

The Overflowing Family

A Guide to Cultivate
Generosity & Joy Together

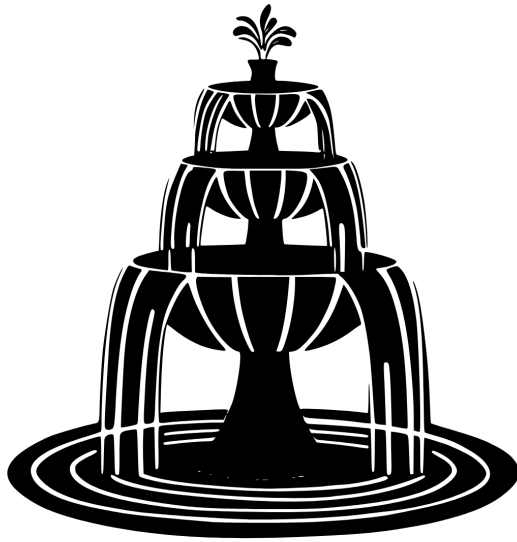


Features a Practical Toolbox by Age Group

Ashley Beach Smith

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To Ben—

You never say no to someone in need. You've modeled what it looks like to trust God fully with our resources and to live with open hands and a generous heart. Your quiet strength and steady faith have shaped our family and this book in more ways than you know.

To Nolen and Juli, Ella and Jackson, and Gracie—

Thank you for the way you live with compassion, courage, and generosity. You embody the kind of open-hearted, open-handed life this book points to. Watching you give freely, love deeply, and show up for others has been one of my greatest joys. I pray you carry this legacy forward, continuing to bless the world in ways only you can.

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An Invitation for More

More peace. More purpose. Real joy.

You love Jesus. You pray together. You try to do the right things and raise your children in faith. And yet... something feels off. Life is full, but not full of the right things. Joy feels fleeting. Peace is something you're constantly reaching for but never quite grasping. You wonder: Is this really the abundant life Jesus promised?

What if you and your family could experience something deeper, richer, and more joyful than you ever imagined? What if the key wasn't found in striving, controlling, or perfecting, but in giving?

The life your family longs for is about something far more profound than doing good deeds or donating money. It's about stepping into the abundant life God has designed for you, not a life of ease or wealth but one of deep joy, peace, and purpose, by allowing His generosity to flow through you. It's about shifting your perspective from scarcity to trust, from fear to freedom, from striving to

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overflow.

Maybe this sounds inspiring, or maybe this sounds terrifying. Maybe you wonder if radical generosity will stretch you too thin. Perhaps it feels like one more thing to add to an already overwhelming life. But what if it's not? What if generosity is not just an act but a path that leads to the peace, joy, and connection your family has been longing for?

That's the question Jake and Sidney Wilson found themselves asking. They love their kids and do all the right things. They attend church on Sundays, have family dinners, and never miss bedtime prayers. But still, life feels exhausting. The pressure to be good parents weighs on them constantly. They want their home to be a place of peace, but between work stress, financial worries, and the chaos of raising kids, they often feel like they are just trying to survive.

They wonder, *Is this really what life is supposed to feel like?*

Then, a shift begins to take place. A simple conversation at church sparks a thought. In a quiet moment, they sense that God might be inviting them to see things differently.

Jake and Sidney ask, "What if we've been holding on too tightly? What if, instead of working so hard to create the perfect life for our family, we learned to give and serve without fear? What if real joy isn't found in protecting what we have but in sharing it with others?"

This book is for families who long for more peace, more

purpose, and real joy. It is for parents who want to raise their children in faith and love but often find themselves overwhelmed by the demands of daily life. If you've ever wondered whether something deeper is possible, you are not alone. The world tells us that happiness comes from securing more, protecting what's ours, and making sure we always have enough. But Jesus teaches a radically different way. He says that real life, abundant and meaningful life, is not found in self-preservation but in surrender. "For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it." (Matthew 16:25, NIV)

You don't need more guilt or unrealistic expectations. You need a clear way forward to anchor your family in God's abundant love and allow that love to overflow into the world.

