

In worship on October 16 Barry Adams, Rob Addis, Ashley Hicks and Scott Sampson shared in their own words and from their own experiences what ***Generous Living*** means to them. Click on the link below to read their manuscripts.

[Barry Adams](#) (8:45)

[Rob Addis](#) (11:00 am)

[Ashley Hicks](#) (8:45 and 11:00 am)

[Scott Sampson](#) (8:45 and 11:00 am)

Barry Adams

Sunday mornings in Johnston, SC in the 50's and 60's had absolutely no variety. If you lived in the Adams' house, you went to church and there was no freedom of choice for my brother, sister or me.

So, why did I start the habit of worship? It was because Bill and Deloris Adams gave me no other options.

But Sunday afternoons during those years held more variety for sure. Football, baseball, fishing....for some reason we could fish on Sunday afternoon but we couldn't hunt. Or....we just drove around the county looking for stuff that needed investigating.

They really shouldn't have allowed 14 year old boys to drive automobiles.

That Sunday afternoon in 1963 the old Warren house needed investigating.

There were 12 of us who needed desperately to dispel or confirm the rumor that the old house out in the country, formerly occupied by two old maid sisters, was not haunted.

And so, we surrounded the house, peering into the windows; checking out the barns; looking for signs of ghosts and goblins.

Danny's voice pierced that late afternoon's "investigation". "Ya'll come here," he said, with an unusual bit of quiver in his command. Perhaps he had found a ghost! So we headed around to the front of the house only to find Danny standing next to Mr. Jeff Wright who was a very real and very tall man.

I knew Mr. Wright because I had seen him in church every Sunday for as long as I could remember but I didn't think he knew me. Mr. Wright was a farmer and had been asked by the family of the Warren sisters to watch over their house since they were now in a nursing home.

Mr. Wright lined us up and talked to us about trespassing and how we needed to spend our time not being juvenile delinquents. He said that he intended to call all of our dads and tell them that he was not pressing charges but that we had been caught doing something we shouldn't have been doing.

So, down the line he started. "Son, what's your name?" "Danny Johnson", the first boy in line said. "And is your dad Tupper Johnson?" he asked. "Yes sir", Danny replied, staring at the ground. And to the second boy he asked, "son what's your name?" "Hal Knight", he replied. "And is your dad Bill Knight?" "Yes sir."

Now, I was #11 in a line of 12 boys. And I thought, this old man isn't writing down any names (or dads). There is no way that he is going to remember all of our names, I thought. My friends are not smart at all because every one of them is giving him their real name!

And so down the line he went. "Son, what's your name? Is your Dad...?"

When he finally got to me I knew exactly what I what I would be compelled to say. "Son, what's your name he asked?" And with only the slightest hesitation, I answered..."Roger Smith." "And is your dad Earle Smith?" "Yes sir", I replied, with perhaps a little too much enthusiasm.

For about 4 seconds, I thought, I am the smartest 14 year old in Edgefield County. That was, until I heard him ask the last boy in line, "son what's your name?" And I knew immediately what the answer would be. "Barry Adams", he said. "And is your dad Bill Adams?" "Yes sir", he replied, with only the slightest grin on his face.

You know, Mr. Jeff Wright called every one of our dads that afternoon except mine. But that night at the Sunday evening worship service at FBC, I heard the now too familiar voice of Mr. Jeff Wright calling out to my dad as the benediction ended. And the gig was up and I was grounded once again.

But, here's the odd thing to me about this story. Mr. Wright never mentioned this incident again to me or my friends or our dads.

Why did I start coming to church? Because my parents made me.

Why do I keep coming to church? Because beginning when I was young, people like Mr. Jeff Wright gave me a glimpse of what Christ is like.

He forgave me when I wronged him.

He showed a Christ-like love for me when I tried to deceive him.

He helped me accept the discipline that I deserved.

He encouraged me and supported me as a teenager and then as an adult.

And, he forgot about my sin.

Why do I come to FBC Aiken? Because there are a number of Jeff Wrights who are sitting in these pews right now.

And week-end and week-out you forgive; you forget about the sins of others; and you encourage and support those of us who don't deserve your kindness.

And I thank God every week for the privilege of worshiping with you at FBC Aiken.

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Rob Addis

Good morning! My wife, Diane, and I have been members at Aiken First Baptist church for just over 2 years. We came here looking for a loving and caring church home. That is what we found here at First Baptist.

