

# GENERATIONS OF GIVING



**Theme:** God encourages us to show love by helping others

**Bible Story:** *Jesus Calls Out the Pharisees (Matthew 23: 1-12)*

**Leader:**

Good morning, friends!

Have you ever had to carry something really heavy? Like your backpack. Or a moving box. What if you had to carry that heavy thing all by yourself everywhere you went?

*(Let children respond)*

What if I said I was going to help you, but then I sat back in my comfy chair and I just told you lots of rules about HOW to carry your heavy backpack?

Sometimes people have to carry heavy things that we can't see — sometimes we call these burdens. Maybe they are scared, worried, or sad. Maybe they're lonely. Maybe their family is experiencing a hard time.

In Matthew 23, Jesus calls out the religious leaders and teachers of that time. They knew God's commands, and they were very good at telling other people what they should and shouldn't do. But they weren't living out God's commands by loving and helping other people.

Jesus reminded them that following God isn't just about what we say or how we look on the outside. It's about how we live. It's true for us too! We shouldn't make people's burdens heavier by nagging them about what they're doing wrong, but we should help them. When we help someone, even in a small way, it's like helping them carry their heavy backpack.

This month as a church, we are sharing stories from one of our mission partners, Thornwell.

Thornwell helps kids and families who need help. Sometimes that looks like helping a kid have a safe home. Sometimes that looks like teaching a family new ways to support each other. Sometimes that looks like helping kids have the tools they need to learn.

Jesus wants us to do more than talk about loving people. He wants us to love people by the way we treat them.

That's what Thornwell does. And that's what we, as a church family, do when we give to and pray for Thornwell. (Introduce Turkeys)

**Let's Think:** What's one way we can help someone this week?

**Here's a challenge:** Look for someone who might need help this week. And remember that even though you're young, you can show God's love by helping them. You can be someone who helps carry someone else's burden.

You can notice. You can help. You can care.

*Will you pray with me?*

**Dear God,**

**Thank you for loving us. Help us notice when others need help. Thank you for helping kids and families through Thornwell.**

**Amen**



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# GENERATIONS OF GIVING



**Theme:** God encourages us to share what we have to help others

**Bible Story:** *Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand (John 6:1-14)*

**Leader:**

Good morning, friends!

What is your favorite thing to eat for lunch? That treat that you get excited about when it's packed in your lunchbox or maybe it's a meal your family eats every Sunday after church.

*(Let children respond)*

What if I said I was going to pack that special treat in your lunchbox tomorrow? You'd probably be thinking about it all morning, right? Imagining how good it will taste. You start getting hungry, and it starts sounding better and better. You can't wait for lunch! But when you open your lunchbox, I ask you, "Hey! Would you mind sharing your lunch with the whole class?"

*(Let children respond)*

In John 6, Jesus asks his disciples how they might feed a large crowd that had arrived. The disciples didn't know what to do — there wasn't enough food or enough money to feed everyone. But one little boy had brought his lunch — five loaves of bread and two fish.

Certainly not enough for a large crowd. But the boy gave what he had to Jesus. And Jesus took that small lunch, gave thanks to God, and used it to feed thousands of people!

God can use what we have — even if it feels small — to help others.

This month as a church, we are sharing stories from one of our mission partners, Thornwell.

Thornwell helps kids and families who need help. And we get to be a part of that! In fact, young people have been a huge part of helping other kids through Thornwell for over 150 years.

More than 150 years ago, a 10-year-old boy named Willie Anderson gave his allowance of 50 cents as the first gift to start Thornwell, a safe place for kids to live when they had nowhere else to go.

For 100 years, kids have put coins in cardboard turkeys to support kids living at Thornwell. In fact, it was a group of kids in South Carolina who helped raise money to build an elementary school for children living at Thornwell.

And kids are still making a difference! A few years ago, a 10-year-old boy named Hampton was inspired to share his allowance with Thornwell to help kids.

