

Grace Church Presents

CRAZY GENEROSITY

RICK LONG



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FOREWORD BY **RICK LONG**



GENEROSITY
IS AT THE
CORE OF THE
CHARACTER
OF GOD.

We all have the power to bring change and life to others. It happens every day, all around us. Whether you are sharing with a neighbor, taking a pay cut to help a fellow employee, reaching out to people in need, agreeing to be an organ donor, or just giving an encouraging word, you are being generous. Imagine a world where generosity was the rule, rather than the exception. A world where we give freely without expecting anything in return.

The spiritual norms of Christian life include prayer, worship, and faith, but for many Christians, generosity is optional. Others are simply unwilling to sacrifice their own comfort for the benefit of others. This study will consider generosity from a Biblical perspective, and elevate it from optional to holy and sacred, where it belongs.

Generosity is at the core of the character of God. It was based upon His virtue of giving good things freely and liberally, that God sent Jesus to redeem and rescue us (John 3:16). We cannot have a meaningful relationship with God without addressing the issue of generosity.

I know what you are thinking, but this study is about so much more than money. All of our resources, whether they be time, talents, treasures, or trust, are gifts from God, and we need to honor God in the way we utilize them.

When God changes your heart from self-centered to generous, you begin to know freedom and transformation in every part of your life. This book will start you on the path to Crazy Generosity.

A more generous world is a better world.

Pastor Rick Long
Grace Church of Arvada
Arvada, CO



WELCOME TO **GENEROSITY**

Welcome to Crazy Generosity. You may be asking, “Why Generosity?” and “Why Crazy Generosity?” Those are very good questions.

God is generous. He is not just generous, but He is “crazy” generous. God gave His own Son. No one’s generosity can top that. God’s generosity extends to other precious gifts He’s given to us. In addition to salvation, God has given us our life and breath, our time, our talent, and our treasure. The beauty of generosity isn’t merely the receiving of gifts, but the giving of gifts. We are most like God when we are generous.

Crazy Generosity isn’t an appeal to the church building fund. Crazy Generosity is an invitation to a life of freedom from the demands of life and materialism that weighs us down. Crazy Generosity frees us from the demands of the “have to’s” and releases us to the joys of the “want to’s.” After all, what’s more rewarding, paying a bill because someone demands it or giving a gift no one expects? Join us on a journey that is both crazy and wonderful and discover a freedom in Christ you’ve never experienced before.

Crazy Generosity integrates what you are learning in church on the weekends with what you’re studying in your small group and with your individual times with God.

In the context of your small group, you’ll dig deeper into the topics and scriptures you’ve heard in the weekend messages. In that faith community, you will learn, discuss and grow. On your own between meetings, you’ll be guided through rich devotional times that again integrate with what you’re learning and experiencing at church and in your group.

This study consists of four sessions, each focused on different aspects of generosity. Now, please be assured no one is asking for something you don’t have. But, think about the things you have been given: time, talent and treasure.

You’ll have a chance to learn together, to discuss and share your own stories in a way that focuses on practical real-life application as you find your story in the story of God’s amazing generosity.

USING THIS WORKBOOK

Tools To Help You Have a Great Small Group Experience!

1. Notice in the Table of Contents there are two sections: Sessions and Appendices. Familiarize yourself with the Appendices. Some of them will be used in the sessions themselves.
2. Use this workbook as a guide, not a straight jacket. If the group responds to the lesson in an unexpected but honest way, go with that. If you think of a better question than the next one in the lesson, ask it. Take to heart the insights included in the Frequently Asked Questions pages and Appendices.
3. Enjoy your small group experience.
4. Read the Outline of Each Session on the next pages so you understand how the sessions will flow.

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OUTLINE OF EACH SESSION

Life change happens in small groups. In the setting of community, we can obey Jesus' command to love one another. In this study, you'll not only read and discuss biblical texts, you'll think and talk about how to apply what you've learned to your everyday life. The goal is not that you'd accumulate knowledge, but that your life would be transformed, and your character will reflect that of Jesus Christ.

A TYPICAL GROUP SESSION FOR THIS STUDY WILL INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS:

1. WEEKLY MEMORY VERSES

Each session opens with a Memory Verse that emphasizes an important truth from the session. This is an optional exercise, but we believe that memorizing Scripture can be a vital part of filling our minds with God's will for our lives. We encourage you to give this important habit a try. The verses for our four sessions are also listed in the appendix.

