

indecision, reluctance and guilt that may be associated with giving.

7 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." - 2 Corinthians 9:7 NLT

When you search your heart for your motive in giving, what does this verse indicate we specifically want to avoid? How would you recognize that your generosity is Spirit-led rather than obligatory?

- Apprenticeship to Jesus

9 You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich. - 2 Corinthians 8:9 NLT

As followers of Jesus our life's goal should be to follow His example. Consider the immense generosity He showed to us. Let the love and joy from Christ's generosity fill you to overflowing with a heart of generosity towards others.

3. What do I Share and Who do I Share it with?

Take a moment to brainstorm what you have to share with others. Then identify any opportunities you are aware of to connect your resources with those who need them the most. If you feel excitement over the possibility of blessing someone through your generosity, you have probably discovered your next step in apprenticeship to Jesus.

WRAP-UP

Jesus' teachings on money and generosity are counterintuitive to our cultural assumptions. He boldly claims that happiness is not found in gaining wealth, but in following His example of a deeply relational life of love and giving. When we follow that example, we can experience the joy of sharing all we have been giving with those who need God's love and hope. We get to be the messengers, delivering God's blessings to others.

MEMORY VERSE

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

Challenge- If you see a need, meet it yourself. Perhaps by serving lunch at People's Kitchen, mowing an elderly neighbor's lawn, mentoring a struggling student, or having a meal with someone on the margins. There are a thousand ways to express the love of Jesus. Let's blur the lines between giver and receiver; to become kin and family of God.

Willing to Share **The Way of Generosity - Week 4**

INTRODUCTION

As we conclude our series on generosity, we will turn our focus outward and look for those we can share with. This is not a question of money alone but of all our resources, our time, our hearts and our faith. What do we have to share? The answer to that question requires an attitude check. Do we only share from our "excess" and if so, what is our definition of excess? Do we ever consider the needs of others before our own needs? What if sharing is inconvenient? It won't always come easily but it is the practice of generosity that Jesus modeled for us and if we are going to be more like Him, we may need to change what we normally think of as being generous.

Ice Breaker

What do you think is the best thing to share with a friend?

Key Passage

18 Tell them [those who are rich in this world] to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. - 1 Timothy 6:18 NLT

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What do we need?

*17 Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.
- 1 Timothy 6:17 NLT*

We probably don't often pause to take an account of what we have, what we need and what we want. When we consider those three categories, we likely use different metrics or measurements for each.

Pause for a moment and consider how you would go about making a list of what you have, what you need and what you want. How did you define your needs? Was it in terms of a standard of living you have established or wish to? How did you evaluate what you have? Was it a monetary and physical inventory? Did you include any intangibles like good health, loving friends and family, or the beauty of the place we live? With this in mind, how might you amend your lists?

8 Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! - Matthew 6:8 NLT

11 So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him. - Matthew 7:11 NLT

19 And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus. - Philippians 4:19 NLT

In the English translation of our key passage, Paul tells Timothy that God supplies us “richly with everything we need for our enjoyment.” In the Greek text it literally says that “God richly supplies us with all things for us to enjoy.” Jesus says God knows exactly what you need (Matt 6:8) and gives us good gifts (Matt 7:11). God certainly is not limiting us to the bare essentials (Phil 4:19). He supplies so much more than all we need. Our Father is the giver of good gifts and He want us to have enjoy them!

When we recognize all God has given us it should bring us joy- not only in what He provides, but in the One who has provided for us because He loves us! He invites us to share in that joy through the practice of generosity just as He takes joy in giving His children good gifts.

The Greek word for need (Chreia) means necessity. What would you identify as the needs associated with the 3 passages below? How might God use us, His people, in generously supplying those needs?

17 When Jesus heard this, he told them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor--sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners." - Mark 2:17 NLT

45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. - Acts 2:45 NLT

13 When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality. - Romans 12:13 NLT

2. Use Money for Good

Doing Good is not just about doing no harm. It's about activating generosity towards others. Generosity is more than a random, every now and then, act. It's a way of life that begins in your heart and moves outward towards others. If you don't start somewhere you'll never start.

Last week we ended our study with a list of some basics of generosity. This week let's take a deeper look.

- We have to listen to God for direction.

Before you undertake any changes in your practice of generosity you need to be tuned in to what God is telling you. So first, pray. *Do you already sense that God is reshaping the way you view generosity? If so, how? If not, spend time listening to God before you commit any changes.*

- Regular and Proportional

2 On the first day of each week, you should each put aside a portion of the money you have earned. Don't wait until I get there and then try to collect it all at once. - 1 Corinthians 16:2 NLT

Paul gave the church at Corinth very practical advice which all of us can heed. Do you already have a regular time and amount set aside as a gift to the Lord? If not, consider incorporating this practice into your giving.

- Sacrificial Giving

They [the Macedonian church] are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. - 2 Corinthians 8:2 NLT

A generous heart is not bounded by limited finances. Sometimes the most generous gifts are given by those who know the pain of poverty themselves, as was the case in Macedonia or with the widow's mite. Has there been a time when you've experienced the joy of sacrificial giving? If so, explain the circumstances and the impact on those involved.

- Voluntary and Cheerfully or Joyfully

God wants us to experience the joy of generosity. But there are some issues that hinder our ability to experience that joy. These include