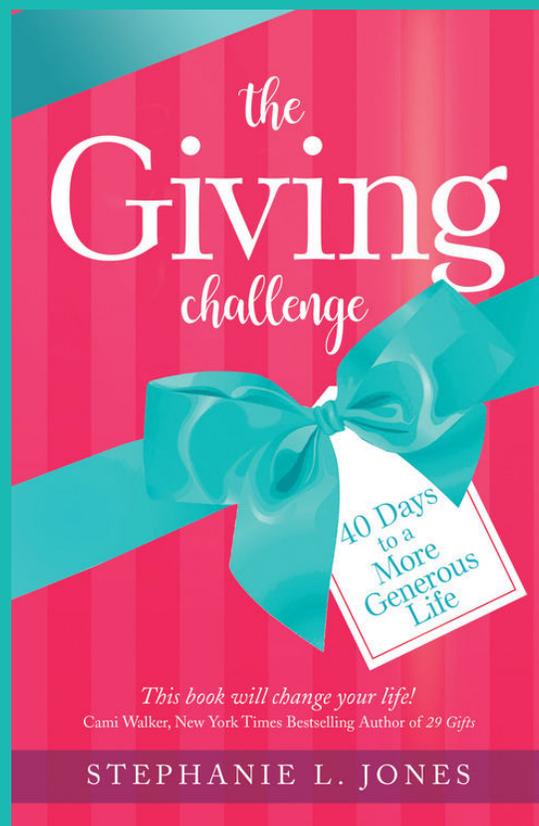


12 BONUS GIVING CHALLENGE STORIES



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Preface

(Taken from *The Giving Challenge: 40 Days to a More Generous Life*)

Compassion inspires action. Small, positive actions lead to unexpected reactions. These positive actions change lives, one person at a time. Experience has conditioned us to expect the worst from others. The news is full of one bad story after another. We are surprised when a total stranger sees a need, great or simple, and responds. I try to be that stranger, carefully observing my surroundings, listening to the needs of those around me, and taking action. But I haven't always been good at following through. Sure, I've volunteered my time and donated my money, but I didn't necessarily seek out specific opportunities to give to others. Like everyone else's, my life was busy, and I focused primarily on myself and the things I needed to get done in a day's work. I stayed in my lane.

Listening to the tugging of my heartstrings and having the courage to respond to the needs of others has been difficult and challenging throughout my life. Talking to strangers is awkward. Money was something I needed to keep for my selfish pleasures instead of giving away freely. My possessions were just that—my possessions—and they weren't to be given to others. I had worked hard for those things. I deserved them! However, much of that changed in 2011.

The beginning of that year ascended as the New Year always does: with the anticipation of coming adventures. I had recently read *29 Gifts* by Cami Walker and decided to embark on my twenty-nine-day gift-giving journey. As I thought about this experience, I wondered if I should plan my daily giving or allow opportunities to present themselves to me. I decided a combination of the two was the way to go, as there is no wrong way to give!

What I didn't realize was giving daily started to rule my thoughts. I couldn't stop seeing opportunities to give and help others. The possibilities were all around—everywhere I went. For more than five hundred days, I gave a gift away every single day. While that may sound like humble-bragging, what I found was incredible! This journey made more of a difference in my life than it did in those to whom I gave. It changed my relationships with my friends and my family. It improved my marriage. It made me more grateful, and I began to understand that *things* don't bring happiness. In fact, I found the opposite to be true; giving away things and having less brings more happiness. I became more patient and took opportunities of standing in line to meet those around me. I became more generous. I was no longer stingy with that dollar in my pocket. If someone needed, I'd give it away. I struggled on sharing this journey and gifts, as I never wanted it to come across as bragging. But I also wanted to get my story out to tell others that giving is simple. Giving will change your life, just like it did mine.

Opportunities to make a difference are all around us and most take little to no money and/or time. A smile to a stranger, a helpful hand, some donated clothing, festive Easter baskets for the children of the local domestic violence shelter, an encouraging text, a bonus tip for the waitress who is working to put herself through college, or a thank-you note to someone that made a difference in your life. These gestures may seem simple, but they *do* make a difference. How do I know? How can I be certain? Because I have done these very things. I have seen smiles and tears; I have received hugs from strangers and witnessed the sense of relief, joy, and happiness of those to whom I've reached out. And for that moment in time, the people I gave to knew someone cared. I believe each simple gift made a difference.