Generosity is not about losing something. It is about stepping into something greater. It is about stepping into the abundance God has already provided and allowing it to flow freely in and through your family. As you release your grip on fear, control, and scarcity, you will begin to see something remarkable. God will shape you and your children and fill your home with peace that defies understanding.

The idea of radical generosity may make you uncomfortable. It might stir questions or bring up fear about what it will cost. That tension is real, and it is okay to feel it. But do not let it keep you from stepping forward. What Jesus offers in return is far greater.

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He is not asking for more than you can give. He is inviting you into a new way of living that frees you from fear, unlocks deep joy, and builds a legacy of faith for your family.

Welcome to *The Overflowing Family*, a guide designed to help you discover God's generous nature, identify the baggage that may be holding you back, step into His work, and embrace your family's unique generosity journey as one that overflows with joy.

Throughout this book, you'll find opportunities titled *Step Into the Overflow*. These sections include thoughtful reflection questions and simple exercises to help you pause, process, and apply what you've read. Take a moment to grab a journal and a pen. As you move through this journey, let these moments become a space for honest prayer, growth, and deeper connection to the heart of God.

Before we go any further, take a deep breath. Sit with these words from Jesus:

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.” (Matthew 7:7-8)

Step into the Overflow

What are you seeking?

- A home filled with joy instead of exhaustion?
- A deeper awareness of God's presence in your family's daily life?
- A heart that trusts Him more fully?
- Healing from past wounds or struggles?

How are you currently trying to find what you're seeking?

TOOLBOX

Living the Invitation A Parent's Generosity Toolbox by Age

Generosity doesn't happen by accident. It is cultivated. This section will guide you through practical ways to nurture generosity at every stage of parenting. It will help you introduce age-appropriate opportunities that fit your child's understanding and abilities. Whether your child is just learning to give cheerfully or is old enough to take ownership of their giving decisions, you will find tools and ideas to help your family put generosity into action.

The goal is to raise children who give and build a family that lives generously together, experiencing the joy and freedom that generosity brings.

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TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS (AGES 2-4): INTRODUCING GENEROSITY

Generosity begins with the smallest acts of kindness, and even young children can start learning what it means to give, share, and care for others. At this stage, children are naturally curious and eager to imitate what they see, making it the perfect time to introduce simple ways to practice generosity in daily life.

The goal at this age is not to teach deep concepts about money or giving, but to help children develop a heart of kindness and an awareness of others.

Simple Ways to Introduce Generosity

Encourage Sharing – Teach your child to share their toys, snacks, or crayons with a sibling or friend. When they share, affirm their kindness with words like, “That was so thoughtful of you to give your friend a turn.”

Let Them Help Give to Others – If you are donating food, clothes, or supplies, invite your child to place items in the bag and explain in simple terms why you are giving. “These clothes will help another child who needs them.”

Pray for Others Together – When someone in your family or community has a need, pray aloud with your child in a simple way. “Dear Jesus, please help Grandma feel better.”

Use Books and Stories to Teach Giving – Read books that highlight kindness and giving, such as *The Berenstain*

Bears Think of Those in Need, or Bible stories like The Good Samaritan.

Start a Giving Jar – Have a small jar where your child can place coins. Let them know this money will be used to help someone in need. When the jar fills up, take them with you to give the money to church or a charity.

Let Them “Give” at Church – If your church has an offering, give them a coin or dollar to place in the basket. This small act helps them associate giving with worship. Take time to talk about how giving supports the church’s mission. Explain that their offering helps provide for things like missionaries, outreach programs, children’s ministries, and helping people in need. Connecting their giving to real-life impact makes it more meaningful.

Praise Generous Actions – When your child shares, helps, or gives, celebrate it. Simple encouragement like, “That was very kind of you to let your friend have the bigger piece,” reinforces their behavior.

Talk About Generosity in Everyday Life – When your child sees you giving to church, praying for others, or helping a neighbor, they begin to understand that generosity is a normal part of life. But modeling generosity is not enough. Talking about it with your child helps them connect giving with faith and trust in God.

