

# GENEROUS LIVING

6-DAY DEVOTIONAL

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This 6-day reading plan features devotions that will inspire you to open your heart and home in generosity and hospitality. Each day's reading shares about a woman in American history whose life exemplified these characteristics. Readings are drawn from the American Woman's Bible published by HarperCollins Christian Publishing.

- DAY 1:** Rose Hawthorne Lathrop: Generosity . . . a Way of Life
- DAY 2:** Nettie Fowler McCormick: Dedicated Christian Philanthropist
- DAY 3:** Evelyn LeTourneau: Charity As a Way of Life
- DAY 4:** Eva McGown: Self-Appointed Welcoming Committee
- DAY 5:** Catherin Coffin: Entertaining Strangers
- DAY 6:** Martha Washington: Treating Others with Hospitality

# DAY 1

*There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.*

**Proverbs 11:24-25**

## Rose Hawthorne Lathrop: Generosity . . . a Way of Life

True generosity is not about the willingness to part with money and possessions. It is about a way of life and an attitude of the heart.

The generous life is one in which giving is simply an outworking of an inner conviction. It is a life of outward focus. Jesus said, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:33). The pursuit, then, should not be riches, but God’s kingdom.

The truly generous one is the one who pursues God and allows the Lord’s love to flow through every action of life. True generosity is giving prompted by love, regardless of the self-sacrifice involved.

God has given freely to us. When we live in the light of this truth, we want to freely give back to Him and to others. Second Corinthians 9:7 says that we should give “not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.” We can give cheerfully because we are thankful for what we

have been given and we know the blessing that comes from being generous with our time, our talents, and, yes, our money. This truth hasn’t changed from the time Jesus walked the earth until now.

Rose Hawthorne Lathrop, who gave generously of her time, resources, and life to minister to cancer patients, saw it this way: “If time made any alterations in so vital a matter as the best methods of charity, Christ would have told us so . . . He has not said a word to contradict His first teaching, simple, direct, unavoidable, leading to personal sacrifice and immediate Holy love.” That is a generous life indeed.

# DAY 2

*Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.*

**Luke 6:38**

## Nettie Fowler McCormick: Dedicated Christian Philanthropist

The heart and soul of Nettie Fowler McCormick is revealed in this well-known quote: Usefulness is the great thing in life—to do something for others leaves a sweeter odor than a life of pleasure.”

Born in Brownville, New York, Nettie was seven when her parents died and she went to live with her grandmother. A serious child with a determined, strong character, her parents’ death taught her that life was short, and she wanted to make her life count for God.

When Nettie was twenty-one, she was introduced to Cyrus McCormick, the wealthy inventor of the McCormick grain reaper. Despite the difference in their age—he was twenty-five years older—the couple married in 1858. Nettie and Cyrus had seven children, two of whom died in childhood.

The Great Chicago Fire of 1871 destroyed the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company’s factory. Cyrus had already made a fortune and he considered not rebuilding and simply retiring. When Nettie disagreed, Cyrus allowed her to make the decision, as he realized she and the children would be there long after he was gone.

Nettie oversaw the construction of a larger factory, which opened less than eighteen months after the fire. Nettie assisted

Cyrus in running the plant and later, when their son took over the family business, advised him. Her correspondence with her son included legal issues, strikes, business and investments, and the problems that arose when they consolidated to form the International Harvester Company.

Nettie believed that their money was a sacred trust to be used for good. She became a generous and dedicated Christian philanthropist. She gave large sums for colleges and hospitals in foreign lands, donated to American colleges and helped found at least forty- six schools. One of the family’s favorite projects was the McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, giving over four million dollars into this project.

Nettie helped improve the Southern mountain schools, introducing courses in domestic science and manual training. She was instrumental in setting up churches in the area and started Sunday school classes. She also performed “small kindnesses,” such as paying for a young man’s dental work or arranging for the care of a minister’s sick wife

To a friend, she remarked, “Yes, money is power, as you have said, but I have always tried not to trust in it, but rather to use it for the glory of my Master.”

# DAY 3

*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

**Acts 20:35**

## Evelyn LeTourneau: Charity As a Way of Life

From humble beginnings, R. G. and Evelyn “Mom” LeTourneau would impact not only American industry and education, but also the lives of countless young people. Evelyn fell in love with R. G. while she was a young girl and the couple eloped when she was sixteen. Despite the fact that R. G. had no training (he had to drop out of school during the eighth grade), he was a hard worker and loved inventing things; Evelyn was behind him all the way.

Tragedy struck when the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918 took the life of their infant son. Although raised in Christian homes, R. G. and Evelyn had not considered God as important in their own lives. Their loss and grief caused them to reassess their priorities. In a complete turnaround, they committed their lives to the Lord and immediately began looking for ways to serve Him. They took children to Sunday school and opened their home to anyone in need of a meal, a Bible study, or just some mothering.

In 1929, while the rest of the country was reeling from the stock market crash that led to the Great Depression, R. G. and Evelyn founded R. G. LeTourneau, Inc. The company developed the world’s largest earth-moving machinery, which would

revolutionize construction and road building. A success from the beginning, it wasn’t long before the company earned a half million-dollar profit.