Jesus reminded his disciples, and in fact the whole crowd that day, that when we generously share what we have, God can use those gifts — no matter the size of the gift — to do big things!

As a church family, when we give to and pray for Thornwell, we are part of the big things God is doing for children and families. We simply give what we have and trust God to use it.

**Let's Think:** What's one thing you have that you can share, or you could use to help someone?

**Here's a challenge:** Look for someone who might need help this week. And remember that even though you're young, you can show God's love by helping them. Share a smile. Share a treat or a toy. You can be someone who shares what they have.

You can share. You can trust God. You can make a difference.

*Will you pray with me?*

**Dear God,**

**Thank you for all the good things you have given us. Help us have generous hearts. Thank you for helping kids and families through Thornwell.**

**Amen**



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# GENERATIONS OF GIVING



**Theme:** God encourages us to use what we have to help others

**Bible Story:** *The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)*

**Leader:**

Good morning, friends!

What's something you're really good at?

*(Let children respond)*

Maybe you're an artist. Maybe you have a talent for singing or dancing or playing an instrument. Maybe you're good at sports. Maybe you're good with animals. Maybe you're good at making people laugh. Maybe you're a kind friend.

God made you who you are — exactly who you are supposed to be, uniquely yourself. And God made you with special and unique gifts, abilities, personalities, strengths. And we can each use what makes us unique to serve God and help others.

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells a story about a man who was going on a journey. Before he left, he gave three servants some money. Each got different amounts, and he asked them to take care of it.

What do you think they did with it?

*(Let children respond)*

Well, two of the servants went to work and used what they had been given. They doubled the money the man had given them. But the third servant had been scared to make a mistake or lose the money he had been given. So instead of using it or investing it or even putting it in a bank, he hid it.

When the man returned, he was happy with the servants who had used what they had been given. He said to them: "Well done, good and trustworthy servant."

At the heart of this story, Jesus is asking each of us "What will you do with what God has given you?" It may not be money. But God has given each of you a special gift. A talent. An ability. A family.

This month as a church, we are sharing stories from one of our mission partners, Thornwell.

Thornwell helps kids and families who need help. And there are so many ways that we get to be a part of that! It starts with noticing a need and being brave enough to use what we have to help. Maybe we share our time. Maybe we share our talents. Maybe we share our money.

Someone might notice that children need school supplies and decide to send some to Thornwell.

Someone might know that a child entering foster care needs something special to call their own, so they make a quilt.

Someone might see that volunteers are needed to build a playground, so they give their time.

Someone might give money. Someone might pray. Someone might serve.

As a church family, when we give to and pray for Thornwell, we are part of the big things God is doing for children and families. We might not all have the same thing to offer, but we can use what we have to make a difference.

**Let's Think:** What is something God has given you that you can use to help someone else?

**Here's a challenge:** Look for someone who might need help this week. And remember that God made you, and you can show God's love by helping them. Think about the ways that you can use what God has given you to help. You can notice a need. You can use what you have. You can help.

*Will you pray with me?*

**Dear God,**

**Thank you for all the gifts you have given us, and the ways you have made us unique. Help us use what we have to serve you and help others. Thank you for helping kids and families through Thornwell.**

**Amen**



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# GENERATIONS OF GIVING



**Theme:** God encourages us to notice people who need help and to do something

**Bible Story:** *The Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46)*

**Leader:**

Good morning, friends!

Can you remember a time when you needed help? Maybe with homework. Maybe with a tricky situation with a friend. Maybe you were hungry or you got hurt. Maybe you got separated from your grown-ups.

*(Let children respond)*

Did you get the help you needed? What did that feel like?

*(Let children respond)*

There will be times when we need help. And there will be times when we are the ones who can help someone else. We can be a kind friend. We can share our lunch. We can help our siblings with homework. We can pick up trash without being asked.

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells us that these small acts of care matter. In fact, Jesus says that when we care for other people, we are caring for him.