Explain why you give. Let your child know that sometimes giving feels easy, but other times it is hard. There are moments when we want to hold on tightly to what we have because we worry about having enough. This feeling

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is normal. We all have the instinct to protect what is ours and make sure we are taken care of. But when we give, we are practicing trust. We remember that everything we have comes from God and that He is the one who provides for us.

Encourage your child to notice what happens when they give. Ask how they feel when they share something with a friend or help someone in need. Help them recognize the joy that follows generosity. Over time, they will begin to see that real security is not found in money or possessions but in Jesus. They will also discover that giving is not just a good thing to do. It is something that brings joy, peace, and a deeper trust in God.

EARLY ELEMENTARY (AGES 5-7): MAKING GIVING TANGIBLE

At this stage, children are developing independence and learning by doing. They love hands-on activities and are beginning to understand cause and effect. They are learning that their actions can make a difference. This is the perfect time to help them see generosity as something real and meaningful.

The goal at this age is to make giving tangible by connecting it to things they can see, touch, and experience.

Simple Ways to Practice Generosity

Let Them Give Their Own Money – If your child receives an allowance or earns small amounts of money, help them develop a habit of generosity by setting aside a portion for giving. One simple way to do this is by using a “Give, Save, Spend” jar system. Label three jars and encourage your child to divide their money into each category. As they watch their giving jar fill up, they will begin to see generosity as a normal and joyful part of life. When the jar has enough, let them choose where to give so they can experience the impact of their generosity firsthand.

Sponsor a Child as a Family – Choose a child to sponsor through an organization like Every Orphan’s Hope. Let your child be involved by praying for the child, drawing pictures, or writing letters.

Make Generosity a Family Activity – Take your child shopping for food or supplies to donate to a local shelter or food pantry. Let them help pick out items and talk about how these things will help someone in need.

Let Them Be a Part of Family Generosity – When your family gives to a cause, invite your child into the process. Explain in simple terms why you give and how it reflects your trust in God. Be honest. Tell them that sometimes giving feels easy, but other times it’s hard. Share that it can be

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tempting to hold onto money for something fun or new, but following God's call is greater than any worldly comfort.

Read Stories That Inspire Giving – Choose books or Bible stories that highlight kindness, generosity, and helping others. Ask questions like, “How do you think that person felt when they were given help?”

Point Out Generosity in Everyday Life – When your child shares, helps a sibling or gives away something they love, notice and affirm it. Say things like, “That was so kind of you to let your friend go first. How did that feel?”

Give Them a Small Giving Budget – Provide a small amount of money (\$5 or \$10) each month and let them choose a meaningful way to give. Encourage them to focus on meeting a real need, whether by purchasing an essential item for someone, supporting a cause that helps others, or providing assistance to a friend facing a challenge.

UPPER ELEMENTARY (AGES 8-10): GROWING OWNERSHIP

At this stage, children are beginning to understand the bigger picture of generosity. They are more aware of needs beyond their immediate world and can start making independent decisions about how they give. This is a great time to increase their involvement by letting them take more

ownership of their giving choices while reinforcing the joy and purpose behind generosity.

The goal at this age is to move beyond simple acts of sharing and help children connect giving to their faith, values, and sense of responsibility.

Ways to Help Grow Ownership

Let Them Choose a Ministry to Give to – Present your child with two ministry options and invite them to choose one to support. Share basic information about each ministry in a simple way, explaining what they do and who they help. Ask your child what stands out to them and why they feel drawn to a particular cause. This helps them begin to connect their giving with real needs and develop a heart for generosity.

Encourage Giving from Their Own Earnings – If your child earns money through chores or allowance, help them develop a habit of generosity by setting aside a portion for giving. If they have been using a “Give, Save, Spend” jar, encourage them to take more responsibility for their decisions. Ask them how they want to use what is in their giving jar and talk about how generosity is not just about giving what is left over but trusting God with what He has provided.

Involve Them in Family Giving Decisions – If your fam-

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ily gives to a church, mission, or cause, invite your child to be part of the process. Ask them for their input and encourage them to help make the decision.

Teach Them to Recognize Needs Around Them – Encourage your child to pay attention to how they can give in daily life. This might mean noticing a friend who needs encouragement, helping a neighbor, or setting aside part of their allowance for a specific need they see.