2. INTRODUCTION

Each lesson opens with a brief thought that will help you prepare for the session and get you thinking about the particular subject you will explore with your group. Make it a practice to read these before the session.

3. SHARE YOUR STORY

The foundation for spiritual growth is an intimate connection with God and His family. You build that connection by sharing your story with a few people who really know you and who earn your trust. This section includes some simple questions to get you talking—letting you share as much or as little of your story as you feel comfortable doing. Each

session typically offers you two options. You can get to know your whole group by using the icebreaker question(s), or you can check in with one or two group members, your spiritual partner(s), for a deeper connection and encouragement in your spiritual journey.

4. STUDY NOTES

This is a brief section with additional commentary, background or insights on the passage you'll study in the Hear God's Story section.

5. HEAR GOD'S STORY

In this section, you'll read the Bible and listen to teaching, in order to hear God's story—and begin to see how His story aligns with yours. When the study directs you to, you'll pop in the DVD and watch a short teaching segment. You'll then have an opportunity to read a passage of Scripture, and discuss both the teaching and the text. You won't focus on accumulating information, but on how you should live in light of the Word of God. We want to help you apply the insights from Scripture practically and creatively, from your heart as well as your head. At the end of the day, allowing the timeless truths from God's Word to transform our lives in Christ should be your greatest aim.



6. CREATE A NEW STORY

God wants you to be a part of His Kingdom—to weave your story into His. That will mean change. It will require you to go His way rather than your own. This won't happen overnight, but it should happen steadily. By making small, simple choices, we can begin to change our direction. This is where the Bible's instructions to "be doers of the Word, not just hearers" (James 1:22) comes into play. Many people skip over this aspect of the Christian life because it's scary, relationally awkward, or simply too much work for their busy schedules. But Jesus wanted all of His disciples to know Him personally, carry out His commands, and help outsiders connect with Him. This doesn't necessarily mean preaching on street corners. It could mean welcoming newcomers, hosting a short-term group in your home, or walking through this study with a friend. In this study, you'll have an opportunity to go beyond Bible study to biblical living. This section will also have a question or two that will challenge you to live out your faith by serving others, sharing your faith, and worshiping God.

7. FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

If you have time and want to dig deeper into more Bible passages about the topic at hand, we've provided additional passages and questions. Your group may choose to read and prepare ahead of each meeting in order to cover more biblical material. If you prefer not to do study homework, this section will provide you with plenty to discuss within the group. These options allow individuals, or the whole group, to expand their study while still accommodating those who can't do homework or are new to your group.

8. DAILY DEVOTIONS

Each week, the Daily Devotions pages will take you slowly through a passage of Scripture, one or two verses at a time. Begin by reading through all the verses to get the context and big picture. Then, dive deep into each verse, asking God to speak to you through it. This provides you with a chance to slow down, read just a small portion of Scripture each day, and reflect and pray through it. You'll then have a chance to journal your response to what you've read. Use this section to seek God on your own throughout the week. This time at home should begin and end with prayer. Don't get in a hurry; take enough time to hear God's voice through his word.



SESSION ONE

TIME

**“Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”
– Psalm 90:12, NIV**



Time has become a more precious commodity for many of us than money. Ask someone a simple question like, “How are you?” and they’re likely to say, “Busy!” or even “Stressed!” Such answers come from people who feel hurried. They may feel as though they are suffering from a poverty of time, rather than material things. We’ve got the basics of food, shelter, and a few extras. But we never have enough time. That makes our time precious—and no matter how hard we work, we cannot buy more time. It is truly a sacrifice when we give our time to anything, especially if it is for the

sake of others. We give a lot of our time to work, but that ultimately benefits us and our family, but not other people—especially those in need. While the Bible doesn’t talk directly about “time management,” it is clear those who followed Jesus “left everything” to follow Him. Jesus didn’t get a few hours of their week—all their time was focused on Him. God has given you the precious gift of a life—all your time is a gift from Him. How will you steward your time well? That doesn’t necessarily mean “getting things done” for God. It might have more to do with where you focus as you go through your day.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A PART OF THE KINGDOM OF
GOD WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR TIME?



