

Joy In My Heart

A 5-Session At-Home Vacation Bible School Resource

Hear. Live. Proclaim. Serve. Strive.



An expression of The Generosity Project, ELCA



Northwest Synod of Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
God's Work. Our Hands.



THE
GENEROSITY
PROJECT
Growing in God's Grace Generation to Generation

Introduction & Notes

Hello friends! As we consider the history of God's people, we recognize the important role households play in the development and practice of our faith. Young people naturally look to their parents and guardians as models of faith; additionally, there is tremendous value in bringing multiple generations together! Through stories and conversation these connections have a profound impact on our relationships with one another and with God and can inspire faithful decisions and actions. We encourage you to include as many people from your household as you are able – if possible, find creative ways to include grandparents, great grandparents or a household of another generation!

This at-home Vacation Bible School series is an expression of [The Generosity Project](#), ELCA, which encourages households of all ages to intentionally practice *generosity*, an “aspect of one’s character, a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).”¹ And each of these sessions will give attention to one of the [ELCA’s Five Gifts of Discipleship](#):

1. **Hear** the word of God and share the Lord’s Supper
2. **Live** among God’s faithful people
3. **Proclaim** the good news of God in Christ through word and deed.
4. **Serve** all people following the example of Jesus
5. **Strive** for justice and peace in all the earth.

As you prepare for this interactive time together, here are a few notes to guide you as you use these resources.

- + Each session will consist of 2-3 parts: a [2-page session guide](#), a [Live it Out handout](#) and occasionally an activity page. These are designed to be simple, but still maintain the VBS “vibe” through singing, activities, and faith-filled fun!
- + The Session Guide will take you step-by-step through the content, but feel free to customize this for your household! You can use one element of a session each day throughout the week, or do a complete session each day as you work through all five sessions in one week.
- + Use a children’s Bible if possible (like the Spark Story Bible) – examples are noted in the Session Guide. These versions are often easier for children to understand, and the illustrations are eye-catching!
- + Each session will help us experience the JOY that can come from God and from living generously as *children* of God.

Session 1 – “God Creates!”

Session 2 – “God Surprises”

Session 3 – “God is With Us”

Session 4 – “God is Joy”

Session 5 – “God is Love”

As we engage in this household ministry together, our goal is to know and experience God’s generous love and to practice sharing this with others! May God joyfully shine on your household!

In love and peace,

Deacon Laura Ramlow

Synod Minister - Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, ELCA

¹ The Generosity Project 5G, ELCA. Planning Guide, Page 6.

Session 1: God Creates!



Theme: We are made in God's image and are blessed by God to be generous too.

Gift of Discipleship #1: HEAR the word of God

Let's Hear God's Word!

Read: "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Genesis 2:27-31a NRSV).

* **Spark Story Bible:** Creation & Adam & Eve (Pages 2-13) **Jesus Storybook Bible:** The Beginning (Pages 18- 27)

Let's Chat!

- + How is God generous in this story?
- + How do you mirror God?
- + What do you **hear** in this story that gives you JOY?

Let's Sing!

"I've Got the Joy" (click [HERE](#) for a video version of the song)

Verse 1

I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart...down in my heart...down in my heart;
I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart...down in my heart to stay.
And I'm so happy, so very happy; I have the love of Jesus in my heart;
And I'm so happy, so very happy; I have the love of Jesus in my heart!

Movements for the song (optional):

Joy = Open hands facing outward on either side of the face; **Down** = point downward
Heart = Point to your heart; **Happy** = pointer fingers touch your "dimples";
Love = Cross forearms in front of chest;
Jesus = sign language for Jesus...middle fingers each touch the opposite palm

Let's Play!

- + [Family Handprint Keepsake](#). (Instructions for this simple and fun salt dough craft found in the link)
- + Play "Simon Says" and mirror one another's actions. Whoever wins the round gets to lead!
- + If we are made in God's image how does that influence our actions & words? Use the handout on page 7!

Let's Reflect

The Bible tells us that God created the world and it was good! God created us in God's image, and we are also good! In fact, God loves creation (including YOU!) so much that he sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. Bible stories like the Creation Story show us just how generous God is – we have air and water, trees and mountains, animals and fish and food and skills....God has given us all that we need. When we are surrounded by messages of scarcity – that we should get more stuff, watch out for ourselves, or that we aren't good enough – we are reminded again and again of God's abundance. And, because we are made in God's image, this means we are generous, too!

Let's Live It Out!

