



Helping Christians Experience the Joy of Giving

By Dean Nelson

Ask any social science researchers, and they'll tell you we're living in an era where there are more people with more wealth in this country than at any other time in American history. Christians represent a sizable amount of that wealth. And yet, the amount of money Christians give away is lower, proportionately, than it was during the Great Depression.

This disparity helped lead the Maclellan Foundation, Chattanooga, Tenn., to wonder if the topic of "giving" was being properly communicated to Christians. At the same time, the Foundation was inundated with requests from church organizations outside the U.S., saying the Church was poised around the world for unprecedented growth. The Foundation leaders felt the word "giving" needed scrutiny. They decided it conjured up images of the "law" instead of "grace," and yet the Great Commission depended on it, and the Bible spoke of it as a source of joy.

So they launched Generous Giving, Inc. in 2000, as a 501(c)3 nonprofit educational organization to promote biblical generosity. Christian Management Report spoke with Daryl Heald, president of Generous Giving, at his office in Chattanooga.

Isn't giving a concept that obviously goes along with being a Christian?

Of course it is, but the way giving is taught in the churches is very flawed. When was the last time you heard a sermon about stewardship?

Well, my church just went through a building program...

Exactly. You only hear about money when there's a capital campaign or a missions emphasis or a budget cycle. It just creates a sense in people that giving is all about tithing and special offerings. We ask, "what does God require?" and "what is the biblical demand?" and find a number and stick to that. But we aren't even doing that, really.

You have mentioned elsewhere that we approach giving as "tipping."

There are people everywhere who say, "Just tell me what to give, and I'll give it." That's fine, and they'll do it, but that's not the point. The point is to look at giving from a broader

scriptural view than just tithing. Giving really needs to become a way of living.

I just think there's a big disconnect about giving in churches today. One of Christ's characteristics is that he was giving. If we're going to become more like him, then that's a characteristic we need as well. He knew everything was his Father's in the first place. Generosity wasn't difficult, because he knew everything already belonged to God.

You're bucking the culture here, because this is a culture of accumulation and protection of our hard-earned money.

But if people knew the *full truth* about giving, they'd see that true happiness is in giving, not receiving and protecting.

Generous Giving was started so people could excel in the grace of giving. It was started to develop a full theology of giving. It's God's nature to give. It was how Jesus lived. It's how we should live. It's part of fulfilling the Great Commission.

Haven't religious groups tried this for centuries, legislating what people should do with their money and possessions?

This is not the lifestyle police. This is not a fundamentalist approach to dictating how you should live, and what you should and should not spend your money on. This is a means to see how it's theologically sound to say it's "better to give than receive." It helps us see that there's joy in living sacrificially as Jesus did.

That sounds like a contradiction.

Not if the word "sacrificial" is understood in its full context. At Generous Giving we don't lead with the sacrificial part. We lead with the joy part. The Holy Spirit transforms a person to live sacrificially and find joy in it.

So what, exactly, does Generous Giving do?

We provide a neutral platform for givers to live generously, where they can learn about ministries and then support them financially.

Ad #13
Pointman Leadership

Ad #9
HR, Inc.

You tell donors where to give their money?

Not at all. We don't recommend ministries or solicit funds for them. We provide resources and a database that allows givers to match their interests with organizations that have ministry projects in their interest area, so they can partner together.

So let's say I want to support a certain kind of ministry...

You'd fill out our giver profile online, and our database would line up, in a straightforward, informational manner, all the ministries that addressed your interest. And it would give you updates every time you logged in.

This is a lot different from the dozens of urgent pleas I get in the mail.

Typically, giving to ministries is done through direct mail or rubber chicken dinners. Our approach strips away the emotion and gives you the facts, so you can give the way you want to give. I call it the democratization of information. Everyone has access to it in the same format.

How do I know these ministries are legitimate?

Every ministry in the database answers the same 30 questions as everyone else, and we have to be satisfied with the information provided.

This sounds a little like people who like to do their own stock trading. Is this like e-trade?

It's like that in the sense that both an individual finds a ministry that matches their interest and an institution finds a giver interested in its ministry.

But you don't recommend certain ministries, the way a stockbroker would?

On our Marketplace website (go to www.generousgiving.org and click on "Marketplace"), World Vision gets the exact same placement and treatment as a Romanian orphanage. We don't recommend, we don't solicit, and we don't grant the money. We simply try to match needs with givers, all in the context of giving as part of being a Christian.

Generous Giving ... at a Glance

Mission: Generous Giving seeks to encourage Christians to experience the joy of giving, live and give with an eternal perspective, model the proverb, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," recognize that God owns everything, and offer gifts as an act of worship.



Daryl Heald

Vision: "We envision the transformation of the hearts and minds of God's people for revolutionary generosity."

Leadership: Daryl Heald, president, 38, who has been with the Maclellan Foundation since 1997. He is a shared employee with the foundation.

Facts: Founded in 2000 by the Maclellan Foundation, a Christian grant-making ministry; five full-time employees, with two others shared by the Foundation; \$1 million budget, mostly paid by the foundation, with some private donors.

Products/Services: Conferences and seminars; a marketplace database that lists 158 organizations with 454 funding opportunities; a research library of news articles, Bible studies, sermon outlines; links to other financial services and resources; books.

Contact: Generous Giving, Inc., One Fountain Square, Suite 501, Chattanooga, TN 37402; phone: (423) 755-2399; fax: (423) 755-1640; web: www.generousgiving.org.

This idea came out of what you were seeing at the Foundation, right?

Yes. We're seeing a steady stream of families coming to the Maclellan Foundation looking for places to support. At the same time, we're hearing from ministry experts around the world telling us how God's moving in remarkable ways—he's moving ahead of us. So we asked how we could take what we're doing and help get out the message of God's activity around the world.

Don't we all tend to ask, though, what's in this for me?

In a word, joy!

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