

DNA

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Preacher: Ray Sweet

[0 : 00] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. As always, if you'd like to learn a little more about us, you can go to FCCgreensburg.com or you can check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, today we are excited to get into God's Word, but most of all, let the Word of God get into us and transform these hearts. Now, today we start a brand new series called Happily Generous, and the title of the message today is DNA.

Now, years ago, when a dollar could, you know, buy you a handful of candy, some of us probably remember that, a little girl's daddy gave her \$2. He said you can buy anything you want with one of the dollars, but the other one belongs to God.

So excited, she hurried toward the candy store. Picture a little girl in the early 1970s with a dress and pigtails running down to the local downtown area.

But sadly, as she ran, her feet got tangled up and she tripped. One of the dollars flew out of her hand and went right down a storm drain.

[1 : 08] And she just laid there staring in disbelief until she finally picked herself up and said, Well, Lord, there goes your dollar. Church family, I couldn't begin a series on stewardship without a joke.

But hey, welcome to the first week of our series called Happily Generous. For those who've been with us for a little while, you know that we usually talk through this important topic of stewardship about every one and a half to two years.

We do touch on this throughout the year in kind of smaller ways. But from time to time, we like to get very intentional. And the response has been overwhelmingly positive as this is an area that people want to understand biblically as there is a lot of misunderstandings and false teachings out there.

You know, probably a year ago, I met up with a pastor from a local town not far from us to simply have lunch. We had never met each other before. And he just so happened to bring me a copy of a stewardship book that had just come out in 2024.

And as I looked at it, I was captured by the title and the bright colors on the front. Happily Generous, The Secret to Living a Priceless Life by Mike Kokolowski.

[2 : 29] And as I thumbed through this scripture-led explanation of how to be a great manager of God's resources, I thought, huh, that may be a helpful series in the future.

And so, here we are. And after seeing way too many pastors steal material and not give credit, it is so important that you know that this series will be based off of this scripture-led book.

And I just want to give full credit to Mike Kaye. So much easier to say his last name that way. But I actually emailed him several months back. And I was very impressed with his humility as he gave us full permission to use his book in this series and even gave some other resources to help me prepare.

And if you want to go to Amazon and buy a copy of the book to read yourself, if you want to go deeper, just put the title, Happily Generous, in the Amazon search engine.

And it'll be somewhere around \$11 and could be here in just a few days. But think with me for a second about that title, Happily Generous. You know, everybody wants to be happy, right?

[3 : 35] Most want to be generous, but we don't always put the two things together, do we? And yet, there's a powerful connection between those two concepts. Mike Kaye put it like this.

He said, The road to happiness is paved with generosity. Or as Luke quotes Jesus in Acts 20, verse 35, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

So think about that. As a parent, Christmas is only 82 days away. And I may have just scared you, right? But what a joy it is to give good gifts to our children and just watch them get so excited.

Now, that doesn't mean that they'll be playing with that toy a month later, but we simply enjoy the moment. Or have you ever had the pleasure to give generously to someone in need?

If you're kind of newer to First Christian Church, we have been doing something called Giveaway Sunday for six or seven years now. It is simply one Sunday every year.

[4 : 35] It's always in early December. We're out of our gratitude for God's faithfulness to us as a church and even our love for our community. We take up an offering. And just like every other Sunday, we take up that offering.

But every penny of it that week, it doesn't go to support our ministry or any of the things it takes to do everything we do. All that money just goes right back into our community to help those in need.

Now, we do all kinds of things throughout the year, but this is on a larger scale. Last year, we did several projects, but the big one was helping a single mom in the Waldron area.

She's a wonderful follower of Jesus who has nine kids, been dealt a really tough hand. She's just had gotten moved into a house, but really needed some larger appliances and different things to kind of furnish the home, needed to convert the garage into an apartment so her mom could move in and help take care of the kids.

So we were able to partner with her church family in Shelbyville, and we gave somewhere around \$25,000 to \$30,000 to make this happen. Probably a \$40,000 or \$50,000 project when you include all the labor that her home church provided.

[5 : 48] And I'm telling you, she was so very grateful and overwhelmed by so many people's generosity. And wasn't it awesome on our end to know that we could make a difference for this family?

And put it on your calendar. Give away Sunday is December 7th this year, and our elders are already praying about where God wants to use that money. Happily generous.

And as followers of Jesus, that must be my goal. And what I want us to understand today is that being a happily generous Christian is a part of our DNA, our spiritual DNA.