- + Using the **Live It Out** handout (pages 5-6), take some time as a family this week to re-read the story and start a conversation about what generosity looks like in your home – the handout will guide your time together.
- + If possible, include grandparents and/or great grandparents in the conversation, whether in person, through video chat or on the phone
- + Being Generous: Action 1 – think about all the people and places that have been recipients of your generosity
- + Generosity Challenge: This session = BOOKS!
- + Blessing: Find a time each day to use and share this blessing with one another

Let's Keep Practicing!

Other ideas for practicing generosity and kindness this week:

- + Donate cereal to a local food shelf
- + Share a smile
- + Leave a post-it note with an encouraging message on a family member's mirror or door
- + Make a 10-10-80 Generosity Station to use as you practice generosity:
 - + Use three containers or one large container/box you can divide into three sections
 - + Decorate in any way you like – stickers, paint, decorative tape, construction paper
 - + Mark them with "Share 10%," "Save 10%" and "Spend 80%"
 - + Make some family goals: Who do we feel called to share 10% of our financial resources with? A specific ministry or organization? Our congregation? The library?
 - + Decide a date on which you'd like to achieve this goal. At the end of the summer? By Christmas? In one year?
 - + Encourage one another to be thinking in "10-10-80" with their income, allowance, special gifts, etc. and add it to your station
 - + How will you celebrate reaching this goal together?

Let's Pray!

God of the world, you have created us in your image and you love us with incredible grace. Your generous love brings us JOY! Help us continue to practice being thoughtful and kind so that we can reflect your love. AMEN.

Let's Sing!

"This Little Light of Mine" (Verse 1)

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine; this little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine; let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

LIVE IT OUT!



Being Generous: The WHY

Conversation Goal

Identify this household's giving patterns and practices

Conversation #1

Our Household Identity and Story

Do your family members know how much you share and give of your financial wealth? With so many methods available to exchange currency, it is easy for the significance of giving to be overlooked and unknown to one another. Research shows children learn sound financial health and generosity when they see parents and significant adults model this as a priority in their lives.

If you do not already have an established pattern of giving, consider a conversation to discuss when and how you as a household might begin.

Key Question

Does each person in this household know how we share and are generous with what we have been given?

Discussion Prompts

- How does this household talk about money? What words do we use?
- Who decides how we distribute our money, especially related to regular giving?
- What is tithing? Do we do it? (Use the internet to look up the word and meaning)
- Do we support a church or institution of faith? Organizations or other causes?
- Do we have an emergency fund? Are we saving for college, vacation, house repairs, retirement, etc.?
- What are our household's essential expenditures for living? Which ones are Wants? Which ones are Needs?
- How much of our spending is influenced by advertising?
- Why do we share? Give?

God's Story Genesis 1:27-31a (CEV). "So, God created humans in God's own image; God made men and women. God gave them a blessing and said: Have a lot of children! Fill the earth with people and bring it under your control. Rule over the fish in the ocean, the birds in the sky, and every animal on the earth. I have provided all kinds of fruit and grain for you to eat. And I have given the green plants as food for everything else that breathes. These will be food for animals, both wild and tame, and for birds. God looked at all that was created. All of it was very good!"

Affirmation + Blessing

I am created in the image of a generous God. I give because I want to mirror a generous God.



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BEING GENEROUS

Action 1

These are the names or drawings of all the people and places that have been recipients of our generosity.



The Generosity Challenge

How many books do we own? Count them. What would it mean to give away 10 percent or buy that many new books for others? How hard would this be to do? Who needs books? To whom or where would we go to donate them?



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I am created in God's image...



How can my thoughts reflect God?

How can my hands be generous like God?



How can my mouth speak with kindness?

How can my eyes see God in the world?



How can my ears hear God?

How can my heart love God and others?



Session 2: God Surprises!

Theme: God uses the gifts and generosity of all people to accomplish the impossible

Gift of Discipleship #2: LIVE among God's faithful people



Let's Hear God's Word!

Read: "After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?' He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, 'Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.' One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?' Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.' So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world'" (John 6:1-14 NRSV).

Spark Story Bible: Jesus Feeds 5000 (Pages 426-431)

Jesus Storybook Bible: Filled Full (Pages 244-249)

Let's Chat!

- + How is God generous in this story? What in this story brings you JOY?
- + Why is food important? We know there is more than enough food to feed everyone in the world, so why are there so many people that are facing hunger? What can we do to help?
- + Jesus gathered with many who wanted to hear him- where and when do you gather or **live** with others who love Jesus?