Let Your Child Join the Story - If your family sponsors a child through an organization like Every Orphan's Hope, like the Miller Family from four, give your child an active role. Let them write letters or pray for the child. Talk about how your giving makes a real difference.

Talk About the Impact of Giving – When your child donates or helps someone, follow up by discussing what happened. Ask questions like, “How did that make you feel?” or “What do you think God is teaching you through this?” This helps them connect generosity to joy and spiritual growth.

TWEENS & TEENS (AGES 10+): INTENTIONAL & THOUGHTFUL GIVING

As children grow into their preteen and teenage years, they begin to think more independently and take ownership of

their decisions. This is the time to help them move beyond simple giving and start making intentional, informed choices about where and how they give.

By this stage in your family's generosity journey, giving should feel like a natural part of life, woven into daily habits and conversations. However, if your family is just beginning this journey, do not feel discouraged. It is never too late to grow in generosity together.

If generosity has not been a central part of your home until now, consider taking some time to revisit the foundational habits covered earlier in this Toolbox section. Start with small, intentional steps. A great way to begin is by studying what Scripture says about generosity as a family. You might commit to a Bible reading plan, explore a devotional on giving, or discuss what it means to be stewards of what God has entrusted to you.

Regardless of where you start, trust that God is at work in your family. He knows your children, their hearts, and their unique path of growth. Ask Him to guide your next steps and give you wisdom as you cultivate a spirit of generosity at any stage of life.

Now is the perfect time to equip your preteens and teens with the tools to give wisely. Just as they learn to make thoughtful choices about how they spend their money, they should also be discerning about where they give. With so many organizations doing meaningful work, it is important to help them ask the right questions, research well, and ensure their generosity is making a real impact.

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Teaching Your Children to Evaluate a Ministry

One of the greatest gifts you can give your child is the ability to discern where and how to give wisely. With so many organizations doing good work, it's important to teach your kids how to ask the right questions, do their research, and ensure their generosity is making a real impact. Here's a practical guide to teach your child how to explore a ministry before giving.

HOW TO RESEARCH A MINISTRY BEFORE GIVING

Before deciding to give, take time to explore a ministry's mission, impact, and transparency. Use this checklist to help your family make an informed decision.

Identify the Core Mission

Use the Key Areas for Christian Generosity in the appendix to guide your focus. Visit the ministry's website to learn more about their work and purpose. Look for:

- What does this ministry do? What problem are they addressing?
- Who do they serve? What group of people or region do they impact?
- Is their mission aligned with biblical values? Is Christ at the center of their work?

A great way to do this is by reading the “About Us” section on their site or watching an introduction video if available.

Check for Transparency & Integrity

A well-run ministry should be clear about its finances, leadership, and impact. Here are key indicators to look for:

Financial Stewardship

- Do they share financial reports or an annual impact statement?
- Is it clear how donations are used?
- Are they affiliated with third-party accountability organizations like ECFA (Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability) or GuideStar?

Impact & Stories

- Do they share real-life testimonies and stories?
- Are their goals and results clearly communicated?
- Can you see how lives are being changed through their work?

Consider Long-Term Sustainability

- Does this ministry help people in a way that respects their dignity and builds them up?
- Are they investing in local leaders and engaging the community in their work?
- Are they training and equipping people rather than just providing temporary solutions?

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Taking time to research a ministry ensures that your giving makes a meaningful impact. Walk through this checklist with your child to help them develop discernment and wisdom in generosity.

THE FAMILY GIVING CHALLENGE: PUTTING GENEROSITY INTO ACTION

Now that your child has learned how to research and evaluate ministries, it's time to put those skills into practice. This hands-on challenge allows them to experience generosity firsthand while making informed and intentional giving decisions.

Step 1: Set the Giving Budget & Challenge

Decide on a giving amount that works for your family, whether it's \$20, \$50, or more, and give it to your child to donate. Tell them: "This money isn't just to spend. It's an opportunity to be part of something bigger. Your job is to find a ministry that is doing meaningful work, something that matters to you, and decide where to give."