In this bonus gift, I share twelve gifts (not shared in my book, *The Giving Challenge*) I have given or received over the past five years during my personal giving journey. These aren't stories to be read in one sitting, but feel free to do so. I encourage you to read one story in the morning before you start your day or in the evening before you go to bed. Let it be of encouragement to you and start making a choice to think of others instead of yourself. Even though I have listed days 1 to 12, you can begin with day 1 or day 30; it doesn't matter. You don't have to go in any particular order. Each story stands on its own.

As you read, be challenged to look for, each and every day, ways to give to others. These opportunities will change your life and that of others. With each story, I offer you a "Giving Challenge," which is a challenge you can do on that day or save for later. The challenges are ideas to jump-start your mind and get you thinking of actions you can take to make a difference. If the challenge listed doesn't apply to you, follow me on social media for more giving challenges and ideas. I also provided a few lines to journal your thoughts, giving experiences, someone's reaction you want to remember, a blessing, or a prayer request. There is also a "Notes" section in the back to journal, doodle, brainstorm, or jot down future gift giving ideas.

I have one request: for twelve days, you seek opportunities to give. I don't care if it's twelve days in a row or one day a week for twelve weeks. But I want for you to commit right now to making a difference in the lives around you for twelve days. I want you to share your commitment with a friend or family member and encourage them to join in on the "Giving Challenge." I'll be praying for you on your journey. I'll be praying that God places in your path people that need to see your smile or hear your words of encouragement. I'll be praying that as you go through this journey if you are struggling with your marriage, illness, finances, or self-

confidence, focusing on others will provide you the perspective you need to change your life, make a choice to be happy and be more generous. Now let's get giving!

Day 1: A Salute

Do you have a ritual or a habit of doing something but you can't explain why you do it? Nine years ago I moved from Indianapolis to Northwest Indiana. The drive from Indianapolis to my home is a straight shot up Interstate 65. When we first moved to "the Region" I still worked in Indianapolis as a consultant for the state and often traveled for work and to see my family. I then spent 24 weeks traveling back and forth to the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy training to become a police officer. During one of my first treks south I noticed a cross on the side of the road that caught my attention. Through some research, I found out the cross was placed there in Memory of Master Trooper Michael Greene.

According to Officer Down Memorial Page, Master Trooper Green was shot and killed on February 5, 1993, when he stopped to question two men he observed urinating along the side of Interstate 65 in Marion County. Master Trooper Greene learned that both men were wanted for outstanding warrants and while handcuffing one suspect, the other suspect shot and killed him.

Master Trooper Greene had served with the Indiana State Police for over 16½ years and was assigned to the Indianapolis post. He had also served as a member of the Indiana National Guard. Master Trooper Greene was survived by his son and daughter. In 2008, a Memorial Mile was designated on Interstate 65 in Marion County in his honor.

Every time I drive by the location, he was killed I give a salute. I know it may sound silly, but I felt compelled to do so, and now it is a ritual. A ritual to say, your sacrifice is not forgotten.

I have often wondered if anyone else does the same thing and my question was answered on January 25, 2011. In the light of the shooting of Officer David Moore, a local news station ran a story on the murder of Master Trooper Greene. The story was an interview with his brother John Greene and his son, now a Deputy Sheriff, Michael Greene. I learned from the interview that his brother honks and his son touches his heart every time they drive by the location where their brother and father were killed. His son ended the story by saying, "We try to make sure everyone remembers my father throughout the years. It is an honor when people still remember."

Today my gift was a letter to Master Trooper Greene's son. I wanted to let him know that I remember his father and the sacrifice he made for the citizens of Indiana. I also shared my salute with him!

Giving Challenge

Do you know someone that has lost a loved one the past year? If so, take a moment to send them a card to say, "I'm thinking of you. I remember." This kind gesture will go a long way and may arrive at a time the receiver needs it the most.

Day 2: Kitchen's Bounty

During the holiday season, I take a several-day break from work. Even though I love my job, it is a “brain drain,” and like most people, I need a good, healthy break every several months to keep my energy up and to stay focused. On one recent day off, I spent an entire day in the kitchen. Even though I can't cook worth a darn, I can bake and create scrumptious candies—at least that's what my friends and family tell me!

I shipped and delivered my treats, and soon my email inbox was filled with messages of gratitude and requests for the recipes of my treats. As a gift to these special people in my life, I collected my recipes and sent them off so my friends and family could add them to their collections.