Let's Sing!

"I've Got the Joy" (click [HERE](#) for a video version of the song)

Verse 1 I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart...down in my heart...down in my heart;
I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart...down in my heart to stay.
And I'm so happy, so very happy; I have the love of Jesus in my heart;
And I'm so happy, so very happy; I have the love of Jesus in my heart!

Verse 2 I've got the love of Jesus, love of Jesus down in my heart...down in my heart...down in my heart;
I've got the love of Jesus, love of Jesus down in my heart...down in my heart to stay.
And I'm so happy, so very happy; I have the love of Jesus in my heart;
And I'm so happy, so very happy; I have the love of Jesus in my heart!

Movements for the song (optional):

Joy = Open hands facing outward on either side of the face; **Down** = point downward
Heart = Point to your heart; **Happy** = pointer fingers touch your "dimples";
Love = Cross forearms in front of chest;
Jesus = sign language for Jesus...middle fingers each touch the opposite palm

Let's Play!

- + Go fishing or bake bread together (easy, no-yeast recipe on page 12).
- + **"Share the Fish"** game: Need: 2 players or teams, each team gets 2 plates, goldfish crackers and a straw for each person. The goal is to take turns and move goldfish from one plate to the other the fastest by using the straw to suction the cracker to the end of your straw and move it to the other plate – no hands!

Let's Reflect

This Bible story tells us an important message: when it doesn't seem like there will be enough, we might want to give up, worry, or sometimes become greedy; but Jesus reassures us that God creates abundance – SURPRISE!, God does the impossible and there is enough for everyone! When we share, it doesn't mean we get nothing, it means that everyone will be included. And this kindness is contagious - others will often want to join in the joy of sharing!

Let's Live It Out!

- + Using the **Live It Out** handout (pages 10-11), take some time as a family this week to re-read the story and start a conversation about who you know that is generous – the handout will guide your time together.
 - + If possible, include grandparents and/or great grandparents in the conversation, whether in person, through video chat or on the phone
 - + Being Generous: Action 2 – think about the people you know who are generous
 - + Generosity Challenge: This session = Canned Goods!
 - + Blessing: Find a time each day to use and share this blessing with one another

Let's Keep Practicing!

Other ideas for practicing generosity and kindness this week:

- + Donate canned fruit or veggies to a local food shelf
- + Bake cookies or treats and deliver them to your neighbors
- + Donate a bag of dog or cat food to a local animal humane shelter
- + Leave a post-it note with a message of encouragement on someone's car window
- + Make a contribution to your Share-Save-Spend station
- + Find creative ways to connect with your faith community as a family – worship (perhaps online), praying for others, calling on the phone, etc.

Let's Pray!

Caring God, you surprise us with abundance when we least expect it. Your generous love brings us JOY! Help us continue to see the needs of others so that we can freely share your love.
AMEN.

Let's Sing!

"This Little Light of Mine"

Verse 1 This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine; this little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine; let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Verse 2 Hide it under a bushel – no! I'm gonna let it shine; Hide it under a bushel – no! I'm gonna let it shine;
Hide it under a bushel – no! I'm gonna let it shine; let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

LIVE IT OUT!



Connecting Generations: Conversation Goal The WHO

Identify and celebrate the people of all ages who are examples of generosity that surround this household.

Conversation #2

Ripples of Generosity

Who are the models of generosity for you? Have you been the recipients of the generosity of others? Who are the extended family members or friends who have shared their time, talent or wealth with you? Recall and name beloved friends, community members and others whose generosity have shaped your life. Listen to one another's stories. Make a photo collage of people who have impacted your life in big ways and small ways. If living, send them a note expressing your appreciation.

Key Question

Who has given generously to us?

Discussion Prompts

- When have we been recipients of the generosity of others?
- For whose generosity am I most thankful?
- What are the giving patterns over the generations in our family? Do we want to change these patterns in some way?
- Does the giving of others inspire us to be generous?
- Does one's age matter in acting generously?