The young couple did not know what to do with such prosperity. “The most I’ve ever spent in my life on a house is \$5,000,” Evelyn told R.G. “It’s too much money.” They created the LeTourneau Foundation in 1935 to handle the charitable side of the business, and consistently gave away 90 percent of their income.

Reaching out to homeless boys, R. G. trained and employed them, while Evelyn opened their home, becoming “Mom” to twenty to thirty boys at a time. Many of these boys became part of their family, moving with them whenever the LeTourneaus opened new plants in different parts of the country.

In 1969, the year that R. G. died, Evelyn was chosen as the Mother of the Year by the American Mothers, Inc., an organization that promotes and honors mothers among the fifty states, DC and Puerto Rico.

# DAY 4

*Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days.*

**Ecclesiastes 11:1**

## Eva McGown: Self-Appointed Welcoming Committee

Eva McGown was hired to act as the hostess of Fairbanks, Alaska. In reality, her employment was simply an official recognition for what she had been doing unofficially for years.

In 1914, Eva Montgomery journeyed toward Alaska; traveling alone from Ireland, crossing America, and sailing up the Canadian coast was a daunting task for a single young lady. But Eva persevered and eventually arrived in the frozen Arctic; she was overwhelmed by the impressive, but intimidating land: huge mountains, never-ending storms, and seemingly interminable long nights. Though wrought with trepidation, Eva faced her fears; her future husband, Arthur McGown, was waiting for her.

Eva and Arthur enjoyed a very happy union. Eva was devastated when her husband died unexpectedly. Being left alone in her adopted home, she knew she needed to keep busy. "It came to me that perhaps now I could begin the work I had felt long ago I would find here. I did not know just what it was. I went to the wee church my husband took me to only a few days after our marriage, and I knelt down and said, 'Lord, I'm ready.'"

Remembering her own feelings on arriving in Alaska, she began visiting the newcomers, telling them that she knew they were "down in the valley," and then encouraging them, saying, "but you should see the fine sights beyond it!"

When World War II came, she was officially put on the payroll to find homes for the civilians who accompanied the servicemen to Alaska. After the war, an influx of new people flooded in, and Eva continued to help with the housing needs. Her modest comment about herself was, "I gave what I could, but I got it back a thousand fold."

# DAY 5

*Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.*

**Genesis 18:2**

## Catherin Coffin: Entertaining Strangers

Nicknamed “the Grand Central Station of the Underground Railroad, the home of Levi and Catherine Coffin in Cincinnati— just across the Ohio River from Kentucky— became a natural stopover for slaves escaping from the South to the free state of Ohio.

When the Fugitive Slave Act was passed in 1850, making it illegal to aid a runaway slave under threat of imprisonment or a fine, Catherine and Levi made no change in their activities. To their critics they invariably replied that, according to Scripture, they were duty-bound to help any individual who came to their door.

While some might have grown weary of the constant stream of visitors, Catherine cheerfully served the refugees by cooking for them, collecting donations, washing their clothing, listening to their troubles, helping them find employment, and assisting in smuggling them to safer locations.

In her warm and hospitable home, she offered to many their first experience of interracial friendship and Christian care.

# DAY 6

*The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.*

**Leviticus 19:34**

## Martha Washington: Treating Others with Hospitality

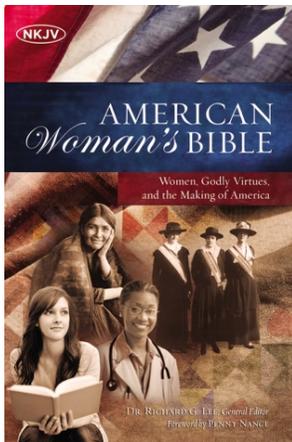
Some people have the natural inclination to befriend others easily; other folk have a quiet and reserved manner.

Hospitality may come more naturally to the outgoing, but it can be practiced by all of us. As a matter of fact, 1 Peter 4:9 tells us we should show hospitality “without grumbling.” This hospitality can have many faces. Maybe we simply make others feel welcome and at ease in our homes or churches or places of business. Maybe we open our homes for meals or other fellowship events. Maybe we reach out to others who are new in our communities or churches.

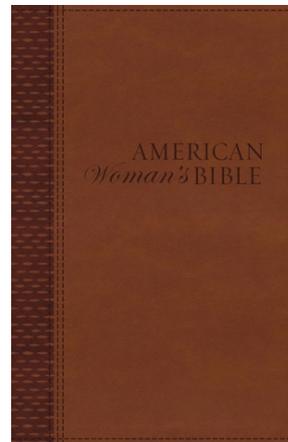
Most of us can probably remember a time when someone was hospitable toward us. Perhaps it was that awkward moment when we were at a new church, considering turning around and leaving until someone approached and simply spoke to us. It might have been a time when we felt uncomfortable in a new environment and someone chose to reach out and include us in a conversation or activity.

Martha Washington was known as a lady with decorum and class, but she also had a way to make people feel at ease in her presence. As America’s first “first lady,” she set a wonderful example of how we can all treat others with hospitality.

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