Step 2: Research at Least Three Ministries Using the Checklist Provided Above

Have your child choose at least three ministries and evaluate them using the three-step approach they've learned:

- **Understand the Mission** – What does this ministry do? Who do they serve? Is their mission centered on Christ?

- **Assess Impact & Integrity** – Are they transparent about their work and financial stewardship? Do they show real stories of change?
- **Engagement & Longevity** – Are they making a lasting difference?

Step 3: Present Their Findings & Make a Decision

At the end of the research period, set aside a family discussion time (like after dinner on a Friday night). Have your child present their findings by sharing:

- What does each ministry do?
- Why were they initially drawn to it?
- Which one do they feel most called to support?

As a family, ask questions and discuss their choice. Then, make the donation together, allowing your child to complete the process.

Step 4: Stay Connected & Pray

After donating, complete the experience by staying connected with the ministry. Together, take these final steps:

- Follow the ministry on social media to see real-time updates.
- Sign up for their emails or newsletters to stay informed.
- End in prayer, thanking God for providing the resources to give and asking Him to bless the ministry, multiply their efforts, and continue guiding your family's generosity.

FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT

Living generously is not about adding another task to your list. It is about embracing a way of life that brings joy, deepens your walk with God, and overflows into the lives of others.

You don't have to do everything at once. Start where you are. Take one step at a time. Choose one or two ways to incorporate generosity into your family's life and build from there.

The goal is not just for your children to give today but to become generous adults who live with open hands and full hearts. As they grow, their understanding of giving will deepen, and their opportunities to live it out will expand.

Trust that the seeds you plant now will take root in ways beyond what you can see today. As you model generosity and invite your children into the journey, God will be faithful to lead your family forward. Step forward confidently, knowing that as you pour out love and generosity, He is pouring into your home in even greater ways. May joy overflow, hope deepen, and love abound as you walk this path together.

APPENDIX

Key Areas of Christian Generosity

Local Needs & Focus Areas
(Community & National Level)

Spiritual Needs

- Bible distribution and evangelism
- Christian education and discipleship programs
- Church planting and revitalization
- Prison ministry and outreach

Family & Community Support

- Crisis pregnancy centers
- Adoption and foster care support
- Assistance for single parents and struggling families
- Ministries for widows and the elderly
- Refugee and immigrant support programs

Poverty & Homelessness

- Food banks and meal programs
- Homeless outreach and shelters
- Job training and employment support
- Affordable housing and transitional programs

Justice & Advocacy

- Anti-human trafficking and exploitation prevention
- Religious freedom advocacy
- Prison ministries and rehabilitation programs

Health & Crisis Care

- Domestic violence shelters and counseling centers
 - Disaster relief and emergency aid
 - Addiction recovery and rehabilitation
 - Christian mental health counseling initiatives
 - Support for families facing cancer or illness
-

Local Needs & Focus Areas
(International Missions & Outreach)

Spiritual Needs

- Bible translation for unreached people groups
- Missionary support and church planting
- Pastoral training and theological education
- Digital evangelism and Gospel media outreach

Global Poverty & Hunger

- Clean water projects
- Malnutrition treatment and feeding programs
- Child sponsorship and poverty relief
- Sustainable farming and food security

Orphan Care & Vulnerable Children

- Orphan care ministries
- Family-based care and foster support
- Education, food, and healthcare for vulnerable children
- Trauma-informed care for children in crisis

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Refugees & Persecuted Communities

- Aid for Christian refugees fleeing persecution
- Support for underground churches in restricted nations
- Bible and discipleship resources for persecuted believers

Religious freedom advocacy

- Humanitarian Aid & Medical Missions
- Medical clinics and hospitals in underserved regions
- Missionary doctors and nurses
- Medical supplies for war and disaster zones
- Trauma counseling for war and abuse survivors

Justice & Human Dignity

- Human trafficking rescue and rehabilitation
- Anti-slavery initiatives
- Legal aid for persecuted believers
- Fair trade and ethical labor advocacy

Education & Economic Development

- Christian schools in impoverished areas
- Scholarships for children and young adults
- Vocational training and skills development
- Financial literacy and microbusiness support