



PURSUE GENEROSITY

FALL SERIES SERMON STUDY GUIDE

'Pursue Generosity' — Part 2: Concerning What You Have

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THE MAIN THING:

Through our pursuit of generosity, God is able to meet the needs of others as well as our own.

PURSUE RELATIONSHIP: *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. Of the list that Pastor Henry gave about God's generosity to us (creation, breath, salvation, eternal life, health, talent, spiritual gifts, time, conveniences, creature comforts, animals...), which ones are most significant to you?
2. If a wealthy person gave you money to give away, who would be first person on your list to bless? Why would you choose that person?
3. Sometimes the 'need' is not financial. When you consider the people around you, what are some 'greatest needs' to which you can respond?

PURSUE GOD: *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. God's people were generous in their giving towards the building of the Temple (1 Chron 29:5-9). What caused the people to give so much (\$10 billion worth +)? Also, check out: Ex 19:5; Psalm 24:1.
2. What does it mean to be a faithful 'manager' rather than 'the owner'? (Gen 2:15; Deut 8:17; 1 Cor 4:7)
3. 'God doesn't prosper me to raise my standard of living; He prospers me to raise my standard of giving.' — Randy Alcorn
Discuss what this statement means to you in terms of God's giving through us (Pastor Henry's third principle in God's plan for our generosity).
Use Matt 25:21 and Luke 6:38 in your conversation.

Application

1. Make an inventory of all that God has given to you. What are you holding 'loosely' and what are you grasping? Evaluate how you are managing your resources.
2. Read Matthew 25:21. What are some 'small things' you can do this week to show your 'generosity'? Talk with someone about your plan.
3. Pray for one another as challenges/frustrations are faced in obeying God.

PURSUE MISSION: *Seek to be the community of God's people in your community*

Next weekend (Oct 11/12) is Thanksgiving. How can you show generosity to a household during that special event?

*Generosity devotional booklets available through the Appleseed Resource Centre.

THE WORD (NIV)

1 Chronicles 29:5-9

⁵... for the gold work and the silver work, and for all the work to be done by the craftsmen. Now, who is willing to consecrate themselves to the LORD today?" ⁶Then the leaders of families, the officers of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of the king's work gave willingly. ⁷They gave toward the work on the temple of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze and a hundred thousand talents of iron. ⁸Anyone who had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the temple of the LORD in the custody of Jehiel the Gershonite. ⁹The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD. David the king also rejoiced greatly.

Exodus 19:5

⁵... Although the whole earth is mine,...

Psalm 24:1

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

Genesis 2:15

¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Deuteronomy 8:17, 18

¹⁷You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." ¹⁸But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.

1 Corinthians 4:7

⁷For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

Matthew 25:21

²¹"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

Luke 6:38

³⁸Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."



Ever since the fall of man, God has been working with us and through us to bring a little heaven down to earth for our good and God's ultimate glory. This is why God calls us to be co-workers in God's service; to work together with God and one another. Or as Jesus said, "Thy will be done on earth - as it is in heaven." Generosity is one means for us to represent Christ throughout our communities, city, and the world to make the invisible Christ visible. Unfortunately, since the fall of man we are less inclined to be generous. We may exercise token generosity (acts of giving that require little to no sacrifice and yet let us feel good about ourselves). Even when we do give, it is often motivated by guilt rather than love and joy. God has called us to break free of this pattern and participate in His generosity plan.

What then is God's generosity plan?

Scripture gives three key principles to describe God's plan. **First**, it reminds us that God owns all of creation. In the Old Testament we read how David himself donated a vast amount of his wealth (worth ten billion dollars today) to build God's temple. In spite of being perhaps the most powerful king of his time, David proclaims that God is greater than any human and that all that Israel donated was and has always belonged to God. The trouble we repeatedly run into today is the notion that we, and not God, are the rightful owners of our possessions. However there are two important reasons why God's claim supersedes our own: first, because it was He that created all things and therefore has claim before all others. The second reason is that since it was by God that all things were created everything is continually sustained by Him.

The **second** principle is this: God gives to us. The greatest display of generosity God has given to us is through His one and only Son, Jesus Christ becoming a man to suffer and die for our sins so we may be reconciled to God. Furthermore, in 1 Chronicles 29 David is left in awe that God would bless Israel with such abundance so they would even have the capacity to give generously. Yet more than just physical wealth, God has blessed us with amazing spiritual gifts and talents. In all things He gives to us freely and simply asks that we manage it well and to also be generous with it. Unfortunately, we tend to claim that these blessings are ours by right. We start using words like "my possessions, my time, my talents - my life..." but what do we have that we did not ultimately receive from God? We so often lose sight of this reality. Rather than finding contentment in what God has given us, we tend to envy our neighbour and question God why He blesses others more than ourselves. Yet God has blessed us with what we need in order to become and accomplish the good He desires.

The **third** principle is that God gives through us. We are chosen to be Christ's representatives here on earth, and if God's will is to be done on earth as in heaven then we must be generous with what God has entrusted to us. God has immense confidence that we will be the conduit of His love, kindness and generosity to others. If we fail to do our part, God's generosity plan begins to break down: if we become greedy, our world becomes needy; if we become generous, the needs of the world will be met. God has provided all that is required, but the problem is that not enough people are generous with what He has already provided. The good news is that if we faithfully respond to God's call for generosity not only will our faith increase as we see Him at work in our lives, but also a little heaven will come to earth to the glory of God. Here is how it works in practice: God deposits these blessings into a trust account, then at some point, God asks us to faithfully transfer some or all of this deposit into the trust account of others in need. God has also promised to make compensating deposits in our account - not only to provide for our needs, but at other times He gives us more than we need so that we can fulfill the needs of others. This is not a 'give in order to get more' scheme; God knows our hearts and we know He will oppose the proud. This stumbling block has left many feeling disillusioned or bitter. Randy Alcorn put it this way: "God doesn't prosper me to raise my standard of living. He prospers me to raise my standard of giving." When we obey God when He calls us to be generous, we are exercising faith and including God in not only our finances, but also in our lives. When we do this, God promises to meet all our needs in Christ - not necessarily all our wants - but certainly all our needs.

The pursuit of generosity leaves us asking one important question: "Jesus, what do You want me to do with all that you've entrusted to me?" God prompts our conscience and hearts to reach out and embrace God's generosity plan. We tend to draw back from this plan out of fear. We fear that God will ask too much of us, but God wishes us to know generosity through giving and receiving; not done against our will, but done through our own volition. The urge to become self-absorbed can be tempting but if we trust God in each step of faith we take, we have the promise of His grace and providence in all we do.