



Generosity Expressions Series

Exploring how God has designed us to express generosity in multiple ways

Hospitality



Bible Study ***February 2, 2020***

Acknowledgements

This Bible Study arranged and written by the Rev. Dr. Benjamin C. Squires.

Portions taken from *The Generosity Gap*, © Barna and Thrivent Financial.

Article available online: <https://www.barna.com/research/generations-generosity-age-affects-giving/>

Other articles used are listed in this document.

Generosity Expressions™ is developed by Thrivent, in partnership with Barna.

1. *How would you define hospitality?*

- *What kind of act is usually the first thing we think of?*
 - *But what other kinds of acts could also be hospitable?*
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2. *Read Acts 18:1-11.*

What examples of hospitality are shown in this story?

3. *What is the result of such hospitality?*

4. *What would have been challenging about offering such acts of hospitality?*

5. *What would be some similar acts of hospitality we might have in today's church?*

6. *Read 1 Timothy 4:12-3
and 1 Timothy 5:1-2.*

*What do these verses tell us about “life together”
across the generations in the Church?*

7. *An important finding that has shaped some of Bethel’s approach
to ministry in recent years is:*

- “There is clear evidence that young people benefit from multiple, sustained relationships outside their immediate family” (Search Institute, 2003); “sustained network of adults” (Roberto, 2014).

How does this relate to the verses from 1 Timothy?

**INTERGENERATIONAL FRIENDSHIPS:
FAITH SEGMENTS**

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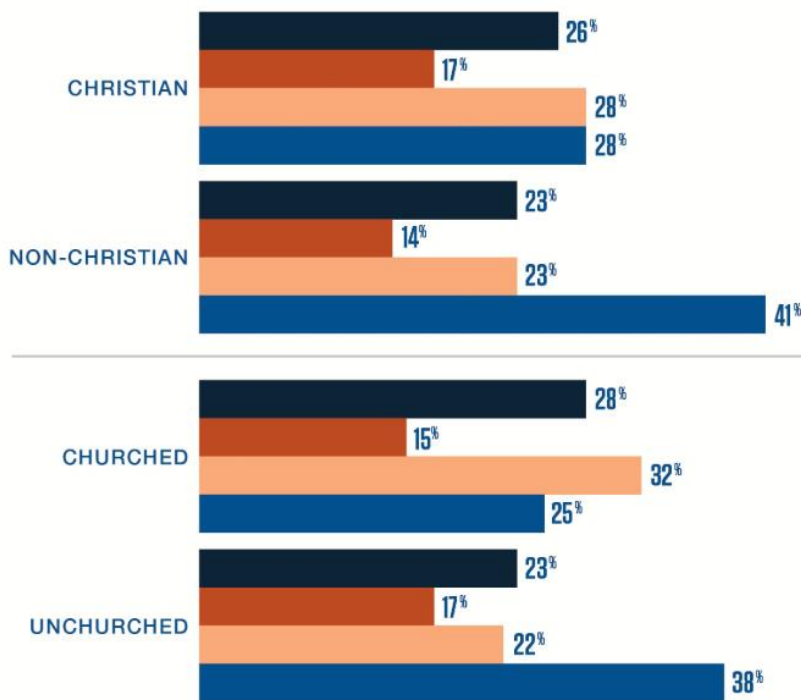
What the Research Means

“In a world that has grown increasingly transient and a job market that often requires young people to move for work, close family relationships become more difficult,” says Roxanne Stone, editor in chief of Barna Group. “What were once common connections with an older generation of aunts, uncles and grandparents as well as with a younger generation of cousins, nieces and nephews have become a holiday event instead of a regular daily or weekly occurrence. In place of this, there is a need for new environments that can engender relationships between older and younger generations. We see in the research that this most commonly happens in the workplace—but the church is also primed to foster these relationships.

“Pastors and church leaders should be encouraged to see that Christians are more likely than average to have intergenerational friendships and to describe those as mentor/mentee relationships,” continues Stone. “Yet, it’s also worth noting that these relationships do not seem to be developing through formal programs—fewer than one in 20 say they formed their intergenerational relationships through a mentor/mentee program. Most of these relationships are happening more organically, through shared activities and affinities. For churches who want to emphasize intergenerational community, this might signal more of a need to teach people how to develop and maintain these relationships rather than implement some kind of ministry for them.”

Do you have a close friend from a different generation?

YES, OLDER
 YES, YOUNGER
 YES, BOTH
 NO



n=1,067 U.S. adults | November 12-19, 2018

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*This chart looks at two ways to measure Christianity in the U.S., by identity and by church attendance.

