

Season 6 | Episode 28

# Thankfulness and Generosity Unlock the Good Life

Randy Alcorn

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Crystal Keating:

This is the Joni and Friends Ministry Podcast and I'm your host Crystal Keating. Each week we're bringing you encouraging conversations about finding hope through hardship and practical ways that you can include people living with disability in your church and community. As you listen, visit [joniandfriends.org/podcast](https://joniandfriends.org/podcast) to access the resources we mention, or to [send me a message](#) with your thoughts.

Stephanie Daniels:

What is the good life? How do we live it? In our world today, dominated by social media, it can be so easy to think that the influencer you follow, who's posting from an exotic location, is living their best life. But are they truly?

Our world tells us that we have to get the latest and greatest to be happy, but "The more you accumulate, the more mass it has, the more gravity it possesses, the more it holds you in orbit." That's what our friend, Dr. Randy Alcorn shared with us in a podcast conversation back in season two.

Randy sat down with Crystal to talk about generosity and the contagious gladness of giving. You might be asking, "Giving, not getting, equals the good life?" It seems counterintuitive based on what the world tells us, but that's the way of God's kingdom.

Let's listen back to that episode as they talk about how open hands and freely giving to others is the key to a happy life.

Crystal Keating:

While you've designated a significant amount of your life to studying and writing about money. Hot topic. You talk about giving, generosity, and the promises found in scripture about God rewarding us in heaven for what we've done with our talents and treasures here in this life. So, if you could give us a snapshot of why this became so important to you and why you think it should be important to all Christians, especially as we're thinking about eternity.



Randy Alcorn:

Well, I think a passage that really turned to my thinking on this, and there are many of them because scripture says a great deal about money, is Matthew chapter six verses 19 through 21, where Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and dust corrupt and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves not break in and steal." Then he says, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Very clearly in the context of Matthew 6, he's talking about giving. He's talking about taking our earthly money and possessions and giving them away to store up treasure for ourselves in heaven. In other words, he's saying don't make your life about earthly treasures.

Now, there's nothing inherently wrong about earthly treasures. Money is not evil. The love of money is the root of all evil scripture says. It does not say money is the root of all evils. Treasures are not evil. Possessions are not evil. Technology is not evil. But, he says, take those treasures God has entrusted to you, and of course, other passages make very clear, some of those we live on. Some of those we provide for our families with, clothes for our children, and food, and I think certainly a certain amount of relaxation and entertainment and sports or whatever it is, are legitimate. But we have got to draw the line because if we don't our possessions are going to end up mastering us, because the more you accumulate, the more mass it has, and the more gravity it exerts. And the more mass, the more gravity, the more it holds you in orbit around your money and possessions, which by the way really are God's money and possessions. They all belong to God, and that's certainly something I emphasize in my books on money, that it all belongs to God. He's the creator of all of it. We are temporarily his stewards of it. But it surely and ultimately belongs to him.

Now the thing that really hit me about Matthew 6 was the reasons that Jesus gives for doing this. Now you'd think for storing up treasures in heaven rather than on earth, for taking earthly treasures and giving them away to great and wonderful causes, and nobody asked me to say this, but like Joni and Friends, you know, but, but, but my point is what a worthy ministry. I mean, put your heart where your treasures are, your heart will fall your treasure.

So, you want to have more of a heart for disabled people? Give to disabled people. You want to have more of a heart for the poor? Give to the poor. You want to have more heart for people in unreached people groups? Give money to translate the Bible into their language. It goes on and on and on. You want more of a heart for God's kingdom? Give more money to God's kingdom, because Jesus says where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. In other words, where you put your treasure, your heart will follow.

Jesus doesn't say don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth because that's the wrong thing to do. Now, it is the wrong thing to do in the sense he's talking about because he's telling us not to do it. But his rationale is don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth because it's the stupid thing to do. Why? His rationale is, because moth and rust and dust and, and, and thieves break in and steal. In other words, your possessions, your money and possessions will not last. They will burn up and they'll be gone. And, you know, either they will outlive you or you will outlive them, but you do not have a permanent relationship with your money and possessions. So, he says, do store up for yourselves treasures in heaven because they're going to last. I do a take off on this in my book, "The Treasure Principle."



