

Enduring Principles
#1 GRACE & GENEROSITY

CENTRING MOMENT

[The Porter's Gate - The Greatest Commandment](#)

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HYMN

CCS 96 – Now in This Moment

OPENING PRAYER

SCRIPTURE

1 Timothy 1: 12 – 16

¹² I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service, ¹³ even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵ The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶ But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life.

COMMENT

In the scripture Paul talks about the change in his life because of his encounter with Jesus Christ. He had been a persecutor of Christians who hunted them down to be executed. Despite this God showed him grace, turned his life around and used him as an example to show that Jesus is particularly for those who are in a mess and need to change their lives.

It fits today because we are going to focus on one of the church's core values – Grace & Generosity. The Church has 9 core values it calls Enduring Principles. The idea is that they guide how we live out our faith in daily life.

At Discovery Camp this Summer the Young Adults recorded themselves discussing what they thought the values mean in our world today. They've turned those conversations into 9 social media posts and we're going to look at the first one today – Grace & Generosity.

VIDEO
Generosity

Young Adult – Social Media Video on Grace &

<https://youtube.com/shorts/77ffiylpnrq>

COMMENT

We're going to share in a couple of stories now from the church's Daily Bread series. One is about someone's experience of the meaning of grace in their life and the other generosity.

Will a couple of people offer to read one of these each?

STORY 1

Grace and Mercy, by *Phyllis Gregg, Independence, Missouri, USA*
(adapted)

My grandmother was originally from Finland. She lived for more than 50 years in Canada, yet seldom spoke English. My brother and I had a hard time communicating with her. Despite that, she did manage to demonstrate, in very clear ways, her love for us. Whenever we visited her home, she would greet us with a huge smile and hug. When we left, tears would fill her eyes. One Christmas, when I was young, she sent me a pair of ceramic angels. They meant the world to me. I carried those two angels with me wherever I lived. They still sit in a cabinet in my home.

After a large family gathering several years ago, I noticed the angels were moved and one of the heads was broken off. I was heartbroken. Who would do such a thing and then just leave it? I was so upset. I glued the head back on, but it wasn't the same. I just couldn't look at those angels with the same love I always had.

Then one day I was sitting in my home office, feeling incredibly bad about an encounter where someone made it very clear I had not lived up to their expectations. I noticed the angels...one with a broken head. God's love, grace, and mercy poured over me. We are all broken. We're all imperfect. We sometimes have visible flaws, yet God loves us perfectly. We may not always feel worthy of this deep level of love but that doesn't stop God from loving us... every day... unconditionally. God doesn't focus on our flaws but instead looks into our hearts and calls us to do the same for others.

Story 2
USA

Blessed by the Giving, by Joann Condit of Phoenix, Arizona

Years ago, when my husband, Clay, and I were just married, we joined a fundraiser to finish building the church's Auditorium, its headquarters building in Independence, Missouri. The church provided families with a small metal can – a bank – to collect stray coins or perhaps larger sums. When the bank was full, we sent the money to the church, earmarked for the work on the Auditorium.

Although just out of college and newly employed, we found we could manage to add to our little contribution regularly. Admittedly, our bank held mostly coins, but then... coins do add up. Our bank was gaining a respectable weight.

In those early years I also put money aside for our own special needs. Since we married only months before, there were many needs for our household. One day I found a crisp, new five-dollar bill I had stashed in my wallet. It was a good sum in 1952. I knew it was there for something I must need, but I could not remember what it was.

I thought about this for several days without success. So, one day I took the bill and folded it tightly to push it through the slot in the top of the bank. The very moment it escaped my pinching fingers, I remembered! And yes, it was something I felt was important. I even tried to pluck it out with tweezers – a futile effort. My special savings would soon be on its way to putting carpeting or seats or lighting in the Auditorium.

Oddly enough, I never missed the item I had wanted so badly. This has remained true many times in the long journey of my life. When we give to God's work, we are blessed by the giving. We never miss what we share to meet the needs of others. That's a promise – you can bank on it!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What stood out to you in those stories?
- Do you agree that Grace & Generosity are core values for the church?
- Do you agree with the young adults in the video that just smiling at someone is being generous?
- How surprised were you that they didn't mention money in their conversation?
- Do you agree that Grace & Generosity are easier to achieve if we work together?

HYMN

CCS 581 – I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Hand each participant a piece of ribbon/string.

I want you to tie this ribbon/string on your wrist using your other hand.

Allow some time to attempt tying the ribbon/string, which should be rather difficult.

Let's try another one. Can you describe exactly what the back of your head looks like?

Offer a short time for participants to consider this question.

Put one hand behind your back. Using your other hand, I want you to clap!

These things are hard to do by yourself. Let's try again working with the person at the side of you.

Ask participants to work with someone near them and repeat the activities.

Many things in life are easier when you have someone to be with you and help you. Sometimes, you just need a hand.

As the young adults in their video suggested God did not create us to be alone but to be interdependent with one another. We need other people, and other people need us. One way we can serve others is by praying for them.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Light the candle

The prayer we are going to do is called a Five Finger Prayer. Each finger represents a group of people. Hold your hand up in front of you.

Touch your thumb with your other hand. Your thumb is closest to you right now, so will pray for those closest to us – our family. I will start the prayer, and you finish it by silently saying the names of your family.

God, thank you for our families. We ask a blessing on each of them.

Pause.

Now touch your index finger. We will pray for those who point us in the right direction: our teachers, doctors, ministers, and mentors.

God, thank you for those that point us in the right direction. May you give them wisdom and support.

Pause.

Now touch your middle finger. This is the tallest finger, so we will pray for those who lead us.

God, thank you for our leaders. May you guide them and grant them wisdom as they lead.

Pause.

Now touch your ring finger. This finger is the weakest, so we will pray for those who are weak, in trouble, in pain.

God, some people are sick, in trouble, in pain. We ask a blessing for each of them.

Pause.

Now touch your little finger. We will pray for ourselves and our needs.

God, thank you for always being there with love, support, and guidance. I humbly ask you for help.

Pause.

Amen.

COMMENT

We believe God's vision is for everyone to experience the Enduring Principles in tangible ways. When we recognize God's grace and generosity to us, we naturally want to respond by living out Christ's mission. Discipleship is the hard and messy work of doing that.

As we've discussed generosity isn't just about money. We can help spread God's love by being kind and sharing with others. But now we have the opportunity to give our offering as one way to help God's love shine for others.

OFFERING AND PRAYER

HYMN

CCS 309 – Put Peace into Each Other's Hands

CLOSING PRAYER

by Tiffany and Caleb Brian (adapted)

Stirring Spirit,

We recognize the changing seasons. We see the first sprout of green in the morning frost, the first snowflake in the dark of midnight, the cool breeze on the face of a sleeping child. We treasure these passing moments as they come and go each year.

We pray that you would also bring a season of grace and generosity to our lands. May it warm our toes and compel our hearts to move. May we watch for moments when we can act generously for others. Even when they are as brief as a breeze.

This week may we experience what it is to live in your love, and for your love.

In the name of Jesus, we pray.

Amen.