Giving Challenge

Do you have a recipe that everyone loves or that you love to make? If so, share it. I love pulling out my recipes and seeing the person's name at the top who gave it to me. It's like having them right beside me in the kitchen. So many of my recipes bring back memories of special occasions in my life. And that always makes me smile.

Day 3: Nurse Jodi

During my gift-giving journey, I had to have minor surgery. Mike and I traveled to Illinois for the surgery and arrived very early in the morning. Mike was starving so we stopped at the Corner Bakery Café so he could grab a bite to eat. (I, of course, couldn't eat anything pre-surgery!) While we were there, I spotted a nicely wrapped coffee cake. I purchased it to give to the hospital staff who would be involved in my care.

Hours later I awoke in my hospital bed wearing a gown and shower cap and with an IV sticking out of my arm. A nurse, Jodi, came in to check on me and I handed her the bag with the coffee cake. She was so surprised and didn't know how to react. I shared with her my gift-giving journey and that this day my gift was to her and the other nurses and doctors who would be with me during the day.

As it turns out, my poor nurse deserved more than a coffee cake. As my anesthesia wore off, I experienced short-term memory loss and therefore kept asking her the same questions over and over. She was so kind and patient and answered me over and over.

Two days later, I mailed a Corner Bakery Café® gift card to Nurse Jodi. She was so caring, compassionate, and patient and stayed by my side until it was time to go for me to go home.

She took extremely good care of me. The gift card was to show gratitude and appreciation for her kindness. I can't remember a time when a nurse has shown me so much attention, just sitting patiently by my side answering questions.

Giving Challenge

Take time in your life to say thank those that go above and beyond to help you out, make you feel comfortable in your time sickness and pain. Hopefully, you will be as lucky as I was to have wonderful nurses taking care of you.

Day 4: Window Clings and a Child's Joy

My little niece loves dogs, noted by her vast collection of all different kinds of stuffed dogs and figurines. She just can't resist anything that has a dog on it. At Halloween time she came to visit me, and I made sure to have a doggie-loving gift for her. This time I bought Halloween dog window clings for her to decorate my sliding glass door. She was delighted! It was a fun activity she could do on her own and keep her entertained during her visit.

Several weeks ago, I came across some adorable Valentine dog window clings. Imagine these colorful decorations of dogs with hearts, roses, and cupcakes. I picked them up to take with me on my next visit to see my family. When I arrived, I gave her the window clings. We immediately went into her room to put them on her window; she looked at the first dog and exclaimed, "What a sweetie....cutie!"

I love that the smallest of gifts and even the most inexpensive treats can bring such great joy to a child.

Giving Challenge

In what simple ways can you bring joy to a little one in your life?

Day 5: Go Reds!

When I was younger, I spent quite a bit of time in the hospital for asthma-related illnesses and bronchitis. I still remember all the people who came to visit me and the gifts they brought to cheer me up. My favorite gift was an orange xylophone with animals on the keys—I'm sure it was the nurses favorite also! Little old' me banging on those keys to no particular tune.

My (at the time) eight-year-old cousin Logan was admitted to Cincinnati Children's Hospital and remained there for over a week while on was my giving journey. I called the hospital gift shop to have a gift bag delivered to his room. He is a Cincinnati Reds fan, just like me. I grew up with posters on my wall of Chris Sabo (my favorite Reds player) and Eric Davis. I wore big buttons on my jacket with players' pictures, and I'd even wear them to games! (Fanatic or nerd—I'm not sure where the line crossed from one to the other!)I also had a 1990 World Series pennant that hung on my wall. Those were good days! So naturally, I wanted to send Logan a gift to celebrate our shared fan-ship of the Reds.

The lady I spoke with in the hospital gift shop understood exactly what I was looking for and put together a red gift bag filled with games, a Reds hat, and a Reds balloon. My hope was to fill Logan with surprise and joy and take his mind off a lengthy hospital stay. From talking to his mom, I think the gift did its job!

Giving Challenge

Is there anyone in your extended family whom you share a common interest with? How can you

bless that person in his or her time of need?

Day 6: Dinner for Two

I'm not exactly a typical housewife. At least I don't think I am. My police officer husband works an afternoon shift at least five days a week so that only leaves two nights available for dinners together. On those nights my husband usually cooks, or we go out, which means I rarely cook. When I do, I make traditional, easy meals, but nothing brag worthy. As my husband says, "Three out of ten times your cooking is good!"

