

Lesson 12

A Generous Heart

TEACHER PREPARATION

KEY CONCEPTS

Having a generous heart is good for the individual and the community.

Greed is the opposite of generosity and can bring destruction to a person's well-being.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. understand the benefits of being a generous person.
2. understand the sad results of being a greedy person.
3. choose to develop generosity in their lives.

KEY TERMS

1. **Generosity:** willingness to give above what is asked or required.
2. **Greed:** excessive desire for wealth or possessions, stinginess.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What a different world it would be if people were filled with generosity! People do not intrinsically have this character trait at birth. Instead, we tend to naturally portray the opposite of generosity, which is greed. Like many of the previous character traits we desire our students to exhibit, this is a learned attitude. It needs to be modeled by teachers and parents. We can strategically plan activities and opportunities for students to participate in generous actions as a class and as an individual.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION

1. In **Discovering the Lesson**, you will need paper and three pairs of shoes. Each pair will have a note attached. Write the following messages on three pieces of paper.
*First note to attach to the oldest, most worn out pair of shoes – I have lost my job and my home. I live on the streets trying to find food wherever I can. I don't want to live this way, but I have not been

able to find a job for the past year. I hope one day to find work again and then I will feel like I can go back to my family.

*Second note to attach to a small child’s shoes – I am only three years old. My mama says she is taking me to the doctor because something is wrong with me. I don’t know what to think or do.

*Third note to attach to an elementary child’s shoes – I cannot hear very well. Sometimes other children make fun of me. I want to do my best, but sometimes I don’t know what I am supposed to do because I don’t hear what people say. I like to play games, but other children seem to be afraid of me. I want to tell them I like to have fun just like them – I just have a problem hearing well.

2. For the second activity in **Discovering the Lesson**, for **younger elementary students**, you will need to use the board or large paper; for **older elementary students**, you will need three sheets of paper for each group.
3. For **Applying the Lesson**, you will need to provide seven small slips of paper for each student, pencils and either an empty jar, can or envelope for each student. *[You could ask them to bring one of those items from home or simply fold paper to make an envelope for each student.]*
4. In **Sharing the Lesson**, you will need some materials depending on which project your class chooses to do.
5. For **Going Deeper**, you will need five coins, pebbles, beads or small pieces of paper for each student.

LESSON

BEGINNING THE LESSON

[Say to the students:] **Hector, Dugan and Trish have been learning about humility and trust. These are character traits they desire to possess in their own lives. Generosity is another trait that will help them have happy and fulfilled lives. It seems they are getting ready to discover the difference between greed and generosity!**

READINESS (5 minutes)

[Read to the students:] **Chapter 12 — The Gold Coin**

“Humility is tricky,” declared Hector as he looked at the Map of Wonders. “Humility seems to want to stay in



the background and not call attention to itself. But at the same time, it has to sing its song of putting others first and reminding us everything is not a competition.”

“So true! Let’s see what is next on our list!” asked Trish.

“What list?” replied Dugan.

“The list the Librarian gave us,” said Trish.

“I don’t remember any list,” continued Dugan.

“Sure you do. Humility was the first thing on the list,” insisted Trish.

“You made a list out of what she said?” added Hector.

“Of course! How do you expect to get anything done if you don’t keep a list?” demanded Trish. “The Librarian said pride, greed, cynicism, bitterness and indifference are polluting the Map of Wonders. And she said we needed to find the antidotes, or opposites, of these things in order to help the Map. We figured out the opposite of pride was humility ... now we need to figure out the rest of the antidotes.”

“Do you make lists for everything?” asked Dugan rather cautiously.

“Do you ever do something and later add it to your list so you can check it off?” added Hector.

“So what if I do?” said Trish.

“Well, not everyone makes lists,” said Hector.

“Then, how do you know if you’ve gotten everything done that needs to be done?” asked Trish.

“My head is starting to hurt,” smiled Dugan.

“So, what is the next thing on your list?” asked Hector.

“Hmm, let’s see. Greed is next,” said Trish confidently. “That means we need to figure out the opposite of being selfish and wanting everything for ourselves!”

The sea in the Map of Wonders right next to them began to create waves, which were lapping at their feet.

“Look what just washed up! A gold coin!” said Hector holding it up for Dugan and Trish to see.

“Wow! Can I have it?” exclaimed Dugan. “I’ve always wanted a gold coin!”

“Ah, I was sort of thinking it was mine, since I found it and all,” said Hector rather hesitantly.

“Oh, be that way,” said Dugan.

“What way?” asked Hector.

“Hey!” yelled Trish. “Guess what else just washed ashore?” holding

up another gold coin just like Hector's coin.

Before they knew what was happening, thousands upon thousands of gold coins began to pile up on the shore of the Map of Wonders.

"Here you go, Dugan," laughed Hector, flipping him the first coin he found.

"Feeling generous now?" said Dugan as he flipped the coin back to Hector and then scooped up fistfuls of coins for himself.

"STOP!" commanded the Librarian raising her arms before her.