God's Story John 6:1-14 (CEV). "When Jesus saw the large crowd coming toward him, he asked Philip, 'Where will we get enough food to feed all these people?' He said this to test Philip, since he already knew what he was going to do. Philip answered, 'Don't you know that it would take almost a year's wages just to buy only a little bread for each of these people?' Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the disciples. He spoke up and said, 'There is a boy here who has five small loaves of barley bread, and two fish. But what good is that with all these people?' The ground was covered with grass, and Jesus told his disciples to have everyone sit down. About five thousand men were in the crowd. Jesus took the bread in his hands and gave thanks to God. Then he passed the bread to the people and he did the same with the fish, until everyone had plenty to eat. The people ate all they wanted, and Jesus told his disciples to gather up the leftovers so that nothing would be wasted. The disciples gathered them up and filled twelve large baskets with what was left over from the five barley loaves. After the people had seen Jesus work this miracle, they began saying, 'This must be the Prophet who is come into the world!'"

Affirmation + Blessing

God has blessed us through the abundant generosity of others. We will joyfully share what God has provided us.



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CONNECTING GENERATIONS

Action 2

Our Family Tree of Generosity: These are the names of all those who have shared God's abundant generosity with us.



The Generosity Challenge

How many canned goods or jars of food are in our cupboards and pantry? Count them. What is 10% of that number? What would it mean to give away or purchase 10% of the number of canned and jarred items in our cupboards? How hard would this be to do? Who suffers from being hungry? To whom or where would we go to donate these items?



Communion Bread Recipe

From Luther Seminary to your table

Sift dry ingredients together **three times**: (important!)

2 c whole wheat flour
1 c white flour
1 & 1/4 tsp baking powder
1 & 1/4 tsp salt

Stir in 4 tsp oil. Set aside.

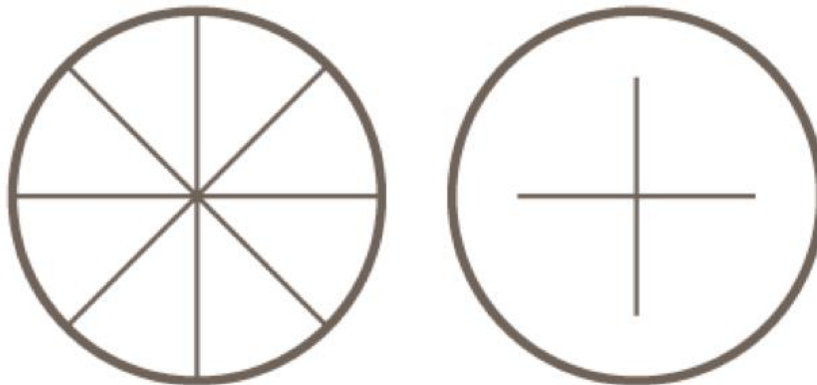
Mix wet ingredients together until dissolved:

3/4 cup + 2 Tbsp very hot water (minimum of 180 degrees F)
3 Tbsp honey
3 Tbsp molasses

Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients and mix well. Dough should be slightly sticky. Do not knead.

Divide into four balls and flatten each into a 1/4 inch thick disk.

With a knife, score the top of each loaf into eight pie-shaped sections, so that the sections can be more easily broken off while serving. Alternatively, you could score a cross onto the loaf.



Lay the loaves on a baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes. Remove from oven and brush the tops of the loaves with oil. Bake an additional 5-8 minutes. Let cool.

Yield: four 8 oz. loaves. Each loaf serves 60-70 people, depending upon the size of the piece given. The loaves freeze well.

<https://inside.luthersem.edu/community-care/chapel/>

Session 3: God Is With Us!



Theme: Where are we meant to be kind and generous?

Gift of Discipleship #3: Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed.

Let's Hear God's Word!

Read: "So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" (Acts 2:41-47 NRSV).

Spark Story Bible: Early Believers (Pages 504-505)

Jesus Storybook Bible: God Sends Help (Pages 326-333)

Let's Chat!

- + How is God generous in this story? What in this story brings you JOY?
- + Where can we worship God? Who can we tell (**proclaim**) the story of Jesus to?
- + Followers of Jesus spent a lot of time practicing faith in their homes; What faith practices do you in your household? What is your favorite faith practice, and why?

Let's Sing!

"I've Got the Joy" (click [HERE](#) for a video version of the song)

Verse 1 I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart...down in my heart...down in my heart;
I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart...down in my heart to stay.
And I'm so happy, so very happy; I have the love of Jesus in my heart;
And I'm so happy, so very happy; I have the love of Jesus in my heart!

Verse 2 I've got the love of Jesus, love of Jesus down in my heart...down in my heart...down in my heart;
I've got the love of Jesus, love of Jesus down in my heart...down in my heart to stay.
And I'm so happy, so very happy; I have the love of Jesus in my heart;
And I'm so happy, so very happy; I have the love of Jesus in my heart!

