

Generosity Declaration

2024

Matthew 28:19-20 records Jesus' last words to all who follow him, *"go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."*

As the body of Christ, we are called and commanded to make disciples of all nations. This Great Commission is to be the central driving focus of our work as followers of Jesus.

We believe the body of Christ cannot carry out this Great Commission without a similar Great Commitment to whole-life generosity. Generosity is an irreplaceable component of the Great Commission. We have created this Generosity Declaration to inspire and challenge the global body of Christ to make a commitment to whole-life, fully surrendered generosity as an essential priority in our pursuit of the Great Commission.

This Declaration builds on the work of Lausanne Cape Town 2010. The following four commitments were made at the conference, and all of them are foundational to this declaration.

- We affirm that generosity is the life the Bible requires. The Bible portrays a quality of life that should mark the believer and the community of believers. From Abraham, through Moses, the Psalmists, prophets, and wisdom of Israel, and from Jesus and the apostles, we learn that such a biblical lifestyle includes justice, compassion, humility, integrity, truthfulness, sexual chastity, generosity, kindness, self-denial, hospitality, peacemaking, non-retaliation, doing good, forgiveness, joy, contentment, and love - all combined in lives of worship, praise, and faithfulness to God.
- We embrace the witness of the whole Bible and God's desire both for systemic economic justice and for personal compassion, respect, and generosity towards the poor and needy. We rejoice that this extensive biblical teaching has become more integrated into our mission strategy and practice, as it was for the early Church and the Apostle Paul.
- We affirm that we must replace self-interest and greed with the biblical teaching on surrender and generous giving as the marks of true discipleship to Christ. We likewise affirm Lausanne's historic call for simpler lifestyles.
- We affirm our calling to make disciples. The biblical mission demands that those who claim Christ's name should be like him, by taking up their cross, denying themselves, and following him in the paths of humility, love, integrity, generosity, and servanthood. To fail in discipleship and disciple-making is to fail at the most basic level of our mission. The call of Christ to his Church comes to us afresh from the pages of the gospels: 'Come and follow me'; 'Go and make disciples'.

This Generosity Declaration expresses anew what we believe about generosity, why generosity is critical to our work today, and the action we must take to make it an integral part of our work of taking Christ to the nations.

What We Believe About Generosity

1. The word 'generosity' is widely misunderstood by the Church and has been used in a narrow and restrictive way for too long. The term must be reframed by Scripture and reclaimed in its fullness for the edification and education of the Church. It must become integral to discipleship as a command to be obeyed, not an option to be considered.
2. Generosity is whole-life discipleship. It is not limited to money and possessions. Instead, it is an outflow of a life fully surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Our relationship to God, our self, our neighbor, and the creation are gifts from God that we steward for Him. Our vision for making disciples of all nations must include this surrendered, selfless stewardship.
3. Disciples embrace generosity because we are made in the image of a giving, generous God. When we are generous, we live out our identity in Christ. Generosity comes from our experience of the grace of God and is an expression of gratitude and love. We cannot share the good news of Christ without including His generosity towards us, and His expectation of our generosity toward others as His image bearers.
4. Generosity is an expression of our trust in God who is able to provide for all our needs. The discipleship journey must bring us closer to Christ in faith, trust, and obedience. This includes teaching generosity and our work of making disciples whose hearts are rich toward God.
5. Generosity is a cure for materialism and discontent, and an antidote to fight worry, anxiety, and depression that is overwhelming our world. Biblical, whole-life generosity sets us free from the bondage of fear, isolation, and insecurity. Disciples are stewards whom the Son has set free to experience 'life in all its fullness.'" (Matthew 10:10) This is the good news of the Gospel we must proclaim.

Why Generosity is Critical to Carrying Out the Great Commission

1. Discipleship and evangelism flow from a generous spirit. Generosity takes us to God. When we are generous, we demonstrate that we understand the heart of God, which leads us to share the love of God with others.
2. We are losing an entire generation to a crisis of trust, cynicism, materialism, and secularization. Generosity is our witness to the watching world that there is a better way. Generosity bridges generational gaps and attracts people to a God of abundance, grace, and purpose.

3. Generosity includes the gift of presence. Our world desperately needs to humanly reconnect to overcome isolation and loneliness, especially in a digital culture.
4. Generosity is necessary to mobilize resources for kingdom work where the need is greatest. Now is the time for the body of Christ to give in unprecedented ways to catalyze a mission movement that will fulfill the Great Commission. This will only happen when the global church has embraced generosity as an indispensable component of discipleship.
5. The body of Christ must live and model for the world a radical new worldview that bears witness to the coming of the kingdom of God. As faithful followers of the Prince of Peace, we must be disciples and make disciples who overflow with a spirit of generosity in the face of the hostility, anger, and divisiveness of our present age.

What Action We Must Take as a Result

1. We must use the Lausanne and other opportunities and platforms to catalyze a global generosity movement that will inspire deeper discipleship among current believers, give power and relevance to our work of making new disciples, and raise the resources to fund the greatest mobilization of the proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel in word and deed in our lifetime.
2. We must encourage, resource, and support a polycentric movement of generosity whereby every local expression of the Body of Christ is participating in generosity towards Great Commission efforts. The global Body of Christ is encouraged to teach, embrace, and practice generosity and stewardship as a manifestation of being disciples in God's Mission and the Great Commission invitation.
3. We must focus our efforts on helping the children and youth in the global church understand, experience, and practice joyful generosity. Together we can reach a lost generation and help them catch a vision for following Jesus as joyful stewards.
4. We must collaborate with existing groups and organizations that are already envisioning, equipping, and resourcing willing leaders with generosity training within their specific contexts. This includes specialized programs for full-time pastors, bi-vocational pastors, lay leaders, Christian business leaders, ministry leaders, military, and government leaders
5. We must champion faith and work integration so that just as discipleship is fully integrated into all facets of the life of a believer, so too generosity will permeate every part of our journey with Jesus in every aspect of our life.
6. We must create resources and provide training so that every new believer who responds to the Gospel enters into a discipleship program that includes the formation of a generous spirit and the joy of the faithful steward as a follower of Christ.

Therefore, we call on the Global Church to:

1. Integrate Biblical stewardship, generous living, and Kingdom-focused giving into the theology and life of every local church, group, network, ministry, and organization.

2. Prioritize stewardship, financial discipleship, generosity, and giving into all of its evangelism and discipleship practices.

Global Generosity Forum Participants

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