

LESSON NINE: WHY WE GIVE

BIG IDEA

Intentional giving and generosity are vitally important for God's people. God has blessed us with more than we need so that we can be a blessing to others. Let's look for opportunities to be generous and consistently make an effort to listen to the voice of God. When we give generously, we can experience new joy, watching with open hands while God works miracles with the resources He provides us.

DISCUSSION

- Have you been a recipient of someone else's generosity? How did it make you feel?
- We can all be a blessing to someone else. What gifts or resources has God given you that you could use to bless others? What is one thing you could do to bless someone this week?
- When do you find it the easiest to be generous? When do you find it the most difficult? What factors contribute to each of those situations?

TEACHING

Generosity in the bible is not a complicated topic. It is an assumed behavior. The people of God are beneficiaries of God's most prized possessions: the life of His Son.

*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.
(John 15:13)*

Speaking of generosity, the Apostle Paul says:

But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also. I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your

need, that there may be fairness. As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack." (2 Cor 8:7-15)

The conflict we feel isn't spiritual; it is cultural! Much of our sense of value and worth is connected to our possessions. This belief doesn't add value; it is a robber. It steals from the joy of finding our true value as sons and daughters, and our true security in God as our provider. Your possessions make promises to you they can't keep. If we have more stuff, we assume we will have more respect, happiness, and opportunity, and we assume more is always better. Both history and your personal experience don't validate the assumption, yet we often persist in gathering more.

Scripture reframes reality. It calls us to imagine a new economy and value set with an alternative definition of wealth. Simply put, God gives me more than I need so I can be a blessing.

Here are three simple questions to ask yourself when you are considering generosity.

The Relationship Question: Who will I commit to relationally?

They are planted in the house of the LORD; they flourish in the courts of our God. (Ps 92:13)

Generosity isn't simply going somewhere; it is going to someone. Personalize your generosity.

The first place to start is by being a part of a life-giving church and tithing. Get to know the vision and the leaders in your church. Get to know their hearts and their hopes for the future. Don't allow generosity to be transactional; make it relational. Then, tie your treasure to that community. Your heart follows your investments. If you want to love your church, invest in her.

In addition to tithing, begin giving offerings. Offerings are gifts above our tithe. Don't simply give to an organization you know little about and have no relationship with. Find something you are passionate about and someone you think is doing it well. Get to know the people running the organization.

Know who you are giving to, and know who your giving blesses. The relationship will make all the difference.

The Difference Question: What difference will it make in eternity?

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Cor 3:12-15)

I hope you want to make a difference in our world. We all agree we face challenges and complexity, chaos and conflict. Our world needs Jesus! The role of the church is to bring the future kingdom of God into the present. Your earthly possessions can be powerful when they are aimed at eternity.

First, ask yourself, *who* am I giving to and *who* does my giving bless? Then ask yourself, *when* do my investments mature? Do they mature on this side of eternity or when the kingdom of God comes? If your investment matures on this planet, it is an earthly investment. There is nothing wrong with earthly investments; just don't let them be your only investment! Invest in eternity. Take the temporal possession you have and give them a heavenly purpose.

The Bible is very clear: only a few things are eternal

- The Word of God
- The Worship of God
- The People of God
- The Person of God

Sometimes, our generosity makes it possible for people to know what they didn't know about themselves and God. (Examples: Bible translation, church planting, or missionary endeavors.)

Sometimes, our generosity gives people more time to hear the Gospel and believe in Jesus as Savior. (Examples: Medical missions or economic development.)

Sometimes, our generosity teaches people they are loved and valuable. (Examples: Justice initiatives and benevolence.)

All generosity is a blessing to both the recipient and the giver. We tend to think of generosity as responding to someone needing something from us. God says generosity is for us. Your giving is a gift to you.

The Obedience Question: What is God telling me to do?

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (Matt 9:35-36)

Sometimes, God asks us to do things that don't make sense. Decision grids or pro/con lists can be helpful. We want to be wise and good stewards. However, more than anything, we are followers. When God speaks, we are to act. The most helpful thing you can do is regularly ask God what He wants you to do with the money and possessions He has provided you. It will often make sense. It will often be through a relationship, and the difference will be clear. But even when it does not make sense, walk in faith with your possessions. Trust God as your provider. Ask Him what He wants you to do and act on what He says.

