

## REVELATION IN GENEROSITY: An Advisor's Transformation from Accumulating, Building, and Protecting to Releasing for Kingdom Purpose

2009 was definitely a year of transformation in my life. First, I was notified that my services in management for the firm I worked with for 32 years were no longer needed. I, too, was a casualty in the downturn of our economy. My compensation was too high and my long-term experiences were no longer considered necessary and good for company growth. Fear had gripped corporate America at all levels and now it had hit me and my family, too.

With the grace and mercy of God and the counsel of wise and Godly men, I was given exactly the peace and direction I needed to tread the waters of corporate downsizing. The Lord gave me clarity and a peaceful approach to discussing and reviewing my first transition package with the appropriate corporate leader. As a result, the revised package was approximately double the original offer. What a real blessing and confirmation to me that God was in control! Praise be to Him! That was March 6, 2009.

Easter was soon upon us as I was enjoying a slower pace and less travel. It was April 11<sup>th</sup> and my parents were coming to our house to celebrate Easter with us. As I was driving that Saturday—my wife's birthday—to pick up Mom and Dad, I had a call from Trudy, my wife, that my dad had called and was not well. He wanted to stay home as he didn't want to get hung up at our house with a sickness. Little did either of us know it would only be two weeks and my dad, at age 96, would relocate to be in his permanent home with the Lord on April 24, 2009. It was certainly a real blessing that the Lord provided the time that my sister, brother and I were allowed to be with Dad those final days and hours until his relocation to his eternal home. Praise God for allowing all our family and friends to be with him. Dad was blessed by our Lord in many ways, but his last blessing was to stay home and be cared for and to pass onto his eternal home right from the home he and mom had built over the last 50+ years. WOW! God is generous as he gave me a wonderful father here on earth who loved the Lord, his family, his local church, and the community where he ran a business with my mom and raised three children. What a wonderful role model my heavenly father gave me to model my earthly life after. Praise God, for all blessings flow from Him!

The next five months of helping care for my 90-year-old mother, whose health went downhill quickly after Dad's passing, were a real testament to the generous Lord and Savior she and my dad loved. Mom had Alzheimer's disease and each day, and sometimes hours, brought on new experiences for our conversations with Mom. The one thing this disease couldn't take from my mother was her holy spirit and the ability to pray each morning and night. WOW! How powerful it was for me to listen to her, knowing it was God's power of the Spirit speaking through her as he had always done. He continued to provide this generous gift of prayer, even up to her final weeks here on earth. Mom went home to be with her Savior and be reunited with her husband of 70+ years September 23, 2009. Praise God for her homecoming!

The effects of all this in my life were not realized until we were looking back at how He not only gave me birth, but the gift of loving parents who provided for me beyond the basics. He died for me before I was even thought of and when I came to know him as my personal Savior, he once again gave me a new life, the experience of life that assures my eternal salvation. Praise God, once again, for His generosity in my life!

After the death of my father in the spring of 2009, I attended a professional advisors education program hosted by our local Christian foundation, Servant Christian Community. At this meeting, Dan Busby, President of the ECFA, was our speaker and he spoke about the new book, Revolutions in Generosity, that he highly recommended (as I do, too) for anyone involved in helping the body (including ourselves) with our challenges with being a more generous people as we serve a mighty and generous God. It helped me to start thinking deeper as a follower of Christ and as a professional advisor, was I truly a generous person?

The key for me was the book, written by over 25 authors respected in this area and edited by Wesley Wilmer, focused on the heart of the matter. The key was, were we focused on what and how God does for His people everyday and minute as He is generous with His love toward us. Are we, in turn, releasing our hearts back to Him with our love and having an open hand with all that he has blessed us with? Are we investing time in serving others in and through our local churches? Are we mentoring others with these God-given experiences so that they will not make some of the same mistakes we may have made in our families, raising kids, marriages, work and career challenges, etc. The list goes on! The key is, are we seeking to help and serve our brothers and sisters—i.e. our neighbors—loving them as much as we love ourselves, as commanded by our God? And, of course, how are we managing our finances? Are we being wise stewards or are we simply building bigger barns to store up more for ourselves, for our firms, and our own businesses (i.e. assets under management)? How are we counseling our clients and other spheres of influence with what's been entrusted to them to manage? Are we helping them to address their issues around stuff, homes, cars, college educations, 401K's and their giving to their local church and other ministries? Are we showing good leadership with our own lives and families and businesses in this area of generosity? Are we stepping out and giving advice that is contrary to our culture as a Christian? Is our worldview shared actively or passively with those who are looking to us as their advisor/counselor? Do we believe that God will abundantly provide more than we will ever need personally? Or do we have a sacristy mentality?