We joined First Baptist and became active immediately, joining the Adult 3 Sunday School class and Wednesday night suppers and service. After about a year, Dr. Hasty approached me to see if I would teach one Sunday a month in the Adult 5 Truth Seekers Sunday School class. A very fine lady, Sally Gregory, was reaching a milestone: she had just completed 3 score and 10 years of teaching Sunday School and felt it was time to hand over that responsibility to another. I'm sure she has taught many of you! The Truth Seekers Class is a class of spiritually mature ladies who wanted a man's perspective.

Diane and I were very happy in the Adult 3 Sunday School class, so we prayed about it. I felt that the Lord was leading me to move to the Truth Seekers Class. Since Diane and I have always have attended the same Sunday School Class, I asked her if she would to join with me, which she did.

This Sunday School class has been a true blessing to both of us. We have learned far more from these lovely ladies than we could possibly teach them.

Pastor Andrea says that I am the sole lion in a den of Daniels!

These ladies have grown spiritually as they have lived full lives, many raising children, grandchildren, and some even great grandchildren. It is indeed a privilege to be allowed to serve in this class. As a man, seeing how these women, from a different generation, interact with each other: loving, caring, supporting, laughing and grieving with each other, is a living witness of Christ at work in their lives.

As many of you know, three months ago, our 26 year old son Andrew, who is a Second Lieutenant in the US Army, was called to serve in one of the remotest posts in Afghanistan. He leads a platoon of 30 American soldiers, most little more than kids in their late teens or early 20's. He also leads half a dozen infantry soldiers in the Afghan National Army. He is located only a few yards from the border with Pakistan. You can imagine how we feel about having our son on the front lines of this war.

Before leaving, Fred asked Andrew if he wanted to have Aiken First Baptist be his church home. Andrew said, "Well Sir, you know that I won't be able to attend very often?" Fred said that that

would be fine. Actually, Andrew has had 100% attendance: every time he has been in Aiken, he has attended Sunday school and church!!

Let me tell you from our first-hand experience: Our church knows that love is not a noun describing a gushy feeling. You, our church family, know that love is an active verb. Not only did our Truth Seeker Sunday School class send cards and parcels with goodies for Andrew and his men, but so too did the Adult 3 Sunday School class we had just left, as well as the Adult 4 Sunday School class! Betty McNorrill helped organize support from our Truth Seekers class and Francine Alsbrooks and Susan Myers from Adult 3, and Lionel and Dot Smith, who have known Andrew since he was a 12 year old, brought Andrew to the attention of their Adult 4 Sunday School class president Wayne Day. Many members organized packages. Not to be out-done, Vicky McCullough also organized packages sent from the children. So many boxes were sent, Andrew and his platoon were overwhelmed with the generosity of our church!

But, as important as letters, cards, emails and packages may be, it is more important to pray.

Andrew always tells us on the phone to remind “his ladies”, as he calls the members of the Truth Seeker Sunday School class, and the church members, to pray. Andrew’s platoon has been ambushed, shot at with machine guns, rifles and small arms fire. They have even been attacked by a car bomb: a black SUV with 1000 lbs of explosive. They are in a dangerous part of Afghanistan and they definitely need our prayers.

Diane and I attend Wednesday night services for the fellowship and the good food. It is usually a hustle getting there on time because we both work a good 30 minutes away from Aiken; nevertheless, we always make it before the lovely ladies finish serving! They are always so gracious to everyone they serve. There is always good fellowship as we eat dinner, sing a couple of old favorites and enjoy a lesson. The conversations around the table are a great way to get to know folks.

Giving is the surest way to receive in God’s economy! The more we give, of ourselves or our resources, the more we receive. The world’s economy and God’s economy of love are exactly opposite.

Diane and I have found what we were looking for here at Aiken First Baptist church:

a loving and caring church family.

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Ashley Hicks

Good morning! My name is Ashley Hicks. I am 19 years old and a sophomore at USC. Many of you know that I've grown up here, in this church. This church has had a major influence in my life and continues to do so. I have felt so loved and I know I can always count on this place for support in anything I do. I learned at a very young age while I was in mission friends and GA's that I really loved helping others and I was drawn to loving those who have come from a different place than I had. In middle school and high school, I went on every mission trip that I could. I grew and learned to love even more each time. After each trip, I couldn't help but think, "What if I did more? What if I stay and continue building these relationships?" But instead, I would just get in the car to leave and go back home, back to my community, back to my routine. I often think about the people that I have worked with over the years, like those in Tennessee at the Wherry Project, those in Romania at the Ruth Project, those in Atlanta at the Stewart Center. I am so thankful for the opportunities that I have had to love and serve and I am so thankful for your support that has kept me going and helped me grow into who I am today.

