

"Generosity" is a topic that often has a seasonal air about it. Even though fundraising for charities, schools and churches is mostly a year-round task now, churches and other charities often make their special appeal for funds in the Fall. This issue of the Dispatch tries to look at the idea of generosity both through a personal story (Bill's essay) and a Biblical principle (Lance's essay). As usual, please let us know of your thoughts or reactions.

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## **Generosity – A Family Story**

By [Dr. Bill Long](#)

One of the greatest desires of parents is that our children adopt the values that are dearest to us. As a result, one of our biggest fears is that they will be tone deaf to these same values. The following story took me by surprise in such a pleasant way that I wanted to share it with you.

I have always stressed the importance of generosity or philanthropy to my children. I encouraged them to check out various ways that they might contribute either to ministries or to efforts to serve people in need. My son seemed, figuratively, to roll his eyes whenever he heard me mention this topic. For, you see, he is an accountant, and he has been convinced for a long time that if you have \$100 and you give away \$10 of it then you only have \$90 left. "How can you be moving towards your financial goals if you give your money away?" he wanted to know. I tried to tell him that the universe isn't a "closed system" and that there are other sources of money or blessing in life, but he just smiled and walked away.

Until...I had a recent conversation with him. In the past few years he has bought a small home in Eugene OR, with a top floor he could rent out to a University of Oregon graduate student. He became a landlord, happily taking in \$750 per month. It is customary in Eugene to lower the rents in July and August to about \$500 a month because the city empties of most of its students.

He told me that, with no encouragement from me, he decided to cancel the rental payment of the graduate student for those two months. She, the student, was doing an internship in the East and wasn't going to occupy the place. Money was tight for her, and my son decided that rather than having her stress about \$1000, he would just bear the loss himself.

Momentarily stunned, I asked him what her reaction to his decision was. My son looked at me with an unaccustomed faraway look. "She was really, really surprised, and she was unbelievably grateful. I was so affected by her gratitude that it made me think that giving her this gift was more of a gift to me than it was to her."

My son now believes in generosity. He told me recently that he hasn't missed the \$1000 at all; in fact he thinks he has more in his account than he thinks he should...

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## **Faith and Family Business**

**"...for God loves a cheerful giver." (II Cor. 9:7)**

By [Lance Woodbury](#)

Many members of family businesses with whom I have consulted stress that generosity is one of their core values. Its tangible form can be financial, such as donations to churches, colleges, or charitable organizations, and even contributing to individual employees and their families.

But we are mistaken if we think that generosity necessarily includes a financial component. My friend, [John Stanley](#), points out several other "currencies" that can meet our generosity goals. For



example, we can demonstrate through our **relationships** -- by connecting people we know -- and applying our specific **strengths** to our cherished causes, instead of just thinking generally about volunteering our time.

But why? Why is generosity, in whatever form, a common family business value?

For many people I know, generosity stems from a sense of having been “blessed,” of having received much more in life than one possibly can repay. They often mean that God, in some way, has provided for them economically, relationally, or spiritually, and they feel some obligation, some calling, to share or pass that blessing on to others.

In a recent church service, one of the speakers noted how a blessing often happens to you *through* someone else. In other words, individuals are “instruments of blessings” and by their actions, they convey God’s blessing to others.

Of course, many people have felt what Bill’s son experienced – that the effects of generosity are self-reinforcing! But the origin of blessing others often stems from a recognition that you have been the recipient of a blessing, many times, and in many ways, through others. Generosity, in its most basic form, is an extension of that blessing, another ripple in the water caused by an earlier act.

As we head into the harvest season, may you remember the ways you’ve been blessed, and may your cheerful acts of generosity be a blessing on others.