I appreciate his honesty, even though sometimes it is a bit much.

Because I have been working a lot lately, my husband has picked up a lot of the house duties. My husband doing housework is a gift to me! So one day I decided to lighten his load and cook dinner for us myself. And though I am not the best cook, he was, as always, appreciative of this break for himself to unwind and relax. For him, this seemingly small task meant a lot.

Giving Challenge

Is there a chore in your household that you can take on to lighten the load of those you live with?

If so, take on this responsibility and bless that person with one less item on his or her to-do list.

Day 7: Birthday Bags

Some of my favorite childhood memories are of my birthday parties. One of my babysitters was a fabulous cake maker who would always make the cakes of my favorite characters. They were fun and colorful, and I especially loved my Strawberry Shortcake cake. My parties were attended by friends from school and included party favors, silly games, and—of course—cake! My summer birthday allowed my parties to usually be celebrated outdoors, which I loved.

As fortunate as I was to have fun outdoor parties filled with friends I loved, I'm reminded that thousands of children around the world never get to celebrate their birthdays. I honestly didn't even begin to think about this until I volunteered at our local domestic violence shelter. Women in domestic violence situations often leave their home with the clothes on their back, no money, and very limited resources. Many women (and men) who are victims of domestic violence are not allowed to work outside of their home, so when they flee, they have no source of income. They are reliant on friends, family, and shelters to help them get on their feet, and hopefully escape the threat of their abusers.

One of the things these mothers often want is to throw their children birthday parties, but this isn't considered a necessity. The Caring Place, the domestic violence shelter I am involved with, always has needs. Many times it is for volunteers, money, and toiletries, but one of the fun things they collect is Birthday Bags. These bags are filled with child-themed birthday party supplies. Some of the supplies include cake mix, icing, candles, napkins, plates, cups, party favors, and hats. These bags can be given to a mother to throw her child a party at no expense to her.

I took a day and filled several Birthday Bags with the needed supplies and donated them to The Caring Place. I did my shopping at the Dollar Tree, where supplies were fun, plentiful, and affordable. My hope was to give many children a special birthday celebration.

Giving Challenge

Call your local domestic violence shelter and see if they have a Birthday Bag program, or something similar. If not, explain the idea and encourage them to start such a program. Then volunteer to be their first donor! It'll be a fun way to involve your children and teach them about taking care of the less fortunate in your community.

Day 8: Overworked, Stress, and a Messed Up Surprise

Do you love surprises or like to play tricks on people? Well, I don't like surprises but I love to play little tricks, and on this day I was both surprised and fooled by a five-year-old. Even though I ruined the joke...you'll find out how soon enough.

I was having a very stressful week at work. I worked day and night on a project that could not end soon enough. When I say day and night, I mean working until one o'clock in the morning, going to bed and waking back up at four o'clock to start working again.

It was a Sunday morning, and I was taking a couple of minutes to relax in my jammies before I got back to staring at a computer screen for another 12 hours. I had the entire house to myself as my husband was working a day shift and had already gone for the day. As I was sipping on a cup of warm tea, I heard the doorbell, and it startled me. It was Sunday morning, so it wasn't the mailman, I don't get unexpected visitors and my husband, as I said, was at work. Being a police wife, when the doorbell rings at an unexpected time, my mind quickly goes to a dark place. The fear embraces my body that I'm going to look out the window and see a uniformed officer, not my husband, standing at my front door to deliver the unthinkable news.

Since I had just talked to my husband, I knew it wasn't bad news at the door. So I did what I typically do when my husband isn't home, I ignored it. I ignored the person on the other side of the door, ringing the bell. Unfortunately, my hope for this person leaving did not come to fruition. The person was mighty persistent, and door rang the bell several more times. Being stubborn, I STILL did not answer!

Imagine the scene...not only is the doorbell ringing; now my cell phone is buzzing. I'm thinking, "What is going on? Can't a girl just have a couple of moments of peace?"

I look at the caller ID, and it's my husband. Whenever he is on duty, I ALWAYS answer my phone. As soon as I pick up, he says, "Answer the door!!!"

Since I'm stubborn, I can't just answer the door. I have to ask, "Why do I need to answer the door?"

My husband in frustration, says again, "Please just answer the door."

Fine, I'm thinking, I'll answer the door. I end our call with my usual, "Love you and be safe."