So hear me. There's no such thing as a fully sold out disciple of Jesus who's not happily generous. And at the same time, this is a lifelong pursuit where we are striving to grow more and more happily generous as the days, months, and years go by.

And that's not just with our money. It's our time. It's our talent. It's our treasures. It's all of me. Because when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, that's God who indwells every follower of Christ out of our spiritual DNA will come happily generous hearts.

[7 : 03] So let me ask you kind of a tough question here. Is this just a month that you have to endure, maybe skipping a couple weeks of the series? Or are we excited to pursue a priceless life where we use everything God has entrusted to us to honor Him by building His kingdom?

And I hope your answer is option number two. So grab your outlines. And the way you can do that with us since you're listening through the radio here is you can always go to the YouVersion Bible app, Y-O-U version Bible app.

It's a free download. Go to the menu. Go to events. Go to First Christian Church of Greensburg. And then you can see our outline that way. And let's look at this part of our DNA using these letters, DNA, as an acronym.

So here's what the D stands for. Deny idols. Deny idols. It goes back to the very first of the Ten Commandments from God.

You shall have no other gods before me. No idols. Jesus first. Now do you remember about four or five weeks ago in our Philippians series, we talked about the five Ps that we as people can so easily make idols in our lives.

[8 : 19] And all of us have probably struggled with these things. Things that Satan uses to promise joy, but really they leave us empty. The pursuit of power, position, possessions, prestige, and performance.

What is often described in our culture as this is the dream that every young child should chase after as they grow into adulthood. And yet when you arrive at these different markers, what the world calls successful, it often feels more like an anxiety-driven nightmare.

And there's always another level. There's always more to get, more titles to chase, more control to have, more people to know my name. Do you remember the quote we shared several weeks back from John D. Rockefeller?

This guy was one of the richest men in the nation's history. If he lived today, he would be in the same conversation with Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, and others. When he was asked all those years ago, how much money does it take to make a man happy?

How much is enough? This church-going man said, just a little bit more. And yet in the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes, that I believe the evidence is very strong that it points to Solomon, King David's son, as the author.

[9 : 38] But we know that Solomon knew power, prestige, possessions, performance, and position well. You could even add in another P word, the word pleasure. Solomon had anything and everything he could ever want.

The wisest man in the world. And yet look at how he opens this book. Ecclesiastes chapter one, starting in verse one. The words of the teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem, meaningless, meaningless, says the teacher, utterly meaningless.

Everything is meaningless. Well, apparently he didn't get the memo about the positivity movement, did he? But here's the point. Solomon knew wealth, wisdom, women, wild parties, and the list goes on.

And what many believe was towards the end of his life, he finally comes to this conclusion in Ecclesiastes 12, 13. So we just looked at the first verses of the book.

Here's one of the last verses in the book. He says, now all has been heard. Here is the conclusion of the matter. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.

[10 : 50] So our spiritual DNA, the way we were wired, is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, putting him on the throne of my heart alone.

And we do that according to this verse in two ways. Fear God and keep his commandments. Now that phrase, fear God, that doesn't mean that you're scared of him, that he's unapproachable, but instead it carries this idea that he deserves our reverence, our awe, our worship, because he is God and I am not.

He is perfect and holy and we are not. So it begins with me denying those idols, the things that my world teaches me. This is how you define success and yet it still leaves me empty.

I deny those idols that chase so hard after my heart and it starts with me saying and living out this prayer. Lord Jesus, your word, your will, your ways, period.

I want to be happily generous in you. And second, the N in DNA stands for note God's generous heart.

[12 : 04] Take very clearly, take note of God's generous heart. So let's start at the beginning where happiness and generosity were born. And as we're going to see, our God is the greatest giver of all.

Listen, generosity doesn't begin with us. He is the author of love and generosity. And his generosity is splattered all over his creation.

See, God spoke and created the universe ex nihilo, that means out of nothing. And as Mike K has said in his book, God carved the Grand Canyon and sculpted the Himalayas.

He planted rainforests and dried up deserts. He filled oceans and froze the North Pole. Because of him, eagles have wings, butterflies have beauty, lions have strength, and cheetahs have speed.

He's the God who is awesome and creative enough to give us this beautiful creation that absolutely is not a product of random chance.

[13 : 05] But that doesn't even compare to his most prized possession. That's you. That's me. See, we were made in his image as he breathed into the dust and formed mankind.

He created us to know him and to be known by him. And I love how Psalm 139, starting in verse 13, says this, For you, God, created my inmost being.

You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, God, because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful. I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. And not only did he create us with a purpose, but he speaks into our lives calling us children of God.

