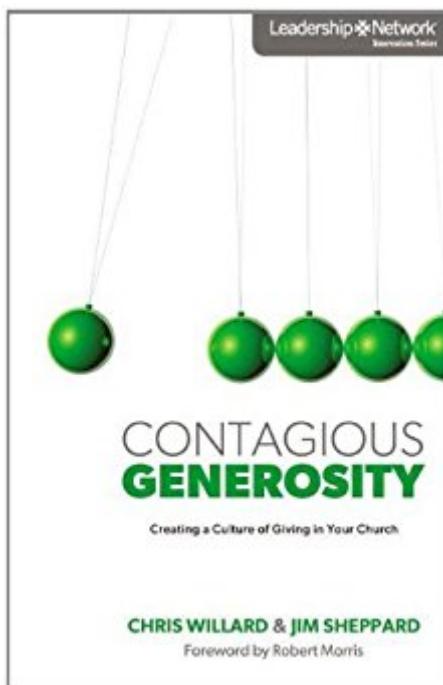


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# Contagious Generosity: Creating A Culture Of Giving In Your Church (Leadership Network Innovation Series)



## **Synopsis**

The general practices related to church funding aren't producing the same results they have in the past. There is a general acceptance that something has changed but little talk or interest is coming from traditional church leader training sources such as denominational entities and seminaries. Pastors are largely left to their own devices to figure this out. • They need a lifeline. While some churches are experiencing exponential growth, some churches - despite their best efforts - have been unsuccessful at moving beyond survival mode. Coupled with increased competition from other nonprofits and a decline in the commitment to give to the church first, churches risk losing the funding they need. A growing number of leaders are beginning to discover there is another way and are struggling to understand what makes one church generous and another not. There is a need in the market to offer a simple, working definition of generosity • and reveal the secrets • some church leaders seem to have simply stumbled upon which are resulting in unexplainable ministry growth and unprecedented church funding even in the midst of tough economic times. The content of this material was developed and refined by Jim Sheppard and Chris Willard through years of ministry leadership in the local church, consulting with church leaders across a broad spectrum of church settings, and through participation in and leadership of the Generous Church Leadership Community facilitated by Leadership Network. Of particular benefit will be the collection of observations and best practices gleaned during the Generous Church Leadership Community that originated within real-life church leadership situations and scenarios by highlighting specific challenges, methods, and successes.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

It is not enough for the church to talk about generosity, nor is it enough for individual Christians simply to commit to being generous; what makes generosity a real and powerful witness to God's love is our action, according to Chris Willard and Jim Sheppard in this book. Generosity flows from understanding that God is the owner of everything, and the resources we possess are assets to be invested in the kingdom. Interesting observations made by the authors include:<sup>\*</sup> One of the biggest mistakes church leaders make in the area of preaching about generosity is that they raise the issue only when they are trying to raise money<sup>\*</sup> Generosity needs to be a thread which runs through the mission and organisation of the entire church<sup>\*</sup> Generosity is cultivated by pastors when they celebrate giving which goes beyond the church as much as giving which goes to the church<sup>\*</sup> Scarcity is a cancer, for which generosity is the cure<sup>\*</sup> As a church leader, if you want to create a culture of generosity in your church, you will have to find a way to stay informed about the giving habits of your people<sup>\*</sup> Generous churches are led by generous pastors<sup>\*</sup> Conversations about money need to be connected to stories of changed lives<sup>\*</sup> Churches are notorious for taking their donors for grantedI found the book both enlightening and inspiring. When comparing church income with church expenditure, most pastors wish that they could encourage their members to become a little more generous. Ironically, a culture of generosity amongst the members of a church really starts flowing only when the church sets aside its own financial needs and demonstrates by example generosity in its giving to others.

The purpose of Willard and Sheppard's book *Contagious Generosity* is not to help churches raise funds, but to help churches create a culture of generosity that raises up generous stewards.

Generosity for them is "... a lifestyle in which we share all that we have, are, and every will become as a demonstration of God's love and a response to God's grace." The authors insist that it is what they want for you, not from you. Willard and Sheppard claim that money is perhaps the most

measurable aspect of our faith. Examining an individual's spending and giving patterns are an indicator of his faith commitment. Similarly examining a church's spending outside of itself gives an indication of the faith maturity of a church as a whole. Because individuals and churches can easily fall back into old selfish habits, a culture of generosity must be continually cultivated. The authors list six actions that leaders can take to develop a culture of generosity in a church: Build trust, Cast (and recast) vision, Shape culture, Demonstrate impact, Enhance relationships, Highlight good stewardship. *Contagious Generosity* has three parts: Church Development, Leadership Development, and Impact. At the end of every chapter is a summarized list of key ideas and a list of discussion questions. I recommend the book to church leaders who know their church is not generous and would like vision and tools for creating a culture of generosity.

This book radically changed my approach and understanding to generosity. For myself, this has been one of the woefully neglected areas of my ministry. I was one of those guys described in the book who felt it was a mark of holiness for me not to know who gives and really be completed ignorant of what was going on financially. After reading the book, I simply looked at stewardship/generosity in a new light. I am taking my leadership through the book and will be making sure that the concepts and principles therein will find their way throughout the church.

When I first saw the title of this book, I thought.. do we really need yet another book on giving as it relates to the Church? In fact, as recently as 2006 there was another book with the exact same title. But *CONTAGIOUS GENEROSITY* is an excellent resource, especially geared toward pastors and church administrators. Two of the main themes are that a culture of giving needs to be developed in congregations, and that being generous is in fact, quite contagious. Chapter 3, *GENEROSITY IS CONTAGIOUS*, is fittingly perhaps the best in the book. While definitely written for pastors and those in church leadership, any Christ follower will benefit greatly from reading and studying the concepts set forth in the book. The authors go to great lengths to remind the reader that generosity really should be the hallmark of the believer, in all areas of our lives. Lots of great advice and an easy read. Well worth the time and effort.

Generosity is not a one and done....or a practice to be exercised only when a church needs to raise money. Rather, it is a culture that must be permeated throughout your entire organization. Just think how much better off our local church and community would be if churches actually were generous in their giving at a Biblical level. I would suggest that we would never have to borrow a dime to

implement any ministry initiative...including construction tools/buildings.Well done Jim and Chris

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