<https://www.barna.com/research/multigenerational-friendships/>

8. How do you think this research relates to Bethel?

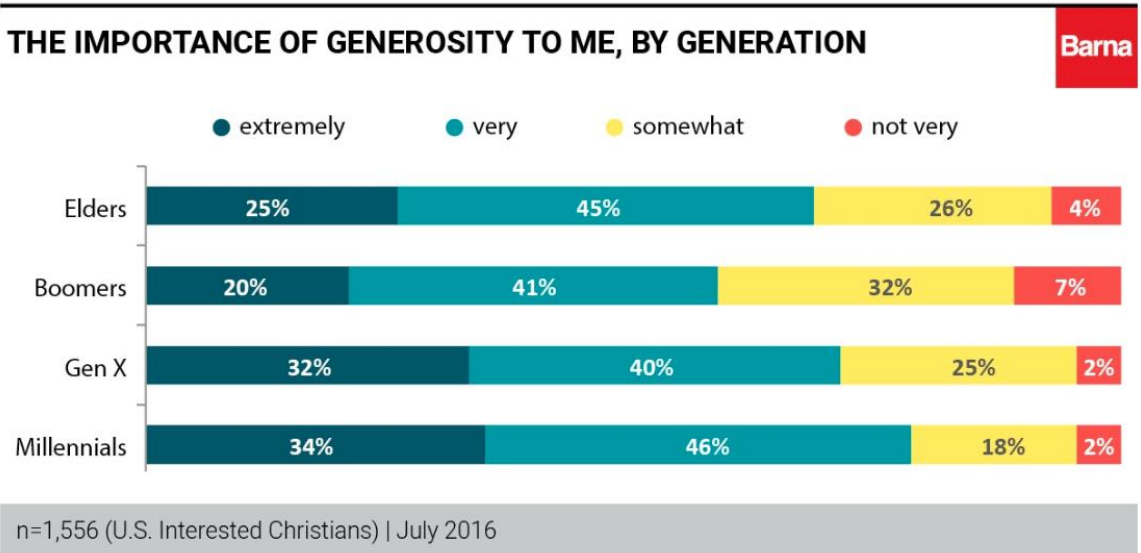
Gen Z: Born between 1999 and 2015
Millennial: Born between 1984 and 1998
Gen X: Born between 1965 and 1983
Boomer: Born between 1946 and 1964
Elder: Born before 1946

Generational differences on generosity have the potential to alienate Christians from each other. But it doesn't have to be that way

How Generations Perceive Themselves

Among the generational groups, Millennials are the most likely to say that generosity is important to them personally. Boomers are less apt to say so, and twice as likely as the youngest adults to say generosity is only somewhat or not very important to them (39% vs. 20% Millennials).

Generosity appears to be important to most Christians, but how well aligned are their giving practices with their priorities?



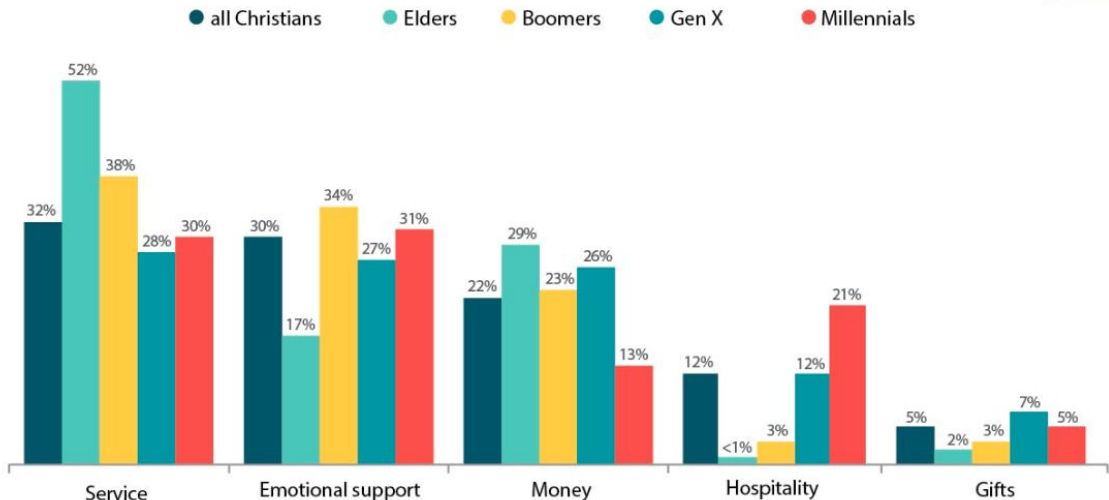
9. *What does this tell you about why the Church needs to focus on Generosity?*

What Is a Generous Act?

