

Outgiving the Best Philanthropists

You've got to love the stories of philanthropists—those who give away large sums of money through donations, trusts, and foundations.

- Warren Buffet gives away 99% of his wealth. In 2017, he gave away \$2.8 billion.
- Bill and Melinda Gates have set up a foundation out of their wealth that is the world's largest philanthropic foundation. Gates does not believe in God, but he does believe in taking his fortune from Microsoft to help others—and his foundation encourages others to give.
- The Walton family behind the massive Wal-Mart corporation gave away \$536 million in 2017.
- In a recent blog, I wrote about Nathan Straus, the co-owner of Macy's who made it the massive department store we know. He was incredibly generous with his fortune.



I could go on and on about the generosity of those with wealth and/or power, but let's turn back to our own attitudes about such philanthropy. Admit it; you're thinking the same way I am: *"If I had that kind of money, I'd give away 99% of it too."*

That sounds so noble and sacrificial, but if you had \$87 billion (Warren Buffet's net worth) and chose to live on a mere 1%, you'd still have \$800 million to scrape by on. Nathan Straus believed in giving away his wealth while he was alive, and when he died he only had \$1 million in his account.

As generous as he was, he still had one million dollars!

I'm not disparaging their gifts and generosity, but let's compare that to someone who gave away 100%.

"He looked up and saw the rich dropping their offerings into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow dropping in two tiny coins. 'Truly I tell you,' he said, 'this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For all these people have put in gifts out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on'" (Luke 21:1-4).

It doesn't take faith to give millions out of our surplus. It doesn't take sacrifice to give millions out of our surplus. It doesn't take love to give millions out of our surplus.

The billions of dollars given by the big names accomplish much good in our world. But what we give sacrificially out of love for God accomplishes incredible good in our hearts and walk with Christ. The two tiny coins this nameless widow gave didn't add much to the bottom line of what the temple treasury took in that day, but that's not the point.



The point is that she gave. The point is that her gift required faith and trust. She didn't give 99% of what she had, leaving a 1% surplus to live on. Her 100% gift

required total trust for how she would live the rest of the day and the rest of her life.

So why did she do it? While Jesus did not tell us nor did Luke give any hint, I can't help but believe that her gift was motivated by her knowledge of who God is and how He works. She gave in response to God's grace and work in her life; she loved God because He first loved her.

I'd love to be a Warren Buffet who lives comfortably while giving away billions, but I'd rather be like this anonymous widow.

- *"Don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don't break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt 6:19-21).*
- *"God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8).*

She gave all she had, but she gained so much more.