Chosen, free, friend, loved, redeemed. And when our ugly sins separated us from a perfect heavenly father for all eternity, this loving God gave.

[14 : 15] He gave us a second chance. Jesus came to this earth, lived a sinless life, taught the heart behind the kingdom. He loved the outcast, healed the lame, made the blind to see, and called lifeless Lazarus out of the tomb.

And the greatest act of love the world has ever known is told very simply in the Bible's most quoted verse. John 3, 16. For God so loved the world that he did what?

He gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. And then, on the third day, when things had been quiet, when they thought that they had gotten rid of this troublemaker claiming to be the son of God, an angel showed up, rolling away the stone.

The earth began to shake as our Savior resurrected. He rose from the grave, conquering death, and offering all of us who would pick up our cross and follow him eternal life. And as if that weren't enough, when he ascended back up into heaven, he promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to all who would dare eat the bread of life and drink from the living water, to all who would dare come after him.

And listen, he didn't save you and just head off on a permanent vacation, leaving you to fend for yourself. By the power of the Holy Spirit, God living inside of you, he is daily sustaining you, guiding you in his truth, protecting you, comforting you, leading you to a purpose greater than anything this world could ever offer.

[15 : 54] So when we talk about generosity, it's important to note that we have the perfect example that we could never live up to, that we could never match. And yet by his strength, following his example, we can live happily, generous lives as great stewards, great managers of our time, talents, and treasure.

And all you have to do is open your eyes to the beauty of and creativity of creation, the intricacy and purpose of mankind, the selfless love that prompted Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection.

And when we look at the origins of generosity, we can emphatically proclaim that God so loved the world that he gave. He gave.

Just think about your own life deeply enough. And you'll come to this realization that you are living proof that God holds nothing good back from those he loves. He is, after all, the great giver, the life giver, the generous one.

So church, we deny idols that are pursuing our hearts to steal us away from our affection we should have towards our God.

[17 : 05] And then we take note of God's generous heart, that he is the ultimate example. And then last, the A in DNA stands for abound in God's generosity.

Abound in generosity. Because he gave it all, we seek to also have generous hearts as we seek to be more like Jesus.

Now Mark Twain once said this, the two most important days in your life are the day you were born and the day you find out why. And we just got done studying the book of Philippians over the last two months as we discovered that our number one purpose is to know Jesus intimately.

And from that daily walk will flow every godly thing in our lives. And yet one of our purposes is to be a great manager of God's resources. To use everything that belongs to him anyways that he's blessed me with to make an impact for his kingdom.

To abound in generosity. To bless others. To spread the gospel from Greensburg to the ends of the earth. Because listen, when I'm generous, I am being like my savior.

[18 : 14] Or in the words of Mike Kay here, he says, if you accept the premise that God is the great giver and you're crafted in his image, you'll realize that generosity resides in your DNA.

That's right, you're genetically wired to give. And I love the story that he shares in chapter 8 of this book about a guy named Chaz Crutchfield and his candy apple red 1969 Mach 1 Mustang.

It literally was a one of one as no other car rolled off Ford's assembly line that year with its exact specifications. Chaz found the car in a neighbor's barn, was able to acquire it, and spent three years restoring it to showroom condition.

No shortcuts allowed. This guy performed excellence on this car. Every bolt and nut on the 429 Cobra Jet engine had to match the originals.

The white interior needed to shine like it did in 1969. Even the AM FM radio had to play Rolling Stones the same way it sounded when Neil Armstrong first stepped on the moon.

[19 : 27] When Chaz finished this project, and he cruised down Main Street, man, all the heads were turning to see such a beautiful display of American ingenuity.

This car was special. It was extremely valuable, and he had to be so proud. But not long after he put away the wrenches and he swept up his shop from finishing this project, the rural church that he attended started a fundraising initiative to build a new children's wing.

Everyone was so excited to see God growing their church and they wanted to have ample space where their kids could truly flourish in God's word. And that's when Chaz began praying.

He heard his pastor talk about hope for the future generations and he wanted to participate in very meaningful ways. But his appetite to contribute surpassed the balance on his bank account.

But still he prayed, not under any compulsion, no one guilt tripped him, but his passion to truly make a difference kicked in and he felt the Lord prodding him to do something that the world and even most of the church would call crazy.

[20 : 39] So with an obedient and cheerful heart, he decided to auction off his car and gave every penny to impact these kids.

But still, he felt like he wanted to give more than that as if that wasn't enough. So, he sold his Mako fishing boat and an almost new fully customized rifle.

