income actually comes as a result of people giving to TEAR. Time and time again we receive notes along with donations explaining how little Johnny gave up his pocket money for a year in order to help someone in a developing country. I am always amazed at how much, and how freely, people with little give.

*Andreana:* I was excited that Caroline asked us, as a couple, to speak on generosity, because this is a word we have thought about often as we have laid the foundations of a life together. Generosity is something we want our marriage to embody, and it's for that reason we engaged with the story of Jesus turning water into wine at our wedding. What we desire is for a generous marriage, with doors wide open to the world, generously giving and generously receiving so that we and others can have life in all its fullness.

*David:* This desire for generosity didn't arrive in a vacuum, but is in our very blood. The quote from Desmond Tutu, in this week's Collins Street Baptist Church practice sheet found on our website, rang true for both of us:

*In the African understanding of ubuntu, our humility and generosity also come from realizing that we could not be alive, nor could we accomplish anything, without the support, love, and generosity of all the people who have helped us to become the people we are today. Certainly it is from experiencing this generosity of God and the generosity of those in our life that we learn gratitude and to be generous to others.*

Certainly, we are who we are because of the generosity of others. My grandparents who were pensioners were always very generous with their money. My father inherited that generosity, and I have had the privilege of watching him give to so many people over the years. Sometimes he has even gone into debt in order to give.

*Andreana:* I was brought up in what I think of as God's economy, where generosity is the key currency. My parents were forever slipping envelopes of cash into the hands of community members in need, and then when Dad didn't get work for a while, other neighbours would bring around bags of groceries. There was always an abundance of baking and often an odd-bod family friend sitting at the table with a cup of coffee and talking our ears off for hours on end. The cycle of generosity I found in the Solomons reminded me of my upbringing.

*David:* This is why we exist, and this is what we desire to give back to the world in our lives and marriage. We hope as we build our lives together that we will be able to live them generously and bless others through them.