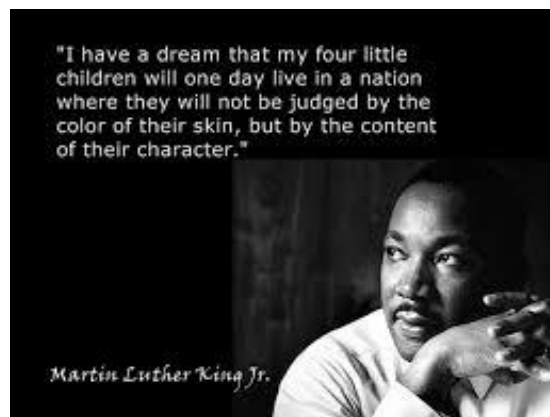




A dream of a global Christian culture of Biblical stewardship, generous living and Kingdom focused giving
Dr Sas Conradie¹

One of the most famous speeches of all time is Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I have a dream' speech on 28 August 1963 in Washington. Dr King's dream inspired Americans to address racial segregation and racism. Without that dream, President Barack Obama would never have become president. I believe every person needs to have a dream. A dream that gives hope for the future. A dream that helps to focus in personal and corporate ministry. A dream that motivates to continue until it had been achieved.



And yes, I also have a dream - a global Christian culture of Biblical stewardship, generous living and Kingdom focused giving. Before I share my dream, which is also that of the Global Generosity Network, let me first give explanations for the words I am using:

- **Stewardship** is a value that embodies responsible planning and management of resources. This could include money, time, talents, gifts, environment, material resources and relationships.
- **Generosity** is the habit of giving and sharing freely without expecting anything in return. It can involve offering time, assets, money, hospitality, talents, prayer, ideas, connections or any other resources to aid a person or people in need.
- **Giving** is a specific transfer in which something is presented voluntarily and without expectation of compensation.

My dream is quite easy:

- that all Christians and groups of Christians will manage the resources God has given them wisely;
- that all Christians and groups of Christians will have the habit of sharing freely with others what God had given them. Generous living should become a life-style of every Christian;
- that all Christians and groups of Christians will give financially to their full potential so that:
 - ministries, churches and givers will reach their full potential;
 - the Whole Church is resourced to take the Whole Gospel to the Whole World;
 - individuals and communities are transformed;
 - the Kingdom of God become a reality in all communities across the world.

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A Christian dream of has to be based on biblical principles. Just as my dream is simple, so are the biblical principles that underpin this dream:

- **God is indescribably generous.** We see this in his creation and experience it in his redemption plan through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ (John 3:16). He is the creator, the source and the sustainer of all things. In Acts 17:24, Paul says, 'The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth,' and in 17:25, the apostle adds that God 'himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else'. Because of what He gave us, 'we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28). Without God's generosity, no life would have been possible!
- **God is the owner of everything** (Psalm 24:1), but from 'one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth' (Acts 17:26) and manage its resources. He gave us His resources to steward for His Kingdom purposes. We are therefore accountable to God for the way we manage those resources (Genesis 1:16-30), as is clear from the parable of the wise manager (Luke 12:42-48).
- **Generosity is a primary indicator of our understanding of our role as stewards of God's creation** (Matthew 6:21). This generosity is not limited to tangible resources and money but is best understood as an extension of all God has entrusted to our care – that is, life, breath, relationships, roles, skills, time, grace and much more (1 Corinthians 4:1). Mankind has the duty and privilege to generate more resources through effective stewardship (Matthew 25:14-30).
- **Generosity is fundamental in the definition of being a disciple of Christ and in fully reflecting the image of our creator** (2 Corinthians 8:7). All believers – rich, poor, young, old, male, female – regardless of position, culture, occupation or nationality, are called to live generously! As such, there are no preconditions for being generous or for encouraging any kind of generosity among others, and that includes financial and material generosity.
- **Just as Jesus, the ultimate gift from God, lived a truly and perfectly generous life to serve and save people** (Mark 10:45, 2 Corinthians 9:8-9), it remains fundamental that Christians model biblical stewardship, generosity and giving (Mark 10:45, Acts 11:29-30, 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2 Corinthians 9:8-9). This generosity is both a God-given privilege and a learned grace to be modelled and taught by all pastors, ministry leaders, and those that teach and equip believers (2 Corinthians 8:1-7, 1 Timothy 6:17-19).
- **Personal motivations for giving ought to reflect sound biblical precepts and God-centred concerns** (2 Corinthians 9:7). We should give so that the glory of His name will reach the ends of the earth (Revelation 7:9-12) and so that needs are met (Matthew 25:31-46).