SHARE YOUR STORY

Each of us has a story. The events of our life—good, bad, challenging, or wonderful—have shaped who we are. God knows your story, and He intends to redeem it—to use every struggle and every joy to ultimately bring you to Himself. When we tell our stories, sharing them with others, we give others the opportunity to see God at work. When we share our stories, we realize we are not alone—that we have common experiences and thoughts, and others can understand what we are going through. Your story can encourage someone else, and telling it can be a path to freedom for you, and also for those you share it with.

OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH PRAYER:

This should be a brief, simple prayer, in which you invite God to give you insight as you study. You can pray for specific requests at the end of the meeting, or stop momentarily to pray if a particular situation comes up during your discussion.



As you begin at this first meeting, take time to pass around a copy of either the Small Group Roster (page 105), or a blank sheet of paper. Have everyone write down their contact information. Ask someone to make copies or type up a list with everyone's information and email it to the group and your small group pastor this week.

BEGIN YOUR TIME TOGETHER BY USING THE FOLLOWING
QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES TO GET PEOPLE TALKING:

- When life gets busy, what are you busy doing? In other words, what specific activities consume your time?
- What are you hoping to get out of this group?
- What do you think it means to manage your time well?
- What gets in the way of doing that?

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KEY INSTRUCTIONS

Whether your group is new or ongoing, it's always important to reflect on and review your values together. On pages 90-92 is a Small Group Agreement with the values we've found most useful in sustaining healthy, balanced groups. We recommend you choose one or two values—ones you haven't previously focused on or have room to grow in—to emphasize during this study. Choose ones that will take your group to the next stage of intimacy and spiritual health. If your group is new, welcome newcomers.

Introduce everyone—you may even want to have name tags for your first meeting. We recommend you rotate host homes on a regular basis and let the hosts lead the meeting. We've come to realize healthy groups rotate leadership. This helps to develop every member's ability to shepherd a few people in a safe environment. Even Jesus gave others the opportunity to serve alongside Him (Mark 6:30-44). Look at the FAQs in the Appendix for additional information about hosting and leading the group.

The Small Group Calendar on page 93 is a tool for planning who will host and lead each meeting. Take a few minutes to plan hosts and leaders for your remaining meetings. Don't pass this up! It will revolutionize your group.



WATCH THE DVD

Use the Notes space provided to record any key thoughts, questions, and things you want to remember or follow up on. After watching the video, have someone read the discussion questions and direct the discussion among the group. As you go through each of the subsequent sections, ask someone else to read the questions and direct the discussion.

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HEAR GOD'S STORY

God uses stories to guide us. When we read the true stories of Scripture, we learn what God is like, we see His plan unfolding. And we learn principles for our own lives. How can we become a part of God's story? By aligning our stories with His. By not just understanding, but by actually doing it—changing our attitudes and actions to live as He would live. Use the following questions to guide your discussion of the teaching and stories you just experienced, and the Bible passage below. You may want to use the study notes on page 22 to guide your reading and discussion.

READ LUKE 10:38-42 (NLT)

³⁸ As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹ Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me." ⁴¹ But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details!" ⁴² There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."



READING QUESTIONS

Martha and Mary were both with Jesus. How did each react to Him?
How would you describe Martha's priorities? Mary's priorities?

Verse 39 says Martha was "distracted." What do you think that means?
What sort of things do you imagine she was saying and doing?
What was her attitude?

In what ways does Martha make a valid point? What are her strengths?

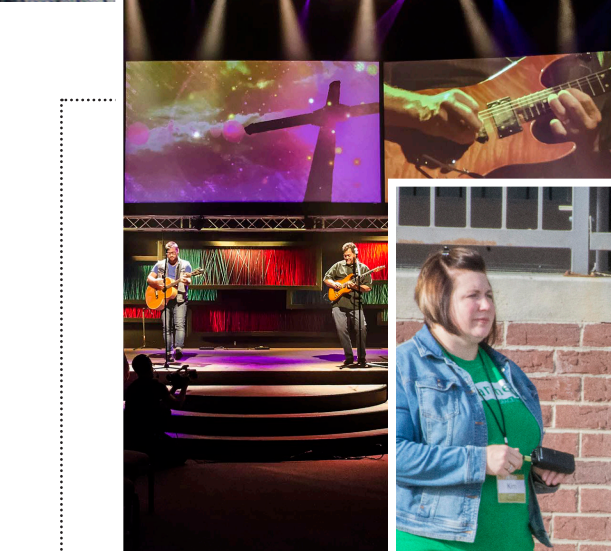
What do you think prompted Jesus to respond to Martha in the way
He did?

