

Are you too generous at church?

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Is it possible to be too generous? I think so. Church leaders can be too generous with their money, their time, and their forgiveness, in ways that are not good for them or the people they are being generous with.

1. Are you too generous with your money? Some people actually give away too much money. It's important to be appropriately generous. Do you know how much money you give away? Sit down and figure it out as a percentage of your income. For some, an appropriate goal is to give less and save more for their own future.

You should at least know how much you give in dollars and as a percentage of your income. Then you can make a thoughtful choice about whether you may want to give less, and what to do with that money instead.

You should also know where you fall in the list of givers to your church. If you are the biggest single giver, the church may be too dependent on you. You may not choose to give less, but you can have a conversation with key leaders about this fact, and how to encourage others to give more.

2. Are you too generous with your time? You may be giving too much of your time away. When you spend large chunks of time with anyone who asks for it, you allow others to set your agenda. The people at church who repeatedly ask you to do this are usually the most unregulated. When you say yes to their constant demands for your time, you do not help them. Instead, you teach them to be dependent on you. They need someone to say no to them more often. And if you are going to keep moving toward your own ministry goals, you need to say no.

Of course, ministry does sometimes mean you set your own agenda aside to spend time with others. However, if you constantly put your goals last, you will never move forward on the initiatives that matter most to you.

3. Are you too generous with your forgiveness? What I mean by this is continually tolerating bad behavior in people who don't want to take responsibility

for themselves. We often say, "Let's give him another chance." This is related to item no. 2. Church leaders often are too accommodating to staff, volunteers, and members who lack boundaries and repeatedly don't fulfill their responsibilities. You will help them more if you expect them to carry out their commitments.

When you set limits with people like this, they will think you are mean. Just because they think you are mean, it doesn't follow that they are right. In fact, it can be kinder to set higher expectations with someone than to continually accommodate them. You help them grow.

Of course I don't mean we withhold forgiveness. But I do mean there need to be consequences for bad behavior. Holding people to account is good for everyone.

I believe in generosity and in encouraging ourselves to become more generous with our resources, including our time and emotional energy. But I recommend you be thoughtful as you give of yourself. Know when to draw the line with money, time, and your willingness to be flexible with others. Remember, only God has infinite resources.

Where do you show too much generosity?

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