In a world that is characterized by socio-economic inequality, poverty, materialism, greed, and corruption this dream lived out by Christians is urgently needed. The [Cape Town Commitment](#) is quite clear that a Biblical lifestyle includes generosity, self-denial and hospitality - 'Above all we must replace self-interest and greed with the biblical teaching on self-sacrifice and generous giving as the marks of true discipleship to Christ'. Unfortunately this emphasis on stewardship, generous living and giving as an integrated part of whole-life discipleship is not always evident in the Christian community.

Praise God for indications that my dream might become a reality:

- [Mision Urbana](#) in Spain encourages generosity through local Christian involvement.
- The ['Handful of Rice' movement](#) by Christians in Mizoram, India has become world famous.
- There is a growing movement of [Generous Businesses](#) where all assets are seen as belonging to God and managed as such.
- [Churches in Guatemala](#) used the 40 Day Generous Life devotional to instruct people in Biblical principles of finances, to inspire greater generosity, and to increase giving to serve those in need.

- In June 2013 60 [South Asian Christian leaders](#) agreed on a plan of action to catalyse Biblical Stewardship, generous living and Kingdom-focused giving across the region. A generosity movement starts to emerge in the region.



The Handful of Rice movement (Buhfai tham) of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church in India has inspired Christians across the world towards greater generosity

- The [Mission Africa Trust Fund](#) is a new initiative to encourage mission giving within Africa.
- The [Church of England](#) has developed an excellent stewardship structure with a Christian Stewardship Committee, National Stewardship Department, national stewardship officer, stewardship departments in dioceses and local church stewardship officers. A wide range of resources to support all aspects of stewardship and giving in the local church is provided through a National Stewardship Department website called [Parish Resources](#).
- A [National Generosity Network](#) had been launched in India to encourage Indian Christians to be good stewards, live generously and give to their full potential to Christian causes. This Network is now organising [generosity summits](#) in India.
- [Generosity Consultations and Training](#) that are organized in various countries and regions receive broad interest. A church leader from a South Asian country travelled for 4 days to attend such a consultation.
- [Journey of Generosity retreats and Celebrations of Generosity](#) are well attended in Asia, Europe and North America.
- The [generosity resources](#) that the Global Generosity Network posts on the Internet receive widespread interest. These resources are then used in preaching, teaching and publication – sometimes in the most unexpected places.

My dream is definitely not only my dream. It is not only even the dream of the Global Generosity Network. This dream is today shared by a growing number of Christians across the world. I want to invite every Christian in the world to become part of this movement:

- **Manage the resources God has given you well, share what God has given you with others and give financially to your full ability to your church and ministries.**
- **Sign the [Individual Generosity Declaration](#)** as commitment to a generous lifestyle and start living generously.
- Ask alliances, churches, ministries or other Christian bodies to **sign the [Corporate Generosity Declaration](#)** and help the organization **design a stewardship, generosity and giving plan of action.**
- **Encourage** other Christians, churches, ministries, fellowships and networks **to sign the generosity declarations.**
- Organise **generosity consultations, workshops, celebrations and [campaigns](#)** in countries, churches, villages, towns and cities.
- Contact the Global Generosity Network for **training in stewardship, generosity and giving.**
- **Use the resources** posted on the [Lausanne Conversation](#) and [Global Generosity Network website](#) in preaching, teaching and living.

- **Read the blogs and other information** on the [Global Generosity Network website](#).
- **Send stories and information** about stewardship, generous living and Kingdom-focused giving that will inspire others to my email address (ggncoord@gmail.com).
- Look out for the book entitled '**Christ-Centered Generosity**' that will be published in March 2015. The book will include contributions, stories and reflections from across the world.
- Take the '**7 Day Generosity Challenge**' when it is launched in 2015. More information will be provided in Christian Institute of Management India communications.

Everywhere I go and look nowadays I see a generosity emphasis. We praise God for that. He is definitely doing something among Christians. A company in the US has a marketing strapline of 'Amplifying generosity'. African Christians are called to 'model generosity in the face of hunger and poverty' in an information outline on the church's response to challenges in Africa. Just think what can happen if every Christian in the world will become a good steward, live generously and gives financially to his/her full potential to Christian causes. Corruption will come to an end. The love of Christ will be shown to people with needs. People will be cared for and will have enough to eat and drink. Churches and ministries will not struggle financially anymore. The world will be transformed! This is my dream for all Christians. I hope that every reader will make this dream a reality. I will pray for that. Please join the Global Generosity Network as we make this dream a reality.