What is the "one thing" Jesus alluded to in verse 42?

STUDY NOTES

Mary, sat at the Lord's feet... To sit at a rabbi's feet was to take the position of a disciple. This was an unusual place to find a woman in Jesus' day. Martha's consternation may not just have been about the fact she felt overworked, but about the fact Mary's social impropriety made her uncomfortable or embarrassed. This was simply not the way things were done. But Jesus commends Mary, and in so doing, invites Martha to come and sit and listen as well. Even some of Jesus' disciples may have wondered at Mary joining their circle. And some of them may have had "Martha-like" tendencies, to focus more

on tasks than on relationship. Jesus is not saying what Martha chooses to do is wrong—but sitting with Him would be a better choice. Jesus uses Mary as a role model for what it really means to honor God with your time. "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair..." Martha's complaint, beyond being a bit passive aggressive, represents a struggle we all face—looking at other people and trying to tell them what they should be doing. You are not the steward of anyone else's time but your own. Resist the urge to control others or complain to God about what they are or are not doing.



CREATE A NEW STORY

God wants you to be a part of His Kingdom—to weave your story into His. That will mean change—to go His way rather than your own. This won't happen overnight—but it should happen steadily. By small, simple choices, we begin to change our direction. The Holy Spirit helps us along the way—giving us gifts to serve the body, offering us insights into Scripture, challenging us to love not only those around us but those far from God. In this section, talk about how you will apply the wisdom you've learned in this session.

If Jesus came to your house, as He did to Martha and Mary's, what would you do? Many of us work forty or more hours per week. Besides work, what takes up most of your time? What keeps you busy? Think about how you spend your time in any given week. How much time do you devote to doing tasks for God (volunteering or serving in some way)? How much time do you spend just sitting at His feet? Do you relate more to Martha or Mary? Are you more task-oriented (to the point where you sometimes ignore people) or are you more people-oriented (to the point where you forget to get tasks done)? How can you follow Mary's example? What exactly would that look like—sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to Him?

We often feel like we don't have enough time. But how much time do you spend watching television or surfing social media? If you think not that much, keep a time log in the coming week, and write down how much "screen time" you log (besides for work): social media, television, video games, etc. This week, how will you sit at Jesus' feet? Can you commit to spending time in daily prayer or study of God's Word (use the Daily Devotions section to guide you)? Tell the group how you plan to follow Jesus this week, and then, at your next meeting, talk about your progress and challenges.

TO CLOSE YOUR TIME TOGETHER

- **SPEND SOME TIME WORSHIPING GOD TOGETHER.** Praying, singing and reading Scripture.
- **HAVE SOMEONE USE THEIR MUSICAL GIFTS TO LEAD THE GROUP IN A WORSHIP SONG.** Try singing A Capella, using a worship CD or having someone accompany your singing with a musical instrument.
- **READ A PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE TOGETHER.** Making it a time of praise and worship as the words remind you of all God has done for you. Choose a Psalm or other favorite verse.
- **ASK EVERYONE TO SHARE.** "How can we pray for you this week?" Be sure to write prayer requests on your Prayer and Praise Report on page 104.

CLOSE YOUR MEETING WITH PRAYER.



ADDITIONAL STUDY

If you feel God nudging you to go deeper, take some time between now and our next meeting to dig into His word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session's theme on your own, jotting your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations. You may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

READ LUKE 10:30-37

- The Parable of the Good Samaritan calls us to radically love our neighbor and have compassion and mercy on all people, even those we'd rather avoid.
- How often do we say we would love to help others but we're too busy? In other words, we are saying we don't have time.
- How much time did the Samaritan have to invest in order to help the man? What did helping cost him, in terms of both time and money?
- Can you think of a recent situation where you could have shown compassion, but didn't because you were in a hurry or didn't have time? How would you describe Martha's priorities? Mary's priorities?

READ MARK 1:35-39

- What does this passage tell us about how Jesus managed His time?
- The verses preceding Mark 1:35 describe what sounds like a busy time for Jesus. Have you ever felt too busy to pray? How did Jesus respond to His full schedule?
- How can you follow Jesus' example in this passage?