Verse 3 I've got the peace that passes understanding down in my heart; down in my heart; down in my heart;
I've got the peace that passes understanding down in my heart; down in my heart to stay.
And I'm so happy, so very happy; I have the love of Jesus in my heart;
And I'm so happy, so very happy; I have the love of Jesus in my heart!

Movements for the song (optional):

Joy = Open hands facing outward on either side of the face; **Down** = point downward
Heart = Point to your heart; **Happy** = pointer fingers touch your "dimples";
Love = Cross forearms in front of chest;
Jesus = sign language for Jesus...middle fingers each touch the opposite palm
Peace = make a peace sign with your 2nd and 3rd finger. **Understanding** = Point to your head (brain)

Let's Play!

- + **Play "Telephone"** as a household; Person 1 begins by whispering something in the next person's ear..."God hears us when we pray and eat together"; then person 2 whispers what they heard to person 3, etc. Did the phrase end as it began?
- + **Share (proclaim!) your faith** by writing positive, kind and inspiring words and symbols about God's love in your windows or on your sidewalk for your neighbors to see.
- + **Learn** how to say "Jesus Loves You" in another language

Let's Reflect

Our church buildings are wonderful and meaningful places to worship God. Early Christians did not often meet in a public building for prayer and singing and reading Scripture; instead they gathered in their households. And when they left their homes, they spent a lot of time telling others about Jesus and meeting the needs of their neighbors. This story from Acts reminds us that the buildings we meet in are special, but the most important thing is building caring relationships with one another, and with God – and that can happen ANYWHERE!

Let's Live It Out!

- + Using the **Live It Out** handout (pages 15-16), take some time as a family this week to re-read the story and start a conversation about all the places we can share kindness – the handout will guide your time together.
 - + If possible, include grandparents and/or great grandparents in the conversation, whether in person, through video chat or on the phone
 - + Being Generous: Action 3 – think about the people you know who are generous
 - + Generosity Challenge: This session = Wheels!
 - + Blessing: Find a time each day to use and share this blessing with one another

Let's Keep Practicing!

Other ideas for practicing generosity and kindness this week:

- + Donate cleaning supplies to the food shelf
- + Bring flowers to someone
- + Explore the great outdoors with a walk, hike, canoeing or backyard adventure – give thanks to God for the abundance of amazing things in nature that provide food, water, air, shelter and fun for us
- + Make a contribution to your Share-Save-Spend station
- + Clean up a room or do some chores without being asked

Let's Pray!

Good and gracious God, you have always been with us; no matter where we pray or sing, you seek us out. Your generous love brings us JOY! Help us continue to practice being thoughtful and kind so that we can reflect your love. AMEN.

Let's Sing!

"This Little Light of Mine" (review verses 1 & 2, and then try verse 3!)

Verse 3 Won't let Satan blow it out, I'm gonna let it shine; won't let Satan blow it out, I'm gonna let it shine
Won't let Satan blow it out, I'm gonna let it shine; let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

LIVE IT OUT!



Equipping Households: The WHERE

Conversation Goal

Identify all the places and ways this household can practice generosity.

Conversation #3

Where Do We Practice Generosity?

One only needs to read or hear the news to know there are many communities of faith, organizations, people, and places that could benefit from acts of generosity. The great needs of the world need attention and heart-felt care. Take some time to identify the places that stir your passion for giving. All ages can find ways and places to share.

Key Question

Where are all the places and what are all the ways we could be generous with our treasure (money), time, and talents?

Discussion Prompts

- What issues or concerns are most important to each of us? This household?
- What or who compels us most deeply to give?
- What are the ways we can support those issues and needs we most care about in addition to our financial gifts? (Ex. recycling)
- What is the difference between charity and generosity? (Do a web search if unsure.)
- What do we need to do and know to practice responsible and wise generous giving?

God's Story Acts 2:41-47 (CEV). "On that day about three thousand believed his message and were baptized. They spent their time learning from the apostles, and they were like family to each other. They also broke bread and prayed together. Everyone was amazed by the many miracles and wonders that the apostles worked. All the Lord's followers often met together, and they shared everything they had. They would sell their property and possessions and give the money to whoever needed it. Day after day they met together in the temple. They broke bread together in different homes and shared their food happily and freely, while praising God. Everyone liked them, and each day the Lord added to their group others who were being saved."

Affirmation + Blessing

God equips us and has given us many opportunities to give and share at home and away from home.