While there is broad agreement about the *spirit* of generosity, people differ when it comes to envisioning an *act* of generosity. “Service” (32%) and “emotional / relational support” (30%) are the two most popular responses among American Christians when asked what actions they associate with the concept of “giving to others.” About one in five says giving money (22%), while fewer say “hospitality” (12%) or “gifts” (5%). Surprisingly, donating money is third on the list, and only one-fifth of adults selects it as their top expression of “giving to others.” The findings on this question reveal some interesting gaps by generation: Millennials, for example, are on par with the norm when it comes to service, emotional or relational support and gifts. But the percentages for money (13% vs. 22% all Christians) and hospitality (21% vs. 12%) are essentially flipped: Millennials prioritize hospitality far more than money as an expression of generosity. At a different extreme are Elders, who are much more likely than the average to strongly associate service with generosity (52% vs. 32% all) and not at all likely to choose hospitality (less than 1 percent of Elder respondents chose this option).

TYPES OF ACTIONS STRONGLY ASSOCIATED WITH GENEROSITY

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Preferred Acts of Generosity

Researchers found that people most strongly associate their own chosen means of *expressing* generosity with their *ideal* of generosity. That is, if they believe monetary giving is the best way to be generous, they give money. If they believe serving is the best way, they tend to give through acts of service. Three out of five people who practice generosity by offering emotional or relational support to others generally associate acts of relational support with generosity. Serving or volunteering and offering relational support are the most common expressions of generosity across generations, but percentages vary, likely related in some instances to free time and financial situation. Elders, for example—many of whom are retired or no longer working full time—are the age cohort by far most likely to report expressing generosity in service or volunteerism. And Millennials, who tend to have fewer overall financial resources, are least likely to say they most often express generosity through monetary giving.

PEOPLE CONSIDER THEIR PREFERRED ACTS OF GENEROSITY TO BE MOST GENEROUS

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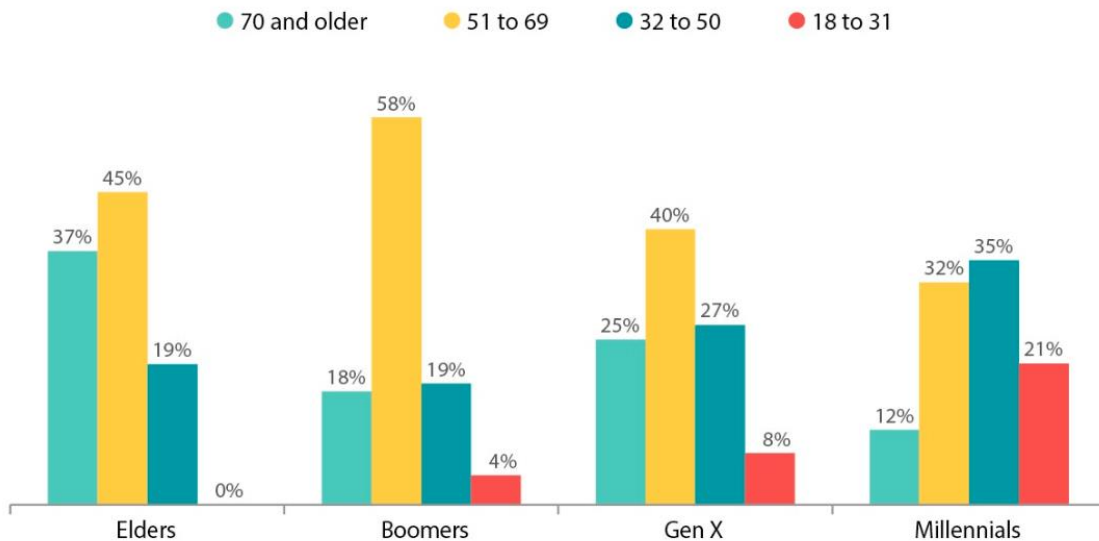
In what way are you most often generous to others?	Which type of giving do you personally see as most strongly associated with generosity?				
	% Money	% Emotional / relational support	% Gifts	% Hospitality	% Service
Monetary support	40	6	9	8	12
Emotional / relational support	17	62	19	15	23
Gifts	12	7	54	10	8
Hospitality	10	9	7	46	5
Service / volunteering	17	12	8	20	49

n=1,556 (U.S. Interested Christians) | July 2016

10. *How does this research relate to your experience at Bethel?*

WHICH GENERATION IN YOUR CHURCH IS MOST HOSPITABLE?