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DAILY DEVOTIONS

Welcome to a devotional experience that will draw you closer to Jesus. Each day, read the verse given. Take your time. Imagine Jesus is sitting with you. Then, imagine Him saying the words in the “reflect” section to you—reassuring you with His presence and loving you with His words of comfort and strength. After reflecting on Jesus’ words to you, take some time to journal your response to Him. You can write whatever is on your heart. Answer the “respond” question only if it’s helpful. You may want to go another direction and that is exactly what you’re free to do. On the first day, you may want to read over all the verses for the week to get the “big picture” of the passage. But then walk slowly verse by verse, listening to Jesus and responding to Him as you meditate on the truths of Scripture and experience His presence.

DAY 1 // READ PSALM 39:4

Show me, Lord, my life’s end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is.

REFLECT: Because I love you, I’ve given you an amazing gift—life! But as you know, it goes by quickly. Compared to eternity, your life here on earth is short and fleeting. So make the most of it. Let me help you live a life that’s meaningful—a life of significance, rather than just success. Seek My guidance for wisdom in how to best live every day, because you know life is short.

RESPOND: If you knew you only had a short time to live, what would you do differently with your time?

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DAY 2 // READ PSALM 39:5

You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Everyone is but a breath, even those who seem secure.

REFLECT: Life is precious, and goes by quickly. In certain seasons, the days seem long (and perhaps difficult), but the years will seem short when you look back. Don't trust in the things of this life and this world—put your trust in Me, and I'll help you to make the most of your one and only life.

RESPOND: What is one thing you want to change about how you manage your time, when you think about how short life is? What have you been putting off until “someday” that perhaps God is calling you to do now?

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DAY 3 // READ PSALM 39:6

Surely everyone goes around like a mere phantom; in vain they rush about, heaping up wealth without knowing whose it will finally be.

REFLECT: You live a hurried life. You're always rushing, always feeling like you can't keep up with all the tasks you have to do. You're seeking more stuff, more money, a better house or car. Stop rushing, and take a moment to just breathe. Come and sit at My feet, listen to Me. Let Me tell you how much I love you. Simply enjoy My presence. That's really the best way to use your precious time.

RESPOND: Think of a time recently when you were rushing about? What drives you to hurry and rush?

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DAY 4 // READ PSALM 39:7

But now, Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you.

REFLECT: What are you looking for, My child? Why are you so busy? I know all the things you feel you need to do—work, family, church, and more all compete for a spot on your calendar, an hour (or way more!) of your time. Focus on Me, and all these things will find their rightful place. Hope in Me, trust in Me—My love will empower you, and help you.

RESPOND: What does it mean to put your hope in God? How does looking to Him and focusing on Him help you to manage your time?

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DAY 5 // READ PSALM 39:8

Save me from all my transgressions; do not make me the scorn of fools.

REFLECT: Here’s My promise: to rescue you, pick you up and turn you around. I want to put level ground under your feet and walk with you, guiding you all the way. Are you willing to follow Me, or do you want to go your own way? Choose wisely, and you can live a life without regrets.

RESPOND: What transgressions have you made with your time? How can you be a better steward of the time God has given you?

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DAY 6 // Use the following space to write any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at in this session and during your *Daily Devotions* time this week.

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GOD IS GENEROUS.

He is not just generous, but he is “crazy” generous. God gave His own Son. No one’s generosity can top that.

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Join us on a journey that is both crazy and wonderful and discover a freedom in Christ you’ve never experienced before.

PASTOR RICK LONG



Pastor Rick started preaching in 1980 at the Christian school he attended. He was commissioned and ordained in 1985 as a Youth Pastor and Worship Pastor and served in two different ministries. He founded Grace Church of Arvada in 1989 with his family and a few close friends.

Since 1999, Rick has been a Purpose Driven Church regional coach for Saddleback Church and Rick Warren’s Purpose Driven Ministries. He was part of the founding team of Dare2Share Ministries where he served for 11 years as the Worship Leader and a part of the teaching team. He has spoken at Promise Keepers and taught seminars at Purpose Driven conferences.

Rick and his wife Shelley have been married for 32 years and have a wonderful family: Jordan and his wife Kym, Brittany and her husband Chad, Brooklyn and Jared. Their greatest joy is spending time with their family and their four beautiful grandchildren.