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EQUIPPING HOUSEHOLDS

Action 3

Our words and drawings illustrate ALL the places and people we can imagine receiving our heart-felt care and generosity.



The Generosity Challenge

How many items do we own that have wheels?
(Ex: vehicles, tricycle, bicycles, lawn mower, toys with wheels etc.) Count them. What would it mean to give away 10% or purchase new that same number? How hard would this be to do? Who is in need of these items? To whom or where would we go to donate one or more?



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Session 4: God Is Joy!



Theme: Knowing and sharing God's stories of generosity

Gift of Discipleship #4: **Serve** all people following the example of Jesus.

Let's Hear God's Word!

Read: "We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints— and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us, so that we might urge Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you. Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking. I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:1-9 NRSV).

Spark Story Bible: Fruit of the Spirit (Pages 550-553)

Let's Chat!

- + How is God generous in this story? What in this story brings you JOY?
- + Early Christians sometimes fought with one another; people like Paul would write letters and speak to them, encouraging them to be kind to one another. Which fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5) are easiest to practice? Which ones are more difficult? Why?
- + What would Jesus do to serve others? What do you do to **serve** others?

Let's Sing!

"I've Got the Joy" (click [HERE](#) for a video version of the song; practice verses 1, 2, and 3, then add 4!)

Verse 1 I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart...down in my heart...down in my heart;....

Verse 2 I've got the love of Jesus, love of Jesus down in my heart...down in my heart...down in my heart;...

Verse 3 I've got the peace that passes understanding down in my heart; down in my heart; down in my heart;...

Verse 4 I've got the wonderful love of my blessed redeemer way down in the depths of my heart;
Way down in the depths of my heart, way down in the depths of my heart;
I've got the wonderful love of my blessed redeemer way down in the depths of my heart;
way down in the depths of my heart to stay.

And I'm so happy, so very happy, I've got the love of Jesus in my heart;
And I'm so happy, so very happy; I've got the love of Jesus in my heart.

Movements for the song (optional):

Joy = Open hands facing outward on either side of the face; **Down** = point downward
Heart = Point to your heart; **Happy** = pointer fingers touch your "dimples";
Love = Cross forearms in front of chest;
Jesus = sign language for Jesus...middle fingers each touch the opposite palm
Peace = make a peace sign with your 2nd and 3rd finger. **Understanding** = Point to your head (brain)

Let's Play!

+ **Make a joyful noise:** Make homemade shakers or drums to use when you're singing. Shakers can be made with two plastic cups, rice and duct tape; drums can be made from empty oatmeal, yogurt or ice cream containers with lids; both can be decorated.

+ **Make a fruit salad:** choose favorite fruits – apples, bananas, grapes, berries, pineapple, etc. – cut into small pieces and mix in a large bowl. Add yogurt or whipped cream if you'd like. Perhaps find a blanket or tent and enjoy your treat outdoors.

Let's Reflect

The more we read, listen to and share stories of faith from the Bible and people in our lives, the more our own faith grows. Think of an apple tree seed; you plant it in the ground and with plenty of good soil, water and sunshine it grows larger and stronger, until it blossoms and creates fruit! These faith stories, along with prayer, worship, serving others, etc. are like good soil, water and sunshine; they help nurture us so we can become strong in our faith, and so that we can bear good fruit, like love, generosity, self-control, gentleness, and kindness. God is so generous with this fruit that we have more than we need – and it overflows, being poured onto others around us. We are made to share it!

Let's Live It Out!

+ Using the **Live It Out** handout (pages 19-20), take some time as a family this week to re-read the story and start a conversation, thinking about a purpose statement for our household– the handout will guide your time together.

- + If possible, include grandparents and/or great grandparents in the conversation, whether in person, through video chat or on the phone
- + Being Generous: Action 4 – a household purpose statement
- + Generosity Challenge: This session = Socks and Undies!
- + Blessing: Find a time each day to use and share this blessing with one another

Let's Keep Practicing!

Other ideas for practicing generosity and kindness this week:

- + Donate diapers, baby wipes or baby food to the food shelf
- + Put together a care package for a new mom, someone recovering from surgery/treatment, or a soldier in the military. Pack some items in a small box and mail it to them.
- + Call a grandparent, relative, or someone from your congregation and ask them questions about what brings them joy. "What Bible story brings you joy? What kind of music brings you joy? What in nature brings you joy?"
- + Make a contribution to your Share-Save-Spend station
- + Send a note of thanks for their service to the public to a fire or police station, library, or congregation

Let's Pray!