When I was a senior in high school I heard we were going to the Stewart Center for our youth mission trip that year, a place that I had been before, a place that I was already connected to, a place that you, as a congregation, supported from the start. Last summer I made a decision that I never knew would affect me so much in the future. I heard that the Stewart Center was looking for interns for the next summer. I knew right away that I wanted to be there and I wasn't going to give up this opportunity. Long story short, I talked to the director of the center, he said he would love to have me, and I applied through Student.Go which is a program through CBF Global Missions that allows students to serve among the most neglected – something that holds a special place in my heart. So, for a year, I planned to be in Atlanta for 9 weeks.

After I spent those 9 weeks in Atlanta this summer, I find my mind drifting to things that happened. When I sat down to think about what I wanted to share with you, it was very difficult to narrow it down. I had to ask myself, "Well what was your favorite part?" Answer: All of it. Next question, "What do you want to share with everyone." Answer: Everything. Don't worry, I know there isn't enough time for that but I hope you can see how wonderful and impactful my summer was just through a few stories that I would like to share with you. This summer, I experienced things that I have never experienced before, felt things that I have never felt before, and thought things that I never thought before. This summer, the Andrew P. Stewart Center became my home and my community. I fell in love with the neighborhood, the kids, and the people that I worked with. When I think of my summer, a few words come to mind: joy,

love, and community. I left Aiken at the beginning of June to start my new journey; I was ready for a summer of change, rebirth, serving, sharing, loving, experiencing. So, here's my story and why my life has been forever changed.

First, let me give you an idea about what my job was. My job was to be a camp counselor specifically to 15 sweet four and five year olds. When I met them the first day, I fell in love and immediately found a place in my heart for them. I was in charge of taking them around to each station which included: JumpStart (an educational program to keep their minds fresh for school), Bible story, crafts, and recreation. I was the one of the counselors who kids ran to for anything whether it was a question, for guidance, or even just a hug. I was amazed how diverse my group was. I had the talker, the athletic one, the one who always looks confused, the cute one. I had the shy one, the artistic one, the funny one, and the one that you always find laughing. And the list goes on. The first thing that one of my kids said to me on the first day was, "Miss Ashley, you sound like a cowgirl!" I knew from then on that I had a stronger southern accent than I realized and that I was in for something good, I was in for a sweet journey. Even though I was in charge of a certain group, I built a relationship with every child. The things I have found the most joy in were the simple things. The random hugs throughout the day—you know the hugs from a child who is sharing their love with you, when their arms are tightly around your waist and their sweaty faces on your stomach, squeezing you as tight as they possibly can- a great example of pure, simple joy.

I also found joy in pushing open the back door and seeing little faces against the fence, waiting to get it in and start the day. Every time a child smiled, every time I felt their arms around me and big eyes looking up at me, every time I heard laughter or singing, I felt God, I saw God in those faces, I was overjoyed.

Once some of the kids started figuring out that we weren't going anywhere and that we would be there for the whole summer, they started visiting us after camp. The first visit they showed up an hour after camp, the second they showed up 30 minutes after camp, and the next time was 10 minutes after camp. Do you see where this is going? Before we knew it, they would run home and then turn around to head back to the center to hang out with us. They had a fascination with doing stuff that they couldn't do during a normal day of camp. This included playing with our phones and computers and being able to run freely, chasing each other through the hallways. They never wanted to leave and we never wanted them to leave either. There was something about that time that felt so real. We could put our counselor role aside and be their true friend. We would run to the door every time someone knocked, even on the weekend, hoping it would be our young friends wanting to hang out with us.

My heart was so happy throughout the whole summer and I was so full of joy. I recently read that "Joy is the feeling of grinning on the inside." That's the best description of a feeling that's so indescribable. That's how I felt.

Not only was my summer full of joy, but it was full of relationships that were being built and love that was being shared. I found that one of the greatest things about building a relationship with someone is hearing their stories and sharing your own. As the summer progressed, I learned things about my kids and my teammates, I learned about their past, I learned about their families, I learned whose cousins were who. I found that every child has already gone through things that I could never imagine going through at their age, so many unimaginable things...things that have made my heart ache because I love these kids so much. It's a kind of love that I have never felt before. Even though I am not a parent, I would imagine that is the kind of love it is. The kind of love that a parent should feel for their child.

