

Generosity isn't just about our behavior; it's about our inner nature — it's about the heart.

Reflect on the following statement, then share your thoughts with your group.

Generosity is more than doing something good in the world, rather it's an opportunity for God to do something good in you.

Following Jesus in the way of generosity is counter cultural. The heroes of our culture are the people who go from rags to riches and pull themselves up by their bootstraps. But Jesus was the antithesis of that story. He left behind the riches of heaven to become a servant and sacrifice himself for our benefit.

Think for a moment of the most generous person you know. They may not be wealthy, but they are generous. How would you describe them? Are they joyful? Does their story of generosity include sacrificial giving? Take a moment to ask God to reveal any area where you have a blind spot towards the opportunities you have to cultivate a heart of generosity.

WRAP-UP

We serve a generous and loving God. As we learn to follow in Jesus' footsteps, we will find that generosity and gratitude flow from our hearts. It is an indicator of our spiritual health. If we see the world with a healthy viewpoint, then we know God is our faithful provider and see our lives as an abundant gift. But if we are focused on consumption and accumulation of money, our view gets distorted by greed, fear and mistrust. When we choose generosity God is able to shape our hearts into something good.

MEMORY VERSE

"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

- Matthew 6:24 NIV

Challenge- What is one act of generosity you can do this week that would counter the fear you may carry?

Cultivate Generosity The Way of Generosity - Week 1

INTRODUCTION

This week we begin a short series on generosity, and yes, that means we will be talking about money. If you feel yourself tensing up at the thought of a study about money, you are not alone. The topic of money evokes strong emotions from many people. But Jesus didn't shy away from speaking about generosity, or money. As much as 25% of His teachings can be seen as relating to money, wealth or generosity. We should not let our uneasiness about the topic stop us from understanding what the Bible teaches us. Let's position ourselves to be shaped by Jesus and cultivate a heart of generosity.

Ice Breaker

If you were given a million dollars, what would you do with it?

Key Passage

19 "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. - Matthew 6:19-21 NLT

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Giving, Receiving, and Storing up Treasures

35b. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" - Acts 20:35b NLT

In Acts chapter 20 Paul reminds us that Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive. The word translated to "blessed" is μακάριος (makarios) in Greek, and it means happy.

Even though we may think that we need “more” in order to be happy, it is not our consumption nor accumulation of things that brings us the kind of joy God wants for us.

Whether you were the giver or recipient, share about a time when you experienced the joy of generosity. If you were the recipient, did you find it impacted your willingness to give to others?

Giving of ourselves, our energy, our resources is one of the ways we commune with God and reflect HIS image. There seems to be a connection between positioning ourselves to rightfully understand giving and money, and how we will be shaped to be more like Jesus.

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Despite what advertisements and social media lead us to believe, having more stuff doesn't equate with having more happiness. At least not the stuff we store up here on earth. If you look at the research, you will find that there is not a correlation between increased wealth and increased happiness. Quite the opposite, more wealth focuses us on our own money and how to keep it or increase it, resulting in stress, greed and general discontent. Storing treasure in “heaven” doesn't mean preparing for the place you go when you die, heaven is the place where God reigns and dwells, His Kingdom which we participate in here and now.

Jesus points out that the things we store up here are subject to destruction. However, what we store in heaven is eternal. What are some ways we might invest our lives and our resources into the eternal treasures of God's Kingdom?

Verse 21 reveals that it is ultimately our hearts that Jesus is interested in. Our heart will follow our money. The more we invest in things, the more important they become to us. We also come to love, worry about, and obsess over what we spend our money on.

2. Healthy Eyes?

22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! - Matthew 6:22-23 NIV

This passage sounds strange to the modern reader. But a “healthy” eye was a figure of speech in Jesus' day. If you have the NIV, there's a footnote after the word “healthy” – “The Greek for healthy here implies generous.” And another one for “unhealthy” – “The Greek for unhealthy here implies stingy. Now that verse begins to make sense.

If we have a healthy outlook, we see the world is full of God's good gifts, and we have more than enough of everything that we need. But if we have an unhealthy view of life, we may see the world as a dangerous place with limited resources where we have to look out for number one to survive. These two perspectives are referred to as abundance mindset and scarcity mindset.

What circumstances tend to influence your perspective towards abundance or scarcity? What attitudes towards God and others would you expect to accompany an abundance mindset?... a scarcity mindset?

31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. - Matthew 6:31-33 NIV

Jesus understood the concerns that we face in life and He addressed them in Matthew 6:31-33. How does this passage demonstrate the shaping of our hearts under both scarcity and abundance mindsets? Contrast trusting your heavenly Father with worrying about your needs.

3. Two Masters

24 "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. - Matthew 6:24 NIV

There is an ongoing spiritual battle for your loyalty. It is a battle between God and money. In some translations the word Mammon is used in place of money in verse 24. Mammon was the God of wealth. It was Jesus' way of saying that money is like a rival god. We want so badly to believe that money is neutral; not good or bad, but it's actually about how money shapes our heart. It is impossible for us to serve both God and money.

Our affection will grow towards which of these we choose to devote ourselves to. God wants your whole heart devoted to Him. *How does money demand our attention and subtly grip our hearts?*