Nurturing God, you give us people, stories, churches, communities, families and so many other things that help our faith grow. Please help us to share the good fruit of faith, like JOY with others around us so that they might know and love Jesus too. AMEN.

Let's Sing!

"This Little Light of Mine" (review verses 1-3, and then try verse 4!)

Verse 4 Let it shine 'til Jesus comes, I'm gonna let it shine; let it shine 'til Jesus comes, I'm gonna let it shine
Let it shine 'til Jesus comes, I'm gonna let it shine; let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

LIVE IT OUT!



Creating Centers For Generosity: The HOW

Conversation Goal

Become a center of generosity by creating a household purpose statement and commitment to practice generosity 24–7–365

Conversation #4

Make A Plan

It is time to form a plan around the conversations that have engaged you so far. You have become informed on your household giving patterns where you could pour out care and generosity. Now it is time to take action!

Key Question

How can we begin to fully live a life of intentional generosity in response to God's love for us?

Discussion Prompts

- What is our purpose as a family?
- How does that purpose inform our sharing and generosity?
- What two items from those we brainstormed in Session 3 do you want to commit to our giving? How much of our treasure? Our time? Our talents?
- How can we commit to giving and serving our church and community of faith?

God's Story 2 Corinthians 8:1-9 (CEV). "My friends, we want you to know that the churches in Macedonia have shown others how kind God is. Although they were going through hard times and were very poor, they were glad to give generously. They gave as much as they could afford and even more, simply because they wanted to. They even asked and begged us to let them have the joy of giving their money for God's people. And they did more than we had hoped. They gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us; just as God wanted them to do...I am not ordering you to do this. I am simply testing how real your love is by comparing it with the concern that others have shown. You know that our Lord Jesus Christ was kind enough to give up all his riches and become poor so that you could become rich."

Affirmation + Blessing

God, use us to respond joyfully to the needs of this world with our acts of generosity.



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CREATING A HOUSEHOLD CENTER of GENEROSITY

Action 4



Our Household Purpose Statement

Two Places We Choose To Give Generously of our Time, Talents and/or Financial Treasure

1.

2.

How do these two choices support our household purpose statement?

The Generosity Challenge

How many pairs of socks and undies get washed each week in this household? Count them. What is 10% of that number? What would it mean to purchase new socks and undies – 10% of the number we wear? How hard would this be to do? Who needs socks and undies? To whom or where would we go to donate them?



Session 5: God is Love!



Theme: With God all things are possible.

Gift of Discipleship #5: Strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

Let's Hear God's Word!

Read: "Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?' He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.' And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.' But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?' Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise'" (Luke 10:25-37 NRSV).²

Spark Story Bible: The Good Samaritan (Pages 360-365)

Let's Chat!

- + How is God generous in this story? What in this story brings you JOY?
- + What did the Samaritan do that was generous? Why did he help the injured man?
- + Jesus asks us to be like the Samaritan – who needs our help right now? What can we do to be helpful?
- + When we give our resources and time to help someone else, we are **striving** to seek justice (to be generous and help like God does for us); tell a story about how you helped by giving your time or resources...

Let's Sing!

"I've Got the Joy"

Verse 1 I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart...down in my heart...down in my heart;...

Verse 2 I've got the love of Jesus, love of Jesus down in my heart...down in my heart...down in my heart;...

Verse 3 I've got the peace that passes understanding down in my heart; down in my heart; down in my heart;...

Verse 4 I've got the wonderful love of my blessed redeemer way down in the depths of my heart;

Verse 5 I've got the mighty Messiah that manifests miracles down in the depths of my heart; down in the depths of my heart; down in the depths of my heart

I've got the mighty Messiah that manifests miracles down in the depths of my heart, down in the depths of my heart to stay.

Refrain And I'm so happy, so very happy, I've got the love of Jesus in my heart;
And I'm so happy, so very happy; I've got the love of Jesus in my heart.

² This story was chosen to incorporate themes of both generosity & justice that can typically be found in a children's Bible. The original Generosity Project story (which will be found in the *Live it Out* resource for week 5) is Matthew 19:23-30.

Let's Play!

+ **Make blessing bags:** Items needed for each bag: 1 gallon Ziploc bag or small backpack, band-aids, 3 granola or protein bars, 1-2 bags of nuts or trail mix, 1-2 bottles of water, 1 new pair of socks, 1 pair of gloves or mittens, 1 travel toothbrush + toothpaste, 1 travel size bar of soap, 1 lip balm, and 1 travel size tissue pack. Once everything is packed into the bag(s), keep them in your car; when you approach someone on the road/in a community who needs help, you can pass this bag to them right from your car!