I answered the door, and there stood my five-year-old niece. My heart sank. Tears stream down my face just thinking about that moment. I don't have children, so my niece is my pride and joy. She is someone I love just about as much as I love anyone in this life. I was so overwhelmed with emotion, and my brain could not process how or why my five-year-old niece was standing on my doorstep. The poor gal had wanted me to answer the door so she could say, "Surprise, I took the bus!" I had ruined her trick 😊

You see, my sister and mom dropped her off and then drove down the street so if I looked out the window I wouldn't see their car. My niece loves tricks, and she thought this would be so funny! I knelt down, hugged her and started crying. I sure she felt her Auntie Stephe was a bit crazy. At that moment, I can't think of anyone else in the world; I would have rather seen standing on my porch. It had been such a rough couple of months at work that I needed something good, something to cheer me up!

To say my family is amazing is an understatement. She, my mom and sister drove three hours one way just to spend a couple of hours with me to brighten my day and take my mind off work. Out of all the gifts, I have received in my life; this one ranks near the top!

My mom and sister followed in behind my niece, and there were hugs and tears all around. I ran upstairs, quickly showered, threw on clothes and we headed into town for lunch and shopping. Even though it was "my day" I couldn't help but let my niece pick where we were going to go shopping. Of course, she chose one of her favorite stores, Michaels, the craft store. We walk in, and she says, "I love this place. I could buy everything!"

My gift for this day was to let her buy crafts and as much as she wanted. She was in heaven! She filled the cart with polka-dot and striped ribbon, every color of glitter glue you can imagine, stickers galore, and various shapes of wood to paint. I will spend money on crafts any day of the week for a child as opposed to filling their room with toys they'll play with for a couple of days and then leave the toy to gather dust on a shelf for the remainder of its little toy life. I love that she is creative and artistic- something I am not!

I have been blessed with a family who knew exactly what I needed. And not only did they know what I needed, but they took action to give me what I needed. Knowing and acting are two very different things. Often we know what people need, we just don't sacrifice our time or resources to give them what they need. My family will never know how much this gift meant to me and I thank them from the bottom of my heart!

Giving Challenge

Do you know someone that is working a lot? Are they putting in long hours to support their family and possibly pursue their dreams? If so, think of a way you can surprise them. Make their day. Give them a break from work for a little rejuvenation!

Day 9: Directions for Mom

My mom is great at a lot of things. Giving, volunteering, massage therapy, being a friend, cooking, decorating for holidays, running, being an encourager and the list goes on and on. On the other hand, my mom is a bit directionally challenged. Now, I'm not one to talk because I have been lost on more than one occasion. Let's just say praise the Lord for GPS, MapQuest and maps on the iPhone. With all this said, my mom doesn't have a GPS nor would she probably know how to use it if she had one. Besides being directionally challenged, she is also a bit technology challenged! MapQuest...well she doesn't get on the Internet unless it is for work. My mom doesn't even have a Facebook page. Maps on the iPhone... well, she still uses a flip phone (that was at the time of my original writer. She has now entered the 21st century and has a smartphone. Go figure!)

On this day I was meeting my mom in Fort Wayne, Indiana for a girl's getaway weekend. We would spend the night and then wake up early to stand in line with many other crazy women for what? You guessed it, the Annual Vera Bradley Outlet Sale. That's right. Thousands of women descend upon this midsize city to get the hottest deals on bags, purses, wallets and even stationary items. I'm not a huge collector of Vera Bradley, but I love their totes and travel bags. I also love their shoe carrier. It's perfect for my muddy running shoes. My mom likes to attend the event because she can find great deals on bags and then give them as gifts throughout the year. My gift for the day, making sure my mom showed up and made it to the right location. I called and gave her directions on how to get where we were going. Guess what? She arrived safely, and the directions were spot on!

This gift was an easy one to give, but sometimes we get so caught up in our lives and the things we know how to do well, like how to use the tools at our fingertips to get from Point A to

Point B, we forget that others may not have the same abilities, skills, and knowledge. Take the time to help others along as the person you are helping has helped you along your way. I can't tell you how many massages my mom had given me when my back and shoulders were tight from hours of work, how many delicious meals she has cooked for me when I come to visit and how many miles she has run with me in the park on trails. The list goes on and on. The least I could do was help her arrive safely without worry.