These types of questions are addressed both in this book and also through the training and resources I've been so blessed to be exposed to by my local church, Christ Community, Kingdom Advisors, Servant Christian Community Foundation (SCCF), National Christian Foundation, Crown Ministries, Generous Giving, and Chartered Advisors in Philanthropy through The American College. This has and continues to be

a journey for me and my family and a maturing process as I advise clients and other advisors in being more intentional with our advice, leadership and counsel when it comes to generosity with all that God has given us and continues to provide to us.

I have a long way to go with helping the poor, homeless, widows and orphans of my community and world, but I believe God is calling me to be a light in this revolution of excess stuff and possessions and to work with advisors and clients (all my spheres of influence) to ask them the tough questions in these areas of their lives so they will be challenged by what God wants them to do in these important decisions. I don't know how God wants them to answer these questions for themselves, but I do know that he wants me to be bold in this area and to witness to others how truly freeing generosity is when we embrace and experience what it does for each of us and our families. God desires us to be free of the control our stuff has over our lives so that we can experience the joy and love of helping our neighbors locally and around the world. My role is to continue to grow and mature in my own generosity and to obey Christ as I serve all of his people with advice, leadership and counsel with an open hand. I have a long way to go but I'm excited for the future as I believe this is the time for us to be generous with all He has blessed us with: time, talent, and treasures! We can and should be the light in a dark world for our clients and their loved ones. Financial freedom allows generosity in our lives and the ability to invest into the lives of others. Praise God!

Personally, for me, one of the key areas of my faith journey and walk with the Lord deals with my giving above and beyond first fruits giving. Over the last decade, we have been blessed with growth in our family's net worth. We opened a donor advised fund (DAF) with SCCF (our local Christian foundation) that is affiliated with National Christian foundation. We also refer to it as a giving bank where we identify of this increase what should be put aside for kingdom work. We use this to give to our local church and a few key ministries that we have become involved with that have made a difference in our lives, like our church has. After my mother died, but before we had her funeral, I was able to discuss with my brother and sister the idea of setting up a family foundation honoring Mom and Dad and their core beliefs: the local church, outreach for homeless, and children/youth outreach.

They agreed that it would be good and they wanted to participate in this with some of their inheritance. So we opened the DAF in my parents name and right before Mom's funeral, shared with the grandchildren and great-grandchildren what we were doing and that these funds would be available for giving by us, the grandchildren, and great-grandchildren for the three areas mom had outlined in her letter to the family. This is where my real joy was so high, having the family as a whole, mentally tied together through mom and dad's foundation. My wife and I committed to give 10% of our inheritance to this plus all of my executor's fee as trustee of their estate.

This is where I started to feel God nudging me onto a more generous heart, especially since we were blessed with a nice increase in our net worth from the inheritance to be received. After prayer and talking it over with my bride of 30+ years, we decided to first finish paying off the home mortgage which was our only debt not yet paid off. Praise God for that blessing he generously gave us! Then, of course, we were still far from doing what God wanted us to do with this increase. Our local church, which we have been part of for nearly 13 years, had just announced a Greater Things Faith Initiative shortly after Mom went to her permanent home with Dad. The influence of the local church had been huge in my life as a young child growing up in church and my mom's influence was definitely felt here. Mom attended the same church for 73 years and all of the 70+ years Mom and Dad were married, they were active in serving others in the church. Praise God for this example in my life as it has helped to set me on this course personally and with our family.

Now, back to commitment #2 of the inheritance. We decided that the original 10% should be increased to 1/3 (plus the executor/trustee fee) for kingdom work. The majority of this would go to our local church's Greater Things Faith Initiative and the remainder used to work in and through the lives of our family, in areas of giving and serving both here at home and in the world.

So, now our journey of generosity is moving forward as God is continuing to work in and through us individually and collectively as a family. Praise God for all he is doing!

Recently, I just attended a 24 Journey of Generosity hosted by Generous Giving for Kingdom Advisors. This experience has further led to new areas of thought and prayer necessary for me and my family to continue on this journey. It is clear to me our lives are called to be ones that are free from the stuff of this world--bigger homes, more toys--and more to walk in faith and with contentment personally. As I'm content with where God has me and the path he has me on, then I can be more aware of the generosity of all my gifts from God—my talents, skills, passions, and treasures. He will then be able to use me right where he has placed me. With my family, church and community focused on making an impact for Kingdom Purpose by how I live and share with others what God has so freely blessed me with!

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