DIG DEEPER

- Our God is generous. He continues to bless us even when we don't deserve it. How does knowing that God loves us that much make you feel?
- What are your views on tithing?
- God builds His Kingdom relationally. Share how you can recognize and embrace the people God has placed in your sphere of influence. Now, share with the group some practical ways you can meet those people's spiritual, emotional, and or physical needs.
- Describe the difference between investing in people's financial needs versus investing in their eternal needs. Share some steps you can take to be intentional about doing both.

COMMON QUESTIONS

How much should I give?

Financial giving can be divided into two categories: tithes and offerings. The Bible teaches us that we worship the Lord with our tithe, which is ten percent of our income contributed to the church on a regular basis. When we feel called to give over and above our tithe, we do so as an offering.

I don't have any money, and I don't have any talents. What do I have to offer God?

Everybody is at "10" at something and has plenty to offer. It sounds like you haven't discovered your areas of strengths and spiritual giftings. You can discover how your design reveals your purpose in life and your best fit in ministry at Growth Track, which takes place over the first four Sundays of every month.

It's hard for me to wrap my head around the idea of "giving." How can I become a more generous person?

Start with the tithe, which involves regularly giving a percentage of your income. Start somewhere. The amount is less important than your heart.

Have you ever heard the funny fact about smiling and feeling happy? Studies show that if you don't feel very happy but you'd like to, one of the best things you can do is start smiling. By behaving like a happy person, you start actually feeling happy. Obedience to God is a lot like that.

Take the Generosity Jump: Commit to giving a pre-decided amount for a pre-decided amount of time. Give first, not with what is left over at the end of the month. The best way to feel more generous is to do what a generous person would: Give. When you see the impact your giving has and experience your relationship with God grow deeper as you

walk in obedience, you will become a confident, cheerful giver. As in so many things, actions lead, and feelings follow.

How do I benefit from giving?

- Giving draws us closer to God.
Matthew 6:21 tells us, "Where your treasure is, there your heart is also." Giving is the antidote to materialism. Remember, money and possessions aren't bad unless they become our priority. Affluence makes promises it can't keep. It calls for our attention and our obedience. It attempts to put itself in a seat reserved for God.
- Giving strengthens our faith.
Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine. (Proverbs 3:5, 9-10)
- Giving is an investment in eternity.
They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. (1Tim 6:18-19)

NEXT STEPS

Ask God to speak to you clearly about how He calls you to live generously.

Think about random acts of kindness, outreach, mission trips, a giving plan through your church, and other opportunities that can help you demonstrate generosity in your daily life.

Ask for wisdom in managing your personal finances, and pray that God will show you how to leverage your resources to expand His Kingdom.

RESOURCES

The Treasure Principle by Randy Alcorn
Redeeming Money by Paul David Tripp
The Legacy Journey by Dave Ramsey
Gospel Patrons by John Rinehart
The Genius of Generosity by Chip Ingram
The Gospel Comes with a House Key by Rosaria Butterfield
For kids: *The Great Lemonade Stand Standoff* by Art Rainer

MEMORY VERSE

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. (2 Cor 8:9)

DAILY SCRIPTURE AND JOURNALING

Day One

They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God. (Ps 92:13)

Journal: If being “planted” is required for godly flourishing, where might more planting be needed in your life?

Day Two

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Cor 3:12-15)

Journal: How do you know what foundation you are building upon?

Day Three

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (Matt 9:35-36)

Journal: What motivated Jesus’ compassion? What motivates yours?

Day Four

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matt 6:21)

Journal: What does your checking account reveal about your heart?

Day Five

They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. (1 Tim 6:18-19)

Journal: What is God’s way to store up treasure?

PRAYER FOCUS

In addition to praying for the specific requests from your group, pray that each group member seeks God’s will daily and looks for opportunities to expand the Kingdom.