The total package was over \$100,000. Why would he do something so radical? Well, that's what the news reporter who caught wind of this wanted to know. And here's what Chas said.

He said, it's simple. 2,000 years ago, God gave his son on the cross for our sins. So the least I can do is give him a 1969 Ford Mustang. Have you ever thought about why Jesus chose to do certain things in his last hours before going to the cross?

One of it, which was a Passover meal with his disciples. But he could have decided to stay and not go to the cross only 33 years on this earth. Why not hang around a little longer, disciple his followers even more, expose the religious leaders further, teach more about the kingdom, heal and give hope to countless others in need.

[21 : 53] Or, he could have delivered one final, massive, big boy sermon that impacted thousands of lives, making the Sermon on the Mount look like a simple devotional.

He could have even demanded a tribute in his honor, reliving kind of a highlight reel of his ministry. You know, forming mud into an eye to restore a man's vision. That was pretty creative.

Walking on the Sea of Galilee, no one saw that one coming. Giving professional fishermen advice that filled their empty nets with fish, that wasn't even his trade. Oh, and don't forget about him taking the hand of a motionless little girl and restoring life to her body.

That quieted down their judgmental laughs. He could have even been like a football coach. He could have huddled up his disciples, kind of drew on the whiteboard and the X's and O's of how they would spread the gospel to the ends of the earth.

The perfect tactical plan that Satan wouldn't see coming. It might even have been nice if Jesus would have gathered everyone around to explain just all the mysteries of faith.

[22 : 57] the perfect understanding of this is exactly how you explain the Trinity or why evil exists, why we sometimes go through painful things in life. But listen, he didn't do any of those things.

What does John 13, starting in verse 3, say? Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, that he had come from God, he was returning to God, so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and he wrapped a towel around his waist.

Why would he do that? After that, he poured water into a basin, and he began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He chose. He chose to wash stinky, grimy, dust, or possibly mud-caked man feet. Do you realize this was a job in their culture that was not only nasty, but it was reserved for the lowest of slaves, not for a king?

Spiritual leaders didn't dare do such a lowly job, and yet the Savior of the world stooped down, washed, and dried 24 feet that night, two of which belonged to Judas the betrayer.

[24 : 11] Why? Because love serves. Love gives generously in every way, and as we come to this four-week series all about being happily generous as followers of Christ, it's important that we first understand that we were designed, wired, by God himself to give generously in every area of our lives.

It's in our DNA as we deny those idols that pursue our hearts, as we realize that our God has modeled the most amazing generosity as he gave his innocent life on the cross, and then last, because he gave.

And because he gave in my spiritual DNA, it's my spiritual DNA to be a happily generous person with my time, with my talents, with my treasure.

But here's our leadership's promise as we navigate this subject. And we know this can be intimidating to some people. So this series will not be a guilt trip.

We promise. It will not resemble an overly tanned tele-evangelist with slicked-back hair, smooth-talking dollars out of your wallet, okay? It's a call to biblical faithfulness, biblical stewardship.

[25 : 24] It's a call that I want to be faithful to the one who gave it all. It's a call to freedom because it's an absolute joy to use everything I am to serve my king.

Because as God's word makes very clear, giving, whether it's my time, my talent, my treasure, giving has to flow from a heart of worship.

And God loves a cheerful giver. It's in our DNA. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we are just so very grateful for how good you are, how you have modeled by giving your life on the cross and so much more from creation to mankind to taking care of us daily.

You have modeled what it truly means to give. And because you are a giver and because we are made in your image, we too are called to be giving to impact our world, to be happily generous people everywhere we go in everything we do.

So Father, it is our prayer as we kind of embark upon this brand new series that you will just stir our hearts, that you will help us to truly surrender everything to you.

[26 : 51] And sometimes this area of stewardship is the last thing to truly be surrendered to you. So Father, have your way. Have your way in us.

Have your way in what you are calling us to do and truly make us more like Jesus every day. We pray this in his precious and holy name.

And God's people said, Amen and Amen. Hey, real quick, invitation for you. So, if you've been listening to this message and you'd like to just know more about us, we are First Christian Church.

My name is Ray Sweet. I'm the lead pastor here. If you'd like to learn a little bit more about us as a church, you can always give us a call. You could, if you have questions maybe about giving your life to Jesus or even just faith questions, here's how you connect with us.

Give us a call, like I said, at 812-663-8488, 812-663-8488, or you can email me at ray at FCC Greensburg dot com.

[27 : 58] Hey, we're so thankful that you tuned in today and we pray that you have been blessed by the power of the word of God. Amen. Thank you.