Crystal Keating:

Love that book.

Randy Alcorn:

Well, thank you for saying that. Um, where I say, you can't take it with you, which everybody has said forever. And it's so true.

Crystal Keating:

Yeah.

Randy Alcorn:

You can't take it with you, but there's a corollary to that. According to Jesus, yes you can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead. And that's what happens when we give. And I think not only of our money, though, it's primarily talking about money in that context, but of our time. When we invest in giving of ourselves to meet the needs of a disabled person, to help a neighbor who's in need, to help, uh, feed somebody, uh, to help clothe somebody, to bring the Gospel to somebody. When we do that, we are making an investment that will never be lost. It will pay off forever in heaven. And sometimes it's those really small things that happen. Or maybe they're, they're big things, but they happen in a small context.

In my book, "Giving is the Good Life" I told this story, but one day last summer I, I went into a Walgreens that was near our house, and had a lot of things on my mind that day, and some stuff I was struggling with and really kind of needing encouragement from the Lord. But one thing that I do whenever I go into a store is pray that the Lord will just connect me with somebody. And I usually have booklets in my pocket like a heaven booklet, "If God is Good," various small Gospel booklets that I've written, and sometimes that other people have written, that I, I just have with me and I, I keep them in the car and I bring them in. I just look for somebody that I might be able to help, have a conversation with, give a booklet to, and maybe it's a person who's a clerk in the store or whatever it is.

On this particular day, I prayed that God would connect me with somebody, a divine appointment. Somebody you'd want me to share something with, to share the Gospel with.

Crystal Keating:

I love that prayer.



Randy Alcorn:

Well, I so I go into this store this Walgreens and nobody's outside. It's a hot summer day, and I go inside and I look around and I actually had come to buy a diet Mountain Dew which is my, kind of my go to drink. But when I saw it was a \$1.89 for 20 ounces, I'm just going, oh man. So I just, was too cheap to buy it. So I walked back out. I'm looking around and looking for somebody and I go, okay, Lord, I guess there's just nobody today. I walk out the door and right outside the door, just standing there, is a homeless guy who's probably 30 years old, really long, stringy, scraggly hair, a long beard, uh, wearing sandals. And I go, I think this is the guy that I was praying for. So I say, "Hi, I'm Randy. What's your name?" He says, "My name's John." And then he looks at me and says, "Are you a follower of Yeshua Adonai?"

Crystal Keating:

No way!

Randy Alcorn:

And I said, "Yes, I am." So the Hebrew words for Jesus the Lord. Are you a follower of Jesus the Lord? Well, first of all, how many homeless people ask you if you're a follower and then give the Hebrew name for the Messiah?

Crystal Keating:

Yeah, that's never happened to me.

Randy Alcorn:

And I instantly knew something extraordinary was, was happening. And, so, I was all ready to share the Gospel with him and to put my hand on his shoulder and pray. But when he asked me that question, I said, "Yes, I am." I said, "Are you?" And he said, "Yes, Randy, let me pray for you." So, he puts his hand on my shoulder and he lifts me up to the Lord and prays that God would do great and mighty things in my life. And that I would serve Yeshua Adonai faithfully and all of this.

So, by the time we're done with our conversation, I say, okay, so I had started by asking him if I could buy something for him. Have you eaten recently or whatever? He said, no, I don't need anything. And then I said, "Could I at least just, just get you a bottle of water? Maybe some food, whatever in here." So, he came in, we look up, and he goes and he grabs a water that's right next to the diet Mountain Dew I was too cheap to buy. So, he grabs that water and I said, "Can I get you something else?" He says, "Well, you know, um, maybe these chips over here." And so, he gets this and we go outside and I want to talk more, but he says, no, I got to get going. I said, "Do you have a place to stay tonight?" He says, "I'll be fine." And he walks away and I go and I get in my car and on this hot summer afternoon and I'm weeping because I believe with all my heart



that I've seen an angel. Or Jesus in human form, or maybe he sent the Apostle John. I don't know, you know, whatever about whatever. And I love the 30 ish and sandals and, uh, beard. I mean, everything about it was just extraordinary. And then I, I finally, it's like 10 minutes have passed before I regained my composure. And I'm thanking God, because I was thinking I was going to be ministering to somebody else, but God sent someone to minister to me.