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n=1,556 (U.S. Interested Christians) | July 2016

When it comes to hospitality, more than three-quarters of Christians over 50 say older adults are strongest in this area; two-thirds of Gen-Xers agree that Boomers and Elders in their church are most hospitable. Millennials, meanwhile, consistent with their definition of generosity, give themselves high marks here. Because openness and welcome are of such high value to younger adults, and more broadly in an increasingly contentious society, hospitality is a potential avenue for reverse mentoring, wherein older Christians learn from younger believers. Taking a learning, rather than teaching, posture could be an older Christian's most generous act.

II. *What is your response to this?*

NARROWING THE HEART GAP

Imagine that a twentysomething Christian, Rachel, hears a Sunday message about generosity, and decides to be more intentional about acts she perceives to be generous. So she begins to host weekly home-cooked dinners for a few single coworkers who live far from home, and invites a friend to sleep on her couch until the friend can find an affordable place of her own. She joins a cultural exchange club to get to know people who have different beliefs and backgrounds, and practices listening to their stories so they feel heard and understood.

Folks from the older generations in Rachel's church—a group that likely includes her pastor, since the average Protestant pastor is over 50¹⁰—may not see these actions as a legitimate response to the call for greater generosity. Neither her financial contributions to the church nor the number of hours she serves have increased. According to their perceptions of generosity and preferences for different kinds of generous actions, Rachel is failing to mature as a generous Christian.

12. *How would Bethel's generations perceive Rachel?*
13. *What would help us grow in understanding the role of Hospitality in our Generosity?*

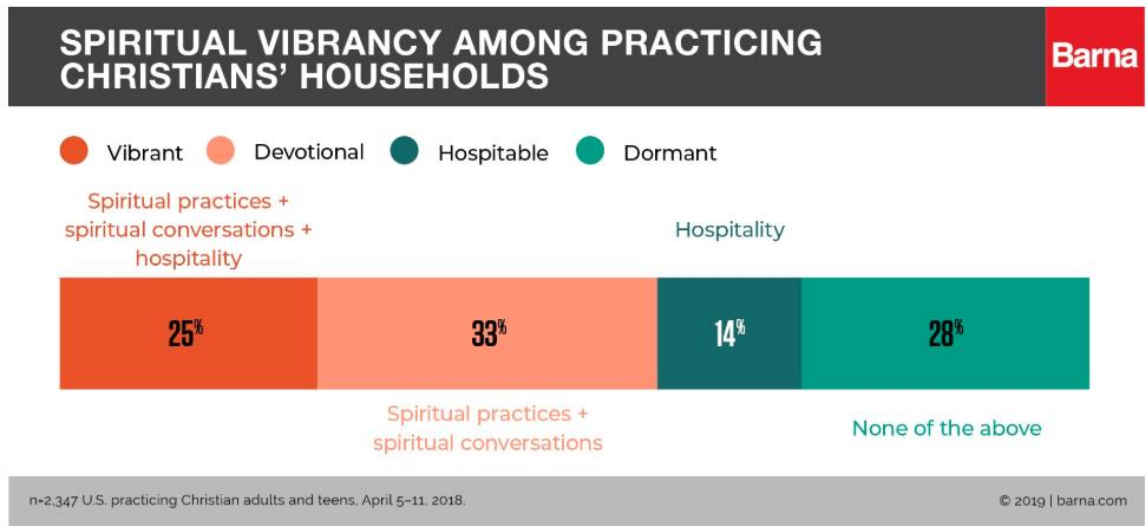
Additional Research:

Acknowledging Importance of Hospitality in the Vibrancy of Faith

How do our core relationships engage us in a thoughtful, transformative faith—the kind that holds up to and is passed down over time? This was one of the guiding questions of Barna’s new *Households of Faith* report, based on an extensive study of practicing Christians and their living arrangements and routines.

