

Generosity

Lesson 1—Generosity and God’s Grace¹

TRUTH

God has been unbelievably generous toward us through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Does this glorious truth impact your generosity? Of course, it is folly to assume we can “pay back” God for our life in Christ. C.S. Lewis touched on this theme when he wrote, “I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare.”

So, what is Gospel-driven generosity? It’s a theme that is pervasive throughout Scripture, and yet we often reduce it to a legalistic requirement or an obligatory task. This study will help you consider the different aspects of generosity—from hospitality to finances to forgiveness—as joyful responses to God’s grace towards us. Money is only one form of currency, so generosity goes far beyond our finances. While some people do need to work on their hearts when it comes to financial generosity, others find it easy to write a check but much harder to give of their time, or open up their home, or generously forgive others. With this in mind, this study is organized around a *holistic* approach to generosity.

A few years ago, pastor J.D. Greear wrote an article called “The Generosity Matrix,” offering several helpful insights for thinking about giving, generosity, and possessions.² Gospel Coalition blogger Justin Taylor summarizes Greear’s article as follows:

[Greear] begins by identifying two different extremes that Christians often hold with regard to possessions. Either:

1. God wants you to give 10%, and after that, you can do whatever you want with your money.
2. Whatever you give, you should be giving more.

The second position, he says, is much better, but it’s imbalanced and leads to despair and constant guilt. He gives three problems with it:

1. It never ends.
2. It’s out of sync with what the Bible says elsewhere about possessions.

¹ A significant portion of this study was drawn from Tim Keller and the staff at Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Copyright, 2016.

² <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/the-generosity-matrix/>

3. It ends up as a spiritualized sense of “compulsory” giving (contra 2 Corinthians 8-9).

Greear goes on to provide a scriptural matrix on this issue. “Any one of these principles, taken alone, will lead you out of balance and into error. You are to hold all 6 of these principles in a reverent tension. We like rules, formulas, and black and white prescriptions. Instead, the Bible gives complementary principles we are to hold in tension.”

1. It is the joyful duty of those who have to share with those who have not.
2. We live with radical generosity to others in response to Jesus’ radical generosity to us.
3. The Holy Spirit must guide us as to which sacrifices we are to make.
4. God provides for His people richly and delights in our enjoyment of His material gifts.
5. *Don’t* trust in riches and *don’t* define your life by the abundance of your possessions.
6. Wealth building is OK.

Consider Greear’s “Generosity Matrix” as you answer the questions in the EQUIP section.

EQUIP

1. What extreme have you struggled with concerning generosity and/or possessions? Why?
2. Which of the six principles is hardest for you, and which is easiest? Why?
3. Read Luke 18:9-17 and Micah 6:6-8. In the passage in Luke, Jesus describes two men who went up to the temple to pray. What do the two men have in common? How do they differ?
4. What do their prayers tell us about both their view of God and what they believe is acceptable to him?
5. What do the Pharisee and Jesus' disciples have in common (vs. 16-17)? How do they regard others of lower status?
6. The Pharisee considered himself great because of his tithes and fasts, but in the Micah text, we see that even the most extraordinary works are insufficient for meeting God's demands. What did the Pharisee and the readers of Micah fail to grasp about what God truly desires? What does this say about our efforts to earn God's approval?
7. What do we learn from the parable in Luke about the necessity of Jesus' sacrifice for sin? How does His voluntary humility change our posture toward God?

ACCOUNTABILITY

NOTE: Your study group does NOT need to go through every one of the following questions. Devote the final 30 minutes of your study time to the ACCOUNTABILITY section, and cover as many questions as you can depending on your group's size.

1. Think back to the parable in Luke 18. To which of the characters do you more readily relate? Why?
2. What are some of the "good deeds" you rely on to earn God's favor?
3. How does the experience of God's grace and generosity to us, shown in the sacrifice of Jesus, radically alter our motivation for good deeds?
4. What events over the past week encouraged you? What *discouraged* you?
5. Without focusing on something you're "doing," describe your relationship with the Lord.
6. How have you worshipped the creation rather than the Creator?
7. What lies have you been believing?
8. Describe a situation or relationship that you would like prayer for.
9. Which spiritual discipline (prayer, study, fellowship, etc.) has blessed you recently? Why?
10. Which spiritual discipline have you neglected lately? Why?

MISSION

1. Village Seven's 2020 emphasis is **For the City: Gospel Love, Living Local**. How can God use you to seek the welfare of Colorado Springs?
2. Do you have a place where you serve in Colorado Springs? If so, how's it going? If not, what are some places where you could get excited to serve and engage?
3. God has placed you at your job, in your neighborhood, and in this city for a reason. Who are people in your life that don't know the Good News of the Gospel?
4. We are praying as a church for God to give us boldness to have spiritual conversations with non-believers we know. How are you doing with this?