

Teaching Young Adults to Be Generous

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Buddy Barrels are a part of my earliest memories of church. I grew up in a pastor's home in rural Indiana. My mom worked in my grandparents' carpet store, and my dad pastored a few small churches while also working as a police officer and a coal miner. My parents did whatever it took to provide for the family, a principle that carried down to my brother and me. Although there were many memories of scarcity and "living by faith," we had a few values we never compromised: love God, love people, and help whenever you can.

The yellow Buddy Barrel was one of the discipleship tools used to teach the biblical principles of generosity and compassion. It was our offering to the Lord—a step to fulfill going into "all the world" with the mission of sharing the gospel.

We were able to pick up a few life-changing lessons regarding our finances and how we were to respond to the needs around us. I've watched these principles carry on from my grandparents to my parents, through my wife and I, and now in our children.

1. Obedience: I've come to the understanding that it's better to be obedient to what the Lord has told me to do than not to obey. This isn't just in regards to finances—this is in everything. I love God's response to obedience, whether it be honoring our parents or giving our finances. Malachi 3:10 (NLT) has one of the most detailed and specific conversations about financial obedience: "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough . . . If you do . . . I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in. Try it!" From our family's perspective, giving the first 10 percent, the tithe, of our income to the Lord has blessed us more than we could ever think or imagine.

2. Compassion: God's compassion is displayed throughout the entire Bible. I am all for people being generous—it is essential to the Christian life—but I'm more concerned with people being compassionate. The story of a Samaritan in Luke 10 tells us that the man had compassion for the injured man in the story. God's compassion flows through the entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments. Compassion is central to the heart of God and is most often defined through the heart of giving.

3. Cooperation: Cooperate with a local church when it comes to giving your tithe and offerings. The principle behind this thought is that you can do more with others than you can by yourself. The instruction is to bring your tithe to where you are being fed, but so many people want to distribute their offerings as they want. When churches work together to distribute finances, more can go further. Partner with the church and help the gospel go further than you could ever think or imagine.

4. Collaboration: Find organizations in your community, as well as global initiatives, that you can collaborate with. If the Lord puts something on your heart, you should investigate who is doing it well and build a relationship with them. Form both a financial and a physical partnership; in other words, show up to help. In my current role, we are working with multiple organizations on the cusp of a breakthrough in their vision. When

we collaborated with them, it helped put them over the top of their goal and even opened new doors of opportunity for them.

5. Consideration – Consider in your heart and decide what you should do, then do it. Second Corinthians 9:7-8 says it this way. “You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. ‘For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.’ And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.”

Let’s park here for a moment. I believe this simple concept is often left out when teaching about giving financially. The motivation to give often comes when someone is coerced through a heartfelt story or need. Advertisers have used this method for as long as I can remember. Maybe you have seen the commercials depicting sad faces, both of humans and animals, with a slow song and a gentle voice speaking and asking you to give. (Sorry if all you can see in your mind is a puppy staring at the camera.)

But what if we were to change how we think about the purpose of giving? I would encourage you to take time at the beginning of each year to pause and pray about what you want to do for your offering, whether it is a general, above-and-beyond type of offering or something specific to a local project or global missions. Commitment is a discipline that is often lacking in today’s society. Make a giving goal, set it in your heart, stay committed, and watch what God does in and through you. Start now and experience a life full of stories and blessings that will be passed from generation to generation.

Follow One. Lead Many. Serve All.