Jesus says, “Just as you did it to one of the least of these... you did it to me.”

When we help someone, it matters because that person matters to Jesus. And sometimes, helping starts with something simple. We notice. We notice what we have and are grateful. We notice what someone else may need help with, and we act generously.

This month as a church, we are sharing stories from one of our mission partners, Thornwell.

Thornwell helps kids and families who need help. And we get to be part of that! No matter how old you are, you can make a difference! Like Hampton.

When Hampton was ten years old, he started thinking about children who didn't have the same things he had. He had been saving his money. He could have used it to buy Legos or Pokémon cards.

But Hampton thought about other children who needed help. So, he decided to give \$100 of his own money to help children at Thornwell.

And when someone asked Hampton why he wanted to do it, he gave a very simple answer: “I’m just doing things that help God.”

Hampton didn't stop there. The next year, he gave \$1,000 to help children at Thornwell. He didn't know exactly what would happen with his gift. He just knew that he had something that could help someone else.

And because Hampton shared what he had, other people were inspired to give, too.

One child's gift helped inspire a whole group of people to care about children and families. Isn't that amazing?

**Let's Think:** Who is someone you notice may need some extra kindness?

**Here's a challenge:** First, think about all the good things God has given you. Practice feeling grateful for what you have. Then, look for someone who might need help this week and ask how you might help them.

You can be grateful. You can be generous. You can inspire others.

*Will you pray with me?*

**Dear God,**

**Thank you for loving us. Help us love others. Help us notice when others need help and do something to help. Thank you for helping kids and families through Thornwell.**

**Amen**



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# GENERATIONS OF GIVING



**Theme:** God is near us when we feel lost

**Bible Story:** *Remembering God in the Wilderness (Deuteronomy 8:1-18)*

**Leader:**

Good morning, friends!

Have you ever been lost? Maybe you got separated from your grown-ups. Or you took a wrong turn in a new place. Or like Kristof in Frozen 2, you were “lost in the woods.”

*(Let children respond)*

Kristof explains how he feels turned around. “North is south, right is left... up is down, day is night.” It’s confusing, lonely, scary, and overwhelming.

In Deuteronomy, Moses reminds his community of a time they felt lost. They spent many years traveling through the wilderness. They didn’t know where they were going. They didn’t know how long it would take them to find their way out. But Moses reminds them: they were never alone.

He said, “Remember the long way that the Lord your God has led you.”

God was always with them in the wilderness. Sometimes hard things in life can feel like a wilderness. The good things we hope for can feel very far away. But we are not alone. God is with us. And God sends people to help us.

This month as a church, we are sharing stories from one of our mission partners, Thornwell.

Thornwell helps kids and families who need help. Children and families sometimes come to Thornwell during very difficult times in their lives. They may feel scared. They may feel alone. They may not know what comes next. But caring people come alongside them.

Linda and her brother John and her sister Barbara came to live at Thornwell when they were kids, and they had nowhere else to go. It was a new place with new people. It probably felt scary for them.

But the people at Thornwell loved them and took good care of them. They shared about Jesus. They helped them not only imagine a future, but build a life filled with possibility.

Linda grew up and had a family of her own. She carried the love she experienced at Thornwell with her. Her son Zack is grown up now, too. And he is grateful for what Thornwell did for his mom when she was a kid.

So, Zack and his family gave a very special gift to Thornwell. They helped renovate a house that kids in foster care can live in with their brothers and sisters, so they don’t have to be separated.

That’s what love can do.

**Let’s Think:** Who has helped you when you feel scared?

**Here’s a challenge:** Find someone who feels a little lost or lonely. You can be someone that helps them find their way and feel less alone.

God is always with you. You can be a friend. You can help others.

*Will you pray with me?*

**Dear God,**

**Thank you for always being with us. Thank you for giving us people who love us and take care of us. Help us notice other people who feel lost or alone. Give us caring hearts so we can help them.**

**Amen**



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