+ **Make friendship bracelets:** Use embroidery thread, yarn, beads, or string to create bracelets to give away to others.

Let's Reflect

In the story of the Good Samaritan we heard that a man was injured and in need of help. After several people ignored his needs, one person felt in his heart to do what he could to help. He had compassion, which means he chose to act out of love and kindness. God loves us with this kind of compassion, especially when we are sad, hurt, lonely, or even when we mess up or make mistakes – God loves us, no matter what! God sent his Son, Jesus, to teach us how to be generous to others through our love – to be the hands and feet of Jesus so that others can know and love God too. Let's be kind wherever we are, let's help whenever we can, and let's be generous with what we have!

Let's Live It Out!

+ Using the **Live It Out** handout (pages 23-24), take some time as a family this week to read the story and start a conversation, thinking about times when we might be unexpectedly generous– the handout will guide your time together.

- + If possible, include grandparents and/or great grandparents in the conversation, whether in person, through video chat or on the phone
- + Being Generous: Action 5 – things/purposes we have supported unexpectedly
- + Generosity Challenge: This session = Lightbulbs!
- + Blessing: Find a time each day to use and share this blessing with one another

Let's Keep Practicing!

Other ideas for practicing generosity and kindness this week:

- + Donate kid-friendly snacks to the food shelf (granola bars, fruit snacks, pudding, etc.)
- + Blessing Bags (see above!)
- + Call a grandparent, relative, or someone from your congregation and ask them questions about a time when someone helped them out or was generous to them. How did it make them feel?
- + Make a contribution to your Share-Save-Spend station
- + Purchase or donate money to your congregation for children's Bibles

Let's Pray!

Compassionate God, even when bad things happen, there are kind people in the world who show up to help – they take time to care for others, especially when there is a big need. Please help us practice loving others the way you do, and remind us that, with you, all things are possible! AMEN.

Let's Sing!

"This Little Light of Mine" (review verses 1-4, and then try verse 5!)

Verse 5 Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine; Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine
Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine; let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

LIVE IT OUT!



Living God's Story: HERE & NOW

Conversation Goal

Discover that my household can respond to God's surprising and unexpected nudges to be generous – and do what may seem impossible.

Conversation #5 When Pigs Fly – Nothing Is Impossible With God!

Sometimes you may be moved to give beyond your planned and intentional giving. A specific situation may move you to give to someone in need. You may feel the desire to help an entire community when tragedy or disaster has occurred. You may feel moved to support a person or organization that helps others and cares for God's creation. Spontaneous giving may be prompted by the Spirit and is another way to grow and nurture generosity in our lives.

Key Question When have we unexpectedly felt motivated to be generous?

Discussion Prompts

- What are some situations or examples where we may want to give of our treasure, time or talent unexpectedly? (Ex.: disasters, someone we personally encounter, or a fundraiser at school)
- How can we be open to giving and sharing unexpectedly?
- Is there a limit to our generosity?
- Do we need to consult with one another before giving and sharing spontaneously?
- How does giving spontaneously fit into our household mission statement?
- Is there a difference between responsible and irresponsible giving?

God's Story Matthew 19:23-30 (CEV). Jesus said to his disciples, "It's terribly hard for rich people to get into the kingdom of heaven! In fact, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to get into God's kingdom." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly surprised and asked, "How can anyone ever be saved?" Jesus looked straight at them and said, "There are some things that people cannot do, but God can do anything!" Peter replied, "Remember, we have left everything to be your followers! What will we get?" Jesus answered: "Yes, all of you have become my followers. And so in the future world, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, I promise that you will sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. All who have given up home or brothers and sisters or father and mother or children or land for me will be given hundred times as much. They will also have eternal life. But many who are now first will be last, and many who are last will be first."

Affirmation + Blessing God, with you all things are possible. Lead us and help our household grow in generosity and unexpected giving and sharing.



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LIVING GOD'S STORY

Action 5

Our words and drawings illustrate the causes and purposes that we have supported because of unexpected opportunities.



The Generosity Challenge

How many light bulbs are inside and outside our house? Count them. What is 10% of this total? What would it mean to give away or purchase new, 10% of the total number of lightbulbs we use? How hard would this be to do? Who needs lightbulbs? To whom or where would we go to donate them?



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