**GOD, THE FIRST AND MOST GENEROUS**

A devotional book available through Generous Life written by Gordon MacDonald entitled “Generosity: moving toward life that is truly life” contains some real gems. The first one in the book reminds us where generosity comes from. It comes from God. Take a moment to share together the first devotional in the book.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

This verse follows on the heels of a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, a Jewish leader. It was a conversation that happened in the nighttime hours because Nicodemus was not yet prepared to risk his reputation by being seen with the Lord in public.

For God so loved the world. Are these words and what follows an extension of the Nicodemus conversation or a comment that flows from it? We do not know. But what is universally accepted is that we are reading some of the most profound of all Biblical truths. God loved…God gave His Son…Who ever believes possesses eternal life. We call it the Gospel. It’s that simple! It’s that profound.

If we wish to become generous givers, then we must know this Scripture intimately. It reminds us that God does not ask of us anything that He has not first done for us. God is the first generous giver. He has provided the highest model of generosity, and He calls for Biblical people to follow.

The generous giver is someone whose heart generates love. It is not a sentimental or romantic love, but a love built on compassion and care, a love that is drawn to the broken and fragmented creatures and conditions of our world. This kind of love values human beings as those created in God’s image. It is accompanied by a righteous ignorance of others. This kind of love cannot contain itself when there are opportunities to change lives and circumstances for those unable to change their own situation.

Following God’s example, the generous giver gives out of his or her very best. God gave His only Son; we give from the depths of our resources and abilities. We give not a token of our wealth, but sacrificially. As God sacrificed His Son, so we follow and give even those things that are most precious to us in our personal worlds: our time, our convenience, our creature comforts.

Finally, the generous giver is someone who, in a sense, lays the tracks for others to find eternal life. We do not give eternal life (only God does this), but we give that which makes it possible for others to find eternal life. As Biblical people we believe that a solid proportion of our giving should move in the direction of those activities that make Christ known, and help others to know what it means to follow.

It is the will of God that we become generous givers. But He would never ask us to do what He has not first done for us.