Near the end of the summer, one of my teammates got the idea to paint something on the side of the building. It was a reminder for us, for the kids, and for the people that passed by on the streets every day. It's a Martin Luther King Jr. quote, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that." It is now something that defines the Stewart Center...what we believed in and what we were trying to teach daily through our actions and words.

This summer, I felt this indescribable love. Love for my team who became by brothers and sisters by the end of the summer, for the kids – who became like my own children and love for the community that became my home. (Yesterday, I got back from a short visit to Atlanta. After not being there for 2 months and thinking about it often, I wondered what it would be like when I finally had the chance to visit. It was better than I could have imagined. Even though those 2 months felt like years, when we got there it felt like we had never left. We picked up where we left off.)

For the first time ever, I became fully immersed in a community that wasn't my own. I was invested, I lived there, I worked there, and I felt a deep connection there. Let me ask you a question...What is community? Really, think about it. The dictionary definition is a social group who resides in a specific location, sharing common interests or characteristics, leading a common life. We can all agree that this is true but community has a whole new meaning for me. It is more than a group of people. I now see it as more of an action or a feeling. I felt community in Atlanta that I had never felt before. I found that community to me is when a group of kids come knocking at your door just to be with you, to hug on you, and to sit in your lap. Community is walking your friend's home and going inside to talk to their family.

Community is throwing a birthday party for someone. Community is seeing an ambulance at your friend's house and running to make sure everything is okay before even thinking about how dark it is or how unsafe it may be outside. Community is standing in the middle of the street and hugging everyone one more time before you have to leave. Community is saying, "I love you," to your neighbor...and meaning it. Do you see it? Community can be more than a place. It can be more than a group. Community can be an action. Community can be a feeling. It's compassion. Famous theologian and author, Frederick Buechner wrote, "Compassion is sometimes the fatal capacity for feeling what it is like to live inside somebody else's skin. It is the knowledge that there can never be any peace and joy for me until there is peace and joy finally for you too." That defines what I found in Atlanta. The compassion I felt. The community that I felt.

I want to challenge you and me too, to do three things. First, be present. Simple right? Well, not really. Being present consists of so many things. It is not just the physical aspect but also the mental and spiritual. Being in the moment. Soaking up the experience. Remembering every detail. Remembering to be right **here**, right now in this current moment. Remembering that God is present while you are being present. This is a lot easier said than done. I am always looking forward to the next thing. During the school year, I was looking forward and planning for the summer. After school was out, I was ready to head to Atlanta for the summer. I didn't want to start planning for my next move. I wanted to be present. I didn't want to miss anything that is right in front of my eyes. I wanted to focus on my new journey, a new experience, a new challenge. I successfully did this and it made a world of difference. Now, that I am back I will have to re-propose this challenge to myself and I hope you will join me in doing this.

Also, my goal is to share the idea of community that I felt in Atlanta. I want to get to know people and to get to know their family too. I want to throw a birthday party for them. I want to care or feel concerned or worried about them. I want to hug on them, I want them to know that I would do anything for them. I want to share my compassion. I want to share the love of Christ with them. Will you join me?

One more thing, I challenge you to keep giving! Give your time, talent and resources. I don't think I would be standing here, sharing about my summer without you. Whether you realize or not, your support has helped me significantly. You taught me to love missions, you gave me the opportunity to serve and help others. You support missions through your offering. You invested in me so that I could invest in others.

This summer, there were times of frustration but for some reason by the end of the day, I don't even remember why I was frustrated because it's the times that the kids love on you and want

to hang on you, it's the "good morning" and the "see you tomorrow" hugs and the random ones in between, it's the laughter, the games, the smiles, the tickling, the kids that do things they aren't supposed to do but are too cute to get in trouble, it's the kids who come back 30 minutes after camp is over to hang out with us for a couple more hours, it's celebrating what's happening here, right now, and mostly it's the relationship that I built with most of my kids and the teammates that kept me going. God has definitely done incredible work in me, through me, and around me. I don't know where I will end up but, I do know that God is not finished with me and my story. And God's definitely not finished with me in Atlanta.

I left Atlanta, my home, my community. I left a place where I felt comfortable, a place where I learned what real **community** is, a place where I found a second home and family. Somewhere that is *impossible* to forget. Something that is hard for some people to truly understand and hard for me to even begin to describe. I left a mark on those people, a piece of me in that community and an even bigger mark was left on me.