And that, by the way, happens sometimes, when you say, okay, I want to serve. I want to give. It's like Jesus says in Luke 6, "Give and it will be given to you." Spilling over out of your lap. Prosperity theology says that's so you can only buy the best cars and have the best vacations and the best houses and this, all this kind of stuff. And Jesus says, no, it's spilling out of your lap. It means it's going back out from you. God entrusted to us that we can just keep giving it away. And that's what we've seen over the years with giving away all the royalties from my books that have sold over 11 million copies is just seeing ministries and lives touched forever.

But to finish this story, I get in my car and I'm driving down the road and I got, I don't know, half a mile down the road. I look over to the left side of the road and they're standing, leaning against a Petco of all places is John, this guy that I met. And he's drinking from my large bottle of water, because the whole thing of what if you give somebody a cup of water I'll not forget it or all, that so I want her to be a big deal and um, and he waves at me and it's the kind of wave and the kind of smile that says, "See you later." And I believe with all my heart. I will see him later. Whoever he was. I'll find out one day.

This is the adventure of the Christian life when it comes to giving. And this is why if people view giving as just a duty driven thing,

Crystal Keating:

Right.

Randy Alcorn:

"I get no joy out of it. I'm just doing it because I have to and God tells me to." Jesus said in Acts 20 verse 35, he said something that is the only statement of Jesus that is in the book of Acts, but isn't in any of the Gospels. And what he said is, "It is more happy making to give than to receive." Now unfortunately, it is translated, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." I've got a whole chapter, a couple of chapters really, in my book on happiness about what this word "makarios" means in the Greek language. You look it up in any lexicon. It is the standard Greek word for happiness, happy, happy making.

So, we say blessed, and 200 years ago in the English language, blessed, you look it up in Noel Webster's dictionary. And the first definition was happy, happy. That's what it meant in English and as translated from the Hebrew and Greek words. But now, blessed isn't a happy word, it's a holy word. I mean, like people talk about the Blessed Virgin Mary, they're not talking about her happiness. And I just wish the translations would not just follow the tradition in these key passages.



Same thing in the Beatitudes. "Happy are those who are meek... Happy are the peacemakers." That's what the word means. But when it comes to giving, here's that one word of Jesus in Acts that isn't elsewhere. It is more happy making to give than to receive, and people are missing out on happiness by being stingy. Well, think of scrooge and the Christmas Carol, think of the word "miser." What word does it make you think of? Like, miserable? Yeah, misers are miserable. In other words, to be stingy, to hold on to your stuff, your money and possessions, is to live a miserable life. To open up your hands and arms and freely give to help others is the key to a happy life.

Crystal Keating:

That is so true. All of God's promises are true, but one of the promises that I continue to see over and over again in my life is God's abundant provision when I give. And so, I give happily because I know that it puts my heart in the right place when I'm storing up riches in heaven, and I'm putting my treasure where God would want it. But then I also see him provide in some really abundant and miraculous ways. It's kind of a way that God has really built my faith as I've stepped out and done things that maybe, I don't know, I wouldn't do that if I didn't know that he was there taking care of me. And I know that it's for eternal purposes. So, and I know Eternal Perspectives Ministries have been supporting Joni and Friends for many years and 90 other ministries, is that right?

Randy Alcorn:

I think that's right. Yeah.

Crystal Keating:

It's amazing. Well, as we close our time together do you have any final words of encouragement about our great God and his promises of heaven? Especially to those who are listening, who may be facing a difficult disability, suffering, or painful earthly hardships?

Randy Alcorn:

I would say for sure, Jesus says in Revelation 21, just after talking about the new heavens, the new earth, God will come down and dwell among his people. Then it says, he will wipe away the tears from every eye. There will be no more sorrow, no more death, no more suffering, no more pain, no more anything bad, fill in the blank, and all will be good. He will make all things right. That is the promise of heaven. And sometimes the word hope, in English, and the way that we use it, is just too weak of a word. When scripture talks about hope, it's talking about the blood bought promises of God.