Another thing I want to note is in today's world we feel we have to be connected. We have to be on the Internet; we have to have Facebook and other social medias (Hi my name is Stephanie, and I'm a social media addict) and a nice phone to stay connect. Well, I think we could all take a page out of my mom's book. Even though we make fun of her constantly for the lack of these things, she still lives a happy and fulfilled life!

Giving Challenge

Next time you see someone lost, take a moment to help them find their way.

Day 10: Take the Day Off

As much as I love to travel, my father is the opposite and doesn't enjoy it so much. Instead of getting on a plane or traveling cross country, my parents spend a week at my house for their vacation. For most of the time, they stay in one of my guest bedrooms, but sometimes they will venture off to a bed and breakfast nearby. I'm lucky that my parents are still young, have taken good care of themselves and are in excellent health. With all of this said, I'm a realist, and I know they will not be around forever. So my gift, while they were visiting, was to take two days off work. I tend to be a bit of a workaholic and besides being a workaholic I like to hoard my days off. I know this isn't healthy; I'm always working on this area of my life. I use not one but two PTO (personal time off) days to dedicate 100% of my time with my parents. We drove up into Southwest Michigan, dined at quaint restaurants, and did a little shopping. As I get older, anytime I can spend with my parents I take the opportunity to do so.

Giving Challenge

If you hoard PTO hours like me, stop working so much and go out and enjoy life! We are only given one wild ride. I'm pretty sure I'm not going to remember the work, but I'm going to remember the people I spent my time with and the memories we made.

Day 11: Potty Training and New Undies

As a parent, even though I'm not one, I would assume one of the most joyous moments would be when your child is potty trained. My nephew had finished potty training and was finally in big boy undies. I wanted him, even though he is young, to know I was proud of his big accomplishment. So what do you get a kid who has just conquered probably the biggest thing of his little childhood life? You get them new underwear. You know the kind that has the characters little boys love. I got him Toystory with Buzz Lightyear and Cars, his current fascination. Usually, underwear wouldn't be the best gift, but today...it was the perfect gift!

Giving Challenge

Many times in life we only celebrate the big things in life. What small accomplishment can you celebrate today?

Day 12: Just a Couple of Minutes

When I started college, my father would randomly send me articles from the local newspaper or a magazine that he thought I would enjoy. It may have been a funny joke or an inspirational story. He would attach a little note to let me know he was thinking of me. Sending notes started in college and still continues today. It is something that takes him a couple of minutes and the cost of a stamp, but it always puts a smile on my face and brings a little sunshine to my day. I don't think it matters how old we are; we still love to receive "special" mail. This gift he started giving me over 20 years ago, rubbed off on me and now I like to do the same for friends and family.

My first gift was to one of my friends who had mentioned to me that she had been struggling to keep her kids paperwork organized. Today I received a catalog from Lillian Vernon. They always seem to have random and unique items. I found a couple of organizational products that I thought may help. I sent her an e-mail with a couple of the items, their description, and item number. I hope it gave my friend a couple of ideas of things to look for when shopping.

My second gift today was to one of my dearest friends from college. She recently took on teaching a class at the local community college. This opportunity will open doors for a continued career in teaching. Last week, I wrote a paper on Servant Leadership for the MBA course I am taking. One of the articles discussed how to be a servant leader in the classroom and with your students. When I read this article, I immediately thought of my friend. Today I wrote a note letting her know how much I appreciate her friendship and that this article made me think of her. In just a couple of minutes I knocked out two gifts and image brought smiles to two friends.

Giving Challenge

Do you come across articles that could help a friend or brighten their day? I encourage you, the next time you see an article a friend might enjoy, cut it out, package it up, and drop it in the mail with a special note. It will take you a couple of minutes, but bring the receiver and entire day of joy!

Your Turn! Start Giving Today!

(Taken from The Giving Challenge: 40 Days to a More Generous Life)

Thank you! Thank you for letting me share twelve (forty is in the book, check it out!) of my favorite, giving stories with you. My giving journey began more than five years ago, and now as I sit here writing, I'm still challenging myself to look for new opportunities to simply give every day. Giving has become an instinct, a part of who I am at my core. In the beginning, I thought *I* was the one giving gifts, but I quickly learned the adage is true. "The more you give, the more you get."

During my giving journey, I was contacted by a lady who stumbled upon my blog and started to follow my gift-giving journey. She had many questions about how I got started and how I figure out what gifts to give. I love hearing from fellow givers, whether a beginner or lifelong giver. Getting to talk to new people and make personal connections is even better.

