Created in the Image of a Giving God
Across faith traditions, giving is often at the heart of religious teaching & practice, but why?

Marc L. Kirchoff, D. Min.
December 2015

In the creation stories of the Hebrew scriptures, the creation of humanity is celebrated with a psalm. It is a tribute to the crowning achievement of creation – human life – the best of the good. Humanity was and is something special in creation. They, man and woman, and only they, were created in God’s own image.

In practical terms, what does it mean to be created in the image of God? I like to have fun with small groups and ask questions like:

- What color hair does God have?
- Are God’s eyes blue or brown?
- How tall is God?
- Is God left-handed or right-handed?

I do this to point out that these traits are irrelevant in terms of God’s image. All humanity is created in the image of God – blondes and redheads, large and small, no matter what we look like physically, we all bear the image of God.

So, within the Judeo-Christian tradition, what traits would we attribute to both God and humanity? We could brainstorm several thoughts...

- the ability to make rational decisions
- freedom of will
- love
- forgiveness
- happiness
- hope

One other quality must surely be on that list – generosity. A part of God that is inherent in every human being is the capacity, the need to give. Generosity is clearly a part of God’s nature. After creating humanity, God gave the plants as food for both humanity and the animals. God gave Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Jesus taught us in parabolic story that God is a generous father.
And for some two thousand years, Christians have taught their children that God's love is shown to us in the form of God's one and only son who was given in order that all who believe might be saved for eternal life.

Can it be any more obvious that God's image includes an aptitude toward giving?

And we, being created in God's image, have within us this same inclination. It is against our natural instincts to be stingy.

Most people, when presented with a real need, and asked in a nice way for a contribution to a worthy project, are more than happy to give.

In his book, *Being Me*, the late Grady Nutt wrote,

“I honestly believe that there beats in the breast of every person a desire to exert a dramatic influence on the course of life.”¹

God has instilled in us a characteristic, an instinct, an urge to exert dramatic influence on life. It is a part of that image which God used as a model for creating us. That image is generosity. We cannot help but give. Not to give is to be something less than human – something less than God's image.

by Marc Kirchoff
Certified instructor for Lake Institute on Faith & Giving's Executive Certificate in Religious Fundraising
Director of Development at The Foundation for Evangelism