I want to leave you with this blessing. It is something that became special to me and what one of the pastors wrote at the church that I attended over the summer. This church was diverse to say the least, people from all walks of life, people who had plenty of stories to tell, and people just searching for God. She would say this at the end of every service:

May you love yourself and others,
May you see possibilities instead of threats,
May you approach each moment with gratitude,
May you cultivate a light and joyful heart
May you feel free to fail and...
May you find the courage to try again
May you find comfort in your own skin
May you receive each breath of life for the miracle that it is
May you bless as you are blessed
May you love what God loves, grieve what God grieves, and Dream what God Dreams
May you hear God's song of delight in you
And may you learn to trust in God's invisible hands.

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Scott Sampson

What are some things we give to?

- Our alma mater
- Going out to dinner (different restaurants)
- Other people
- Church

All four have one thing in common: we believe in a certain outcome! For example:

Alma mater

- We give to provide resources, scholarships, or tickets for our favorite sports team.
- We believe in supporting a hopeful and positive outcome such as the football team playing well each season or contributing towards new buildings on campus that will better serve the place you love

Restaurants

- We go out to eat and pay money at a restaurant because you believe the food will be delicious, filling, and satisfactory. We have a belief that we will walk away happy and satisfied.

Other people

- Give b/c we want to help someone's well-being whether it's with clothes, food, a car, house payment, or their livelihood.
- we are hoping for a positive outcome whether it be for the moment or more long-lasting;
- we might see the fruits of giving first hand or we may never know (like if you paid for someone's dinner as you walked out a restaurant)

Church

- By giving to the church, we provide resources for the children's ministry, different youth trips for middle school and high school, and most importantly we support a staff that is here to guide us spiritually and serve us as Jesus served people 2000 years ago.
- By giving to the church, we have a belief that we're supporting our local church and hoping for a positive impact on us, our family, others in the church, and finally those beyond our church walls (local and foreign missions)
- The bible says to give 10% tithe to the church
- It also says to live generously
 - o **2 Corinthians 9:7-8:** *You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who*

gives cheerfully." And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.

Matthew 19: 21-24: *Jesus told him, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."*

But when the young man heard this, he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is very hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. I'll say it again—it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!"

People giving to Aiken's FBC has affected me for years. Because people gave to Aiken's FBC, I was able to be saved. You supported a staff that was then able to introduce me to my spiritual birth.

- It was a staff starting with Dr. Andrea who baptized me in 1996 when I became a believer and I grew further under leadership and teaching of James Bennett and Mike Johnson through youth group and choir through 2004, when I graduated high school.
- It prepared me for my spiritual growth in college
- Lead me to FCA leadership team by senior year for Clemson's FCA which is the largest FCA in the Nation.
- It all started when I was in 3rd grade
- And it was because of people like you giving to this church

How am I blessed by giving?

First started when I was real young and dad would put a dollar in an offertory envelope for me, and each week I'd fill out my envelope so I could tithe to this church and he taught me long ago the importance of giving.

And furthermore, and he might not appreciate me saying this, but my dad is very good at his job, in all facets and it's because of his success and his willingness to share it with me and our family, that I'm even here today speaking. His principles on money, earning it, investing it, saving it, and giving it to the local church is how I've come to be where I am today in giving and living generously.

- But when I was in college and had summer internships, I would take what I earned at the end of the summer and I'd tithe 10% of what I made that summer, to this church.
- When I became employed at Clemson University on September 16, 2010, I started giving to my local church in Anderson, SC.
- And actually my first 3 paychecks, I tithed to this church because of the impact it has had on my life growing up through middle school, high school, and college.
- I give b/c of the possibility that my giving can affect 1 person at my church in Anderson, like giving by people like you in this church has affected me.

- It says in Matthew 6:19-21, 24
- “Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.
- “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

So serve God with your money as it said in Matthew 19 that I referred to earlier.

Giving to:

- our alma mater
- Restaurants when we go out to eat
- Other people
- Our local church

Out of these four, only 1 remains relevant through our time here on Earth and as we pass on to Eternity

- Giving to the church
- Giving generously
- And realizing if we give, God will provide!

The football team at our alma mater may not have a good season, even though we give \$2000 a year for tickets.

The food at the restaurant we go to and pay for, won’t always be delicious and leave us full and satisfied.

Giving to others won’t necessarily bless us if we consider it our good deed of the day. As it says in Isaiah 64:6 “We are all infected and impure with sin.

When we display our righteous deeds,
they are nothing but filthy rags.”

But giving generously to our church will make you prosper for eternity.

It will give glory to our God who made us and gave us everything we have.

Live generously and experience the happiness it can bring you and our Lord above.

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