I let this woman know I had read *29 Gifts* and that it motivated me to start giving, and not just for twenty-nine days, but for an entire year. That year made such an impact in my life that I continued into a second year. I explained to her that in the beginning, gifts were sometimes hard to come by and many days I relied on creativity and seeking out opportunities. But as the days, weeks, and months went by, opportunities began presenting themselves and the gift giving became a daily habit.

I checked in with this young lady at the end of her first month, and she gave me permission to share her response and experience. Here it is:

Hi, Stephanie. I am so excited to tell you about my twenty-nine days that unintentionally has turned into thirty-one and going. Well, it hasn't been easy, but it has been interesting

and very surprising. I found that on every single occasion that I gave something, I got something in return. This was not my intention whatsoever, but I have received an award for every act.

The most unusual incidence of giving happened one day when I was frustrated and very upset and couldn't focus on something to give. So I took an idea from you and while I was running errands, I drove through a drive-thru and purchased a coffee drink—and of course paid for the car behind me. On my way home, I noticed the same car behind me. I didn't think anything of it, but then I started to wonder if I had offended the driver somehow.

Well, she followed me home. I got out of my car ready to apologize when an old friend popped out of her car and thanked me for the coffee and wanted to know why I hadn't just waved her down so we could have coffee together. I had no idea I knew the person. It has been a few years, I didn't recognize the car, and I deliberately didn't look in my rearview mirror, because this particular act made me nervous.

Another beautiful thing I am finding is that every time I talk about this with family and friends, I get more “leads,” if you will, for giving, and others are considering a journey of their own.

On day 29 an acquaintance asked me to provide them some consultative services for a fee. I volunteered my effort—that leads to a nice contract for the spring. Completely unexpected but very cool!

I have continued with days 30 and 31 and will keep going. I do think it is a habit now, another reward for me.

So when I started, I did not expect rewards. It is strange. I love giving and in the past over thought things so much that when I gave, the recipient often felt like they had to give something back to me, which was very uncomfortable for both of us. This journey, while I think about it every single day, has made things so much easier in that the gifts are simple, unpretentious, and don't render that feeling of obligation on anyone's part.

So glad I caught your blog on this! It doesn't matter if my gifts are even acknowledged by the recipients or if I even know who directly benefits. I think the practice of just giving changes so many things we can't be aware of unless we make an effort.

Will You Take the Challenge?

(Taken from *The Giving Challenge: 40 Days to a More Generous Life*)

I hope this young lady's and my stories inspire you to start your gift-giving journey. I request the following:

- If you have already read my book, *The Giving Challenge*, THANK YOU! If not, purchase the book and take this amazing adventure for forty days. Set a goal to give a gift for a day, a week, or a month. It's a start! I can almost guarantee it will not only become a habit but a lifestyle that will change your life and the lives of those around you. The more you give, the more generous you will be with your time, money, talents, and possessions.
- Share this book with friends and family, encourage them to read it, and share with others.
- If you enjoyed the book, I'd love if you would write a review on Amazon or GoodReads
- Share your "Giving Challenge" with me via social media and tag #GivingChallenge or e-mail.
- Share your giving story with me to possibly be featured on my blog, social media, or a future book.
- Follow me on social media to find more "Giving Challenges."
- Sign up for my forty-day giving challenge and get twelve bonus stories at www.theGivingChallenge.co.

Blog: GivingGal.com

Twitter: [@Giving_Gal](https://twitter.com/Giving_Gal)

Facebook: facebook.com/GivingGal

Pinterest: [Pinterest.com/Giving_Gal](https://www.pinterest.com/Giving_Gal)

Instagram: [Giving_Gal](https://www.instagram.com/Giving_Gal)

www.GivingGal.com

If you have questions, want to share a story with me, or need giving ideas or a speaker for an event; drop me an e-mail at stephanie@GivingGal.com.

I'd love to hear from you!

Blessings,

Stephanie

Stephanie L. Jones is an author, speaker, and life success coach who helps people live their dreams, discover their gifts, and do amazing things. As a fearless changemaker, she's been a private investigator, police officer, and a senior manager in a Fortune 100 company. Stephanie has traveled to 46 states, attended Oprah's Oscar show, and auditioned for her own TLC show in NYC. And she's just getting started!

If you need a speaker or coach, Stephanie would love to hear from you. Contact her today at stephanie@GivingGal.com



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