Jesus shed his blood to assure that these promises will be kept. This is not like some vain hope and, "Well, there's a fairly good chance that, that promise will be kept." No. He stakes





everything. He staked his life on it. He paid the price for us. So, the promise that he will wipe away the tears from every eye is a promise that should encourage us every day.

Talk about something you've, front load into your life today, no matter how hard your life is, no matter how you might even be tempted to take your own life, that you might be tempted to despair, to give up hope entirely. God promises, no, I am with you always. Not, one day I'll be with you. Right now, I am with you. I am with you. I am in you. Romans 8 alone, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. He that gave us what he did in Christ, how shall he not freely give us of all things. Nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ. He causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose. And that's less than half of the promises in Romans 8 alone. And that's one chapter of the Bible. And, I just I think we need to look at God's promises, cling to them, and certainly we need to surround ourselves with fellow believers who can help us. And for people who are disabled, people who are weak and needy, sometimes they're alone, they're on their own, everything we can do to reach out to those people in the name of Jesus.

Not only writing checks to help people in other places. But going down the street to visit this widow, to care for this orphan. To take a child into your home and foster care or to adopt. To take a special needs child that is low on the list of other people's priorities that are never going to be adopted by some people and say, "No, we're going to go out of our way and we're going to do that." And God will bless you and God will reward you. And if he's not going to overlook so much as a cup of cold water given to one of these needy in my name, he said, and that's a promise that's absolutely true, how's he going to reward people who open up their hearts and lives and invest years, decades, sometimes a lifetime, to care for somebody with special needs?

"In as much as you have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, so you have done it unto me," Jesus said. So, when you open up your heart and your life to those people, you do it as if to Christ. And, I will say it again, nobody's asked me to say this, but I will say for sure, when you write out a check to Joni and Friends, and every time we do, every time we send a check, and try to make sure it's a pretty large check, but when we send it, I don't have the slightest amount of doubt that it's an investment in God's kingdom.

And I think if you want to be sure of something, choose carefully. Be sure that you give to, and are part of, a church that teaches God's word and faithfully follows Jesus. Be sure that when you give to a ministry, you know what's, where it's going, how it's being used, and you have reason to trust. And we often recommend to people different ministries that we support, because we vet them, and we check into them, and we look at different things, and if anybody ever wants to ask us we're always glad and certainly one of the top ones we would recommend is Joni and Friends.

Crystal Keating:

Well, that means the world to us that you trust us and that our ministry really is for the kingdom of God. That we're here to equip the church, to evangelize and disciple people with disabilities worldwide, and we're going to make God's house full. So Randy, thank you for your time today. Thank you for putting our minds back on the promises of God and eternity. It's such a pleasure to speak with you.



Randy Alcorn:

Pleasure to be with you. Thank you.

Stephanie:

Wow. This episode hit me square between the eyes. Back when I worked in retail, seeing new clothes out daily made me crazy. I just had to have the next cute new thing. After almost 11 years in the retail industry, you can imagine what my closet looked like. Bursting at the seams with stuff, but I was never satisfied. My mom told me one day, "You know, you get to the point where you don't own the things, the things own you." My mother's wisdom has always stuck with me and is rooted in Matthew chapter six, verses 19 through 21, which says, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moths and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moths and rust do not destroy, where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

In a culture that tells us to hold on tightly to what we have, God calls us to open our hearts and our hands, because the treasures of this earth won't last. Generosity is not just about fulfilling a command, it's about aligning our hearts with the heart of our creator. His heart is generous, and he made you and me in such a way that we'll find deep satisfaction when we follow his example. This is truly how the Kingdom of God works.

When you give, you make an investment that will never be lost, and it will pay off forever in heaven. But it also pays off here and now. As Jesus says, it's more happy making to give than to receive. And on the flip side, being stingy makes us miss out on the fruit of our generosity.

I want to encourage you today, friend, our God is the ultimate giver. So, follow his example! Whether it's being generous with your time, your treasure, or your talents, choose to bless someone around you. With every ounce of generosity, every little act of kindness, you'll cultivate a love for the things that move God's heart through giving.

Crystal Keating:

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