One of the goals of this study, conducted in partnership with Lutheran Hour Ministries, was to learn from households that appear to be exceptionally engaged in communal and consistent faith expression in the home. Barna developed a custom metric that sorts households by reports of collective, frequent engagement in key behaviors:

- **Spiritual practices**—defined here as praying every day or two and reading the Bible weekly all together
- **Spiritual conversations**—defined here as talking about God and faith at least weekly all together
- **Hospitality**—defined here as welcoming non-family guests regularly, or at least several times a month



<https://www.barna.com/research/spiritually-vibrant-household/>

Generosity Expressions Profile: Bethel Results as of 2/2/20

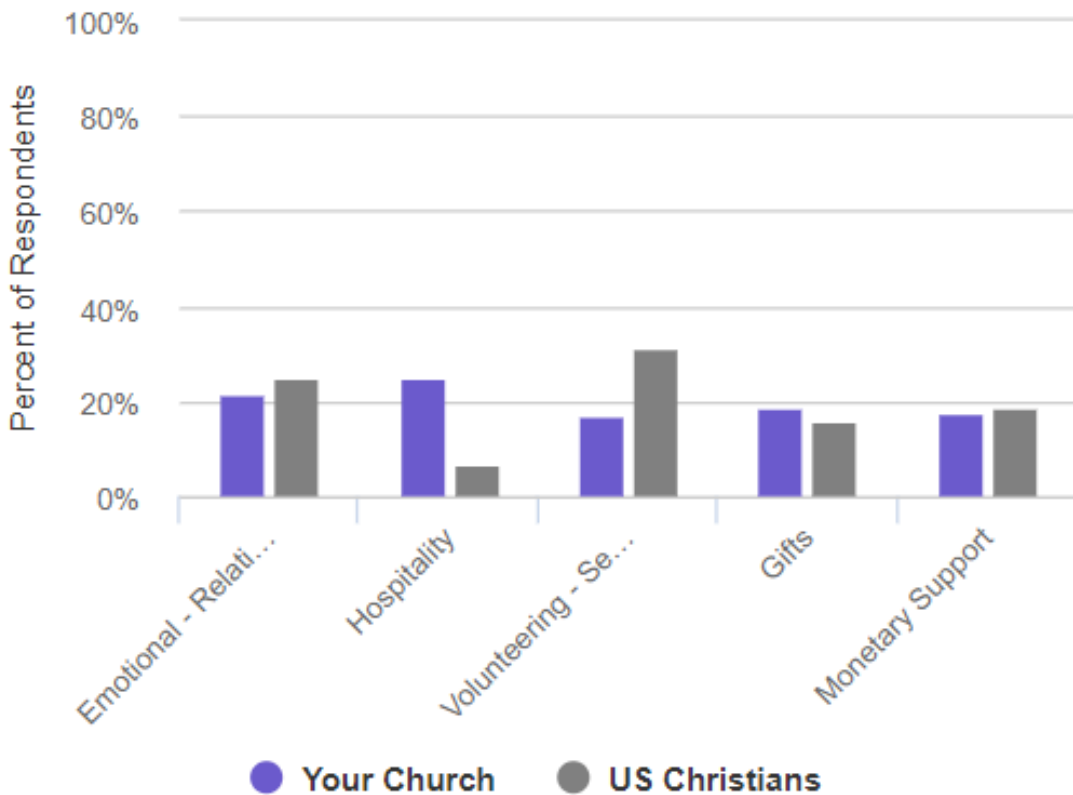
****Despite what graph shows, our goal is 150 assessments completed.****

Assessments Completed 129/220

58%

Responses by generation:

6 Elders	42 Baby Boomers	45 Generation X	11 Millennials	25 Generation Z
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****Assessment closes today. Full report will be shared with us soon from Thrivent.****

Generosity Expressions Series

January—February 2020

A sermon & study series to help us explore how God has designed us to express generosity

Generosity Expressions helps us to see that there's not just one way to show generosity. Generosity shows up in five different expressions: monetary giving, hospitality, emotional-relational support, volunteering-service and gifts. But each of us has a unique combination of those expressions, so that one person's generosity doesn't look the same as another.



The Generosity Expressions™ Profile

We need as many people as possible to complete this by February 2.

As a tool for this series, The Generosity Expressions™ Profile is a short online assessment experience that will give you helpful insights about yourself, but it will also help us create an anonymous report about what Bethel's generosity looks like. We need as many of you to complete this brief assessment as possible.

Go to: www.bethelgurnee.org/generosity

(NOTE: It asks for your name and email **ONLY** to provide you with your individual results. The congregation will only have access to anonymous data).

Sunday Series Schedule

(Sermons & Sunday AM Adult Bible Study)

January 26 - Volunteering / Service

February 2 - Hospitality

February 9 - Monetary Support

February 16 - Gifts

February 23 - Emotional/Relational Support