



PURSUE GENEROSITY

FALL SERIES SERMON STUDY GUIDE

'Pursue Generosity' –Part 4: Concerning What You Need

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THE MAIN THING:

We are called to be generous so that the INVISIBLE CHRIST will be made VISIBLE to the people around us. Finding freedom from our inclination toward selfishness will require our minds to be changed: will we trust Christ or our culture in terms of what really matters in life?

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

1. What motivates/triggers you to be generous? When have you experienced/not experienced God's provision through other people?
2. On a scale of 1-10 (1 being least), what is your quotient of fear or concern relative to God's provision for you/your family?

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

1. Read more from a study Bible about the historical context of Paul's writing in Philippians. How far did Epaphroditus have to travel to find Paul? What did this say about their generosity towards Paul?
2. Where do you see Paul locating himself on the scale (questions #1 above) with reference to Phil 4:19? How does his view compare with the modern world's view? In what ways does Pastor Henry's analogy of the '100 people' speak to this?
3. How do Rom 12:1-2 and Phil 4:14-19 intersect? How does 'being transformed relate to being the blessing that God intends us to be? (2 Cor 9:11)
4. What is the importance of recognizing that often there are conditions in receiving God's promises? (2 Chron 7:14). Identify the implied conditions in Phil 4:19? What are the consequences of not responding to God's call for us to be generous?

Application

1. Pastor Henry said, 'The stuff of this world is as durable as a sand castle on the beach...nothing done for the sake of the world will last.' How are you being challenged to be more generous to invest in eternal rather than earthly treasures?
2. How is God's Spirit prompting you to reflect His love and generosity? What reservations can you identify which hinder your response?
3. Pray together about a specific need of which you are aware (in your own life, or in someone else's life) and how can you be God's hand of generosity.

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

THE WORD (NIV)

2 Chronicles 7:14

¹⁴if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ²Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

2 Corinthians 9:11

You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

Philippians 4:14-19

¹⁴Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. ¹⁵Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; ¹⁶for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. ¹⁷Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. ¹⁸I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.



Generosity: Concerning What You Need

God is on a mission to bring to all people back into a relationship with himself. He's chosen to accomplish this mission through us. But it requires all His followers to be sacrificially generous with time, abilities and resources. Because we are not inclined to be sacrificially generous, we often miss one of the greatest ways God wants to grow our faith and make an eternal difference in the lives of people we know.

The solution comes in Romans 12:2, where Paul teaches that finding freedom from selfishness requires our mind to be renewed. We need to trust God in several areas, two of which are:

God owns everything. He's the Creator of all that we have and are. It's the easiest principle to believe but hardest to apply. This leaves no room for pride, to think that what I have is mine. 2 Cor 9:11 tells us that God is generous and often gives us more so that we can increase our standard of generosity and meet others' needs.

God supplies all your need. (Phil 4:19). People wonder if they can trust God to meet all their needs. Take Paul, who wrote Philippians in prison. Prisoners needed friends and family to provide food, clothes and medicines because the prisons didn't. News of Paul's need got back to churches, and the Philippians sent gifts through Epaphroditus. Paul was touched because the people very poor but gave anyway. Paul thanks them and says God will meet all their needs. Then Paul spells out why generosity matters.

It encourages and builds faith in others. Paul must have been discouraged because other churches didn't respond to his need. When you sense God's prompting to provide for someone, you may be God's answer to someone's prayers and you encourage and build their faith.

It makes you a partner in ministry (Phil 1:4) When you support and pray for those who are called, you share their ministry in accomplishing God's redemptive purposes.

It is noticed by God. (Phil 4:17) No one else may know you give, but God does, and it will be credited to your account. (You've got a file in heaven—every time you give to poor, stand up to injustice, etc, God records and will reward you.)

It pleases God. (Phil 4:18) Every time you open your heart, hands or wallet, a sweet fragrance wafts heavenward. God says, "What an aroma! I love fragrance that comes when my children are generous."

God will meet your need in return. (Phil 4:19). This verse is often misused. Some promises are based on conditions (see 11 Chron 7:14—note the "If...then" condition.) The promise in this verse doesn't cover:

1. **Our lack of generosity.** If you don't follow God when He prompts, someone's needs are not met and God's generosity plan breaks down. This is why we have a needy world.
2. **Our idleness and consequences** (11 Thess 3:6-10) People unwilling to work should not be given handouts. God expects us all to work, even if we have adequate income or if we're retired (volunteer work). We shouldn't leave excessive amounts for children. Wealth passed on has the same effect as winning the lottery. It can ruin families, cause people to lose incentive to work and hence lose their creative potential. Some have even committed suicide.
3. **All our wants.** There is a difference between needs and wants. In 1890 America, absolute needs amounted to 16 items. 100 years later, people had 98 absolute needs. Wants have a way of morphing into needs. The problem is greed, not need. Our culture deifies getting and accumulating, acquiring so much debt we can't be generous even if we want to be. People haven't learned to be thankful and content. In North America, 6% have over half world's wealth. If everyone in North America gave 10%, there would be more than enough to wipe out world poverty.

We can get so caught up in "stuff." The 'stuff' of this world is as durable as a sandcastle on the beach. Our destiny not bound up in things but in eternity. Enjoy every good thing God gives you, but don't become too attached to sand castles of life.

If we want to be people of integrity, we need to align our actions with our beliefs. As you faithfully step out and exercise generosity, He will meet all your needs. Your faith in God will skyrocket and you'll have true joy.