Everything, except the three friends, froze right where it was. The waves ceased to move, suspended with gold coins caught in their green and white foam. The birds flying over other parts of the map simply hung in midair. Everything was silent.

"What just happened?" whispered Hector.

"You tell me," said the Librarian as she picked up one of the gold coins and flipped it up in the air.

"Does this have anything to do with greed or generosity?" asked Trish.

The Librarian raised her left eyebrow and managed to hold all three children's eyes with her gaze.

"Okay, okay ... I know when we only had one coin I was reluctant to give it to Dugan. But when there were more coins than anyone could want, I was ready to give him the coin," replied Hector.

"So, I guess that means it is easy to be generous with things when we have plenty of them," added Dugan.

"But is that really generosity?" continued Trish. "If Hector had given Dugan his only gold coin, that would have meant something. But now it is a pretty empty gesture."

"Generosity always come at a price, but not everything that is valuable is in short supply," said the Librarian.

"Like what?" blurted Dugan, who hadn't intended to ask his question right out loud.

"What are the opposites of cynicism, bitterness and indifference?" asked the Librarian.

"We already know trust is the opposite of cynicism," offered Hector.

"Maybe forgiveness would be the opposite of bitterness," said Trish.

"And I once heard most folks think hate is the opposite of love, but

it is really indifference, you know ... when you don't really care," added Dugan.

"A big helping of generosity, trust, forgiveness and love would go a long way in healing the Map of Wonders, don't you think?" smiled the Librarian. "And the supply of those things is only as limited as you make it."

As the three friends let her words sink in, the Librarian waved her arms once more and said, "START."

The birds continued their skyward journeys and the waves rhythmically lapped the shore — but all of the gold coins had disappeared except the one Hector first found.

He looked down at the coin he first found and said, "Hey, Dugan! Catch!" Then, he flipped the coin to his friend.

EXPLORE (10 minutes)

[Say to the students:] In our story, the Map of Wonders needs some help. The sea is lapping over onto the feet of our three friends. The sea brings Hector one gold coin. Of course, everyone wants it. When we are always thinking of ourselves and wanting things for ourselves, it is called greed. When we think of others, putting their needs before ours, we are showing generosity. Soon, many coins appeared, which made it easier for Hector to think about giving away a coin. What made the difference? [You should hear answers like: There were so many coins, it didn't matter to him if he gave one away; it wouldn't cost him much.]

Being generous will cost you something, but the rewards will be satisfying. It will not always cost you financially. Sometimes, it costs your time or emotions. Hector is learning about making a personal sacrifice for another person's good or happiness. What does Hector do at the end of the story when there is only one coin left? [He gave his one coin to Dugan.] Why do you think Hector did that? [You may hear answers like: It made him feel good; he was giving something that cost him; he wanted to make Dugan happy; he had learned the lesson about generosity; etc.] What do you think Dugan would have said? [Thanks, that was generous; that's OK you can keep it; it will be a treasure of mine.]

*[Lead the students in a discussion of what generosity means. Refer to the definitions in **Key Terms**. You may want to write the definition on the board. Older students can think of synonyms of generosity. Write those under the*

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definition. Some examples are bountiful, nobleness, goodness, unselfishness, charitable and benevolence.

*Next, lead a discussion of the antidote, or opposite, of generosity which is greed.] **What does it mean to be greedy?** [Refer to the definition listed in **Key Terms**. Write the synonyms of greed under its definition. Some examples are stinginess, selfishness and unkindness.]*

*[Say to the students:] **Why is it important to develop a generous character or heart?** [To become a happy person, we need to learn to be generous. It will bring a more fulfilling life.] **Why is it important not to develop a greedy heart?** [Greed will cause a person to always want more. They are never satisfied with what they have. It can lead to having a bitter attitude and even depression.]*

DISCOVER (30 minutes)

*[Say to the students:] **The name of this activity is Time, Talent and Treasure. These are the three main parts of our lives where we can be generous toward other people.** [Be sure they understand talents do not always involve sports or musical instruments – it can be sharing your knowledge of how to tie a shoe, ride a bike, etc. Treasure does not always involve a cost. Treasures can involve sharing love and kindness to others by writing notes or drawing a picture.]*

I have three pairs of shoes. I need three volunteers to come to the front of the room. I want each of you to hold one of the pairs of shoes in your hands. There is a story to go along with each pair. Please read the story out loud to the class [for younger elementary students, you can read the story out loud] and then I am going to ask you three questions:

- 1. How do you think the person who owns these shoes feels?**
- 2. What do you think this person needs most?**
- 3. Can you use your time, talent or treasure to help him or her?**

*[Do the shoe activity and lead the discussions.] **I want each of you to be thinking about how you can give your time, talent and treasure to someone else.***

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For Younger Elementary Students

[Do the next part of this activity as a class.]

For Older Elementary Students

I am going to divide you into groups of four or five. I will give each group three pieces of paper. At the top of one write "TIME," on another write "TALENT," and on the last one write "TREASURE." Together with your group, think how you could be generous to others in each area. Write a sentence for each idea you have. *[Give the groups 10-15 minutes to record their answers. Allow time for each group to share their answers. Make a list on the board of their examples of Time, Talent and Treasure. Encourage your students to follow through with some of their ideas of how they can be generous.]*

APPLY (10 minutes)

[Say to the students:] We are each going to make a "Blessing Jar"! I will give you an empty jar (or can or envelope) and seven slips of paper. I want you to think of ways you can be a blessing to someone else and write those ideas on your slips of paper. Each day this week, I want you to pull one of your blessing ideas out of the jar (can/envelope) and perform that act of generosity. You will be giving of yourself to someone else. I think you will be amazed at how good it feels deep inside your heart. At the end of the week, you can write down seven more blessings you can perform for others the next week and keep the blessings flowing!

SHARE (10 minutes)

[Say to the students:] It is very natural and easy for each of us to think about ourselves and what makes us happy. This lesson has been teaching us about the happiness that can come from thinking of others first and being generous with others. It is a funny thing ... it seems when we are generous with our time, talents and treasures, it ends up making us feel good, too! It seems we receive something back in our hearts when we give to others.

Today, I want you to brainstorm with me about a generous project we can do as a class. *[Depending on the age of your students, some ideas might include collecting toys and clothes for a family in need; going to an elderly person's house and cleaning up the yard; doing a project for the*

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school like cleaning, washing windows or cleaning the school yard; teaching a younger class a game; making paper flowers for someone special, etc. Generosity is often inconvenient or uncomfortable. Remember, it costs us something to be generous whether it is money, time, possessions or comfort. Plan a time for the class to do the activity they choose to do and then follow up after the project with a discussion about how it made them feel.]

ENDING THE LESSON

[Say to the students:] You have all been taught to be kind and share. We have learned generosity is a character trait that goes beyond kindness and sharing. Being generous is costly. It can cost you your time, your abilities or even your possessions. It is thinking of the needs of others without focusing on yourself. And yet, we have learned being generous often brings joy to our hearts!

GOING DEEPER (optional)

[Gather enough coins to give five to each student. You can substitute beads, pebbles or small pieces of paper for the five coins. Bring prizes (candy, fruit, etc.) or determine a reward (being your helper for a day, etc.) to be given to the student or students who end up with the fewest coins.]

[Say to the students:] Each of you is receiving five coins (or substitutes). We are going to play a game for five minutes. During this time, you can ask other students to give you one coin or you may give one coin to another student. If someone asks you for a coin, you must give it. If someone gives you a coin, you must receive it and say, "Thank you." You may not give more than one coin to the same person or receive more than one coin from the same person. At the end of the five minutes, we'll see who has the most coins.

[After the game has gone for five minutes, call time and have everyone return to their seats. Ask which student is the richest (has the most coins). Then, ask who has been the most generous (has the fewest coins). Give a prize or reward to the student (or students, if there is a tie) who have the fewest coins.]

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[Say to the students:] The subject of this lesson is generosity, and even though I didn't tell you before we began, the point of this game was to see who was the most generous with their coins.

Jesus taught his followers to be nice, loving and generous, not only to their friends, but to everyone!

[Ask a student to read the passage, or for younger students, read the passage to them.] **"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemies.' But I tell you, love your enemies. Pray for those who hurt you. If you do this, then you will be true sons of your Father in heaven. Your Father causes the sun to rise on good people and on bad people. Your Father sends rain to those who do good and to those who do wrong. If you love only the people who love you, then you will get no reward. Even the tax collectors do that. And if you are nice only to your friends, then you are no better than other people. Even people without God are nice to their friends** (*Matthew 5:43-47, International Children's Bible*).

[Ask the students:] **Why do you think Jesus wanted us to be kind and generous to everyone, not just to our friends?** *[Let one or more students respond.]* Jesus said God is generous (sending sun and rain) to everyone, not just to those who love and worship Him. So, Jesus wants us to be generous with everyone, not just our friends or other Christians.

PARENT-TEACHER CONNECTION

It is natural and easy for children (and for their parents and teachers) to think about ourselves, what we want and what makes us happy. This lesson focused on the joy that can come from thinking of others first and being generous with them. It is ironic – when we are generous with our time, talents and treasures, we end up feeling good, too! We receive something back when we give to others. When we give without expecting something in return, we can sometimes initiate an ascending spiral of gratefulness and reciprocal generosity.

Questions you might ask your child:

1. What did the Sea of Wonders give the children at the beginning of this story and what happened to it? (A gold coin Hector claimed as his own because he picked it up.)
2. What did your class decide was the definition of greedy? (Being stingy, selfish and unkind, not considering the needs of other people, not sharing.)
3. What is the opposite of greed? (Generosity)
4. What do you think often makes generosity difficult? (It goes beyond kindness and sharing. Being generous is often costly. It can cost you time, abilities or even possessions. It means thinking of the needs of others first and sometimes sacrificing your own needs or desires.)

Parents, share about a time when you were generous. What was the result?

