

Six Habits of Spiritually Happy Men

Habit #5: Spiritually Happy Men Are Generous

Unedited Transcript

Patrick Morley

Good morning, men. I wanted to let you know John Ploehn 's funeral, it was announced a couple weeks ago about John passing away. John was a former table leader here and had been a decades long member of our Bible, died at a young age but beautiful funeral and met all of his four children. Everybody seems to be coping with it pretty well. Say your prayers, continue your prayers for the family. I appreciate Cathy and the children.

Then I wanted to give a joyous announcement. Jim Angelakos who's been here for 25 or 30 years, Jim has been licensed in the Assemblies as a what, Jim? Where is Jim? Licensed as a what? Licensed as a minister for sixteen years, but a couple years ago answered the call to become an ordained pastor. This week, Jim Angelakos completed the two years of study and was ordained as a reverend, as a pastor, in the Assemblies of God. We now will be referring to him as either Pastor Angelakos or the The Most Reverent Right Glorious Reverent Angelakos or the way I'm going to go, Pastor Jim. I wonder if you'd join me in just giving some congratulations to Jim. Jim, would you stand? Jim, would you stand? Stand up. Great. That's our Jim, Pastor Jim. Congratulations to you.

If you would, please, open your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 8. Let me go ahead and have us give a shout out to some men at Big Life Community Church in Oswego, Illinois, five men who have been meeting at 7:00 on Tuesdays at Dean Collin's home, who is their leader. These men are now joining us as part of the video Bible study. By the way, we literally have thousands of you out there. We want to give a shout out to all of you. If you haven't received one yet, just please feel free to send in the name of your group. Right now, I wonder if you would help me by joining in ... Let's give a rousing and a warm welcome to these men who are meeting at Dean Collin's home. One, two, three, hoorah. Welcome, guys. We are really glad to have you with us, and all of the rest of you as well.

We are on the fifth of six habits this morning, six habits of spiritually happy men. First one was that spiritually happy men read their Bible on a regular basis. Your life will never change in any significant way apart from the regular study of God's word. The second spiritual habit is that spiritually happy men, they're just in a small group with some other guys doing life together. The Holy Spirit simply has more options to help you when you're in small group. Then the spiritual habit of serving. You need to have a deep intentional and spiritual impact in one person's life. David, I was reading his message this morning. I was just struck with the depth of the idea of focusing down and getting intentional with a few people. Bret, last week, spiritually happy men pray with and for their wives. Praying with my wife brings the greatest power in the universe into my most important earthly relationship. Great lessons. Today we're going to move to habit number five. Spiritually happy men are generous.

The first thing I want us to look at is the link between happiness and generosity. In 2 Corinthians chapter 8 verse 1, it says, "And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the

Macedonian churches." Jerusalem had some poor people. Paul was taking up an offering for the poor people in Jerusalem. The Corinthians had signed a pledge card that they would make an offering. Meanwhile, the Macedonian churches which are up in the northern part of Greece, Corinth is down in the southern part of Greece, they had been stripped of most of their wealth by the Romans, so Philippi, Thessalonica, Veria, the cities up in the north part of Greece. Those Macedonian churches had decided that they too wanted to help those poor people in Jerusalem even though they were, themselves, under severe hardship and extreme poverty. Read verse 2, "Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity." That's kind of the situation that's taking place.

What we're going to see today, by the way, I have no idea what I'm going to say today. There's so much to talk about. I'm just going to pick a few things as they come to mind and then we'll just see what happens. One thing we do see in the scriptures is that when we talk about generosity, we're not talking about what the rich and the poor do. It's not a question of rich and poor because we know and you know that there are many rich people who are happy and there are many rich people who are not happy. There are many poor people who are happy. There are many poor people who are not happy. There is no linkage between the amount of money you have and your spiritual happiness. In fact, in an article in Christianity Today, basically, people who tithe equally across all different income spectrums. Getting ahead of myself.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 8, if we were to read on, I'll let you read some of it on your own if you're interested. Verse 7 says, he says to the Corinthians, "But just as you excel in everything, in faith, in speech, in knowledge and complete earnestness, and in your love for us, just think about your own life." This could be said of you. You are excelling. You're excelling in your faith. You're here. You're excelling in your faith. You're excelling in your speech with other people. He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have a king for his friend. You're growing in rich maturity in this area of speech and your knowledge of God by coming here and your complete earnestness and then also in your love for each other.

Paul goes on, "See that you also excel in this grace of giving." Whether you're rich or whether you're poor, Paul is exhorting the Corinthians to excel in the grace or the gift of giving. He gives an example to them about what's going on with the Macedonian churches, hey, here's a little testimony for you here. These people are doing it. Then he gives a second example, verse 9, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sakes, he became poor so that through his poverty, you might become rich." There's the generosity of Jesus. There's some other really interesting things there but I don't think we're going to dive into those.

When we look at 2 Corinthians 8 here, where do you think this spirit of generosity that these Macedonian churches had, these people in Macedonia, these little groups in these different cities? Where do you think their generosity really came from? For those of you who are generous, who have a predisposition to be generous, where do you think that spirit of generosity comes from? Does it come from me explaining the doctrines of the Bible to you about giving and tithing? Let me do that. Let me do that so you know what they are. It's important to have the right information.

The New Testament teaches the concept of proportionate giving. 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 2, "On the first day of every week, each of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income." Hey, guess what. The Old Testament also teaches the concept of proportionate giving. Deuteronomy chapter 16 verse 17, "Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord your God has

blessed you." Both the Old Testament and the New Testament teach the concept of proportionate giving.

The Old Testament gives us a benchmark, a kind of rule of thumb of what that proportionate giving would be. It's called a tithe, a tithe being 10%. It began with Abraham giving 10% to Melchizedek? I didn't look this up this week. I think it was Melchizedek. Gave an offering of a 10% to Melchizedek. I don't even remember what it was for. Does anybody remember what it was for? Anyway, there was a 10% gift and that was the first time it was given. Then this got worked into the woof and the warp of spiritual life.

Well, guess what. Not only is tithing a benchmark in the Old Testament, tithing is also the benchmark that Jesus gives in the New Testament. Matthew chapter 23 verse 23. Pretty easy to remember 23, 23. He's the woes to the Pharisees. He's talking about how you tithe but you ignore the greater matters of the law. He said, "You should have continued to tithe," yes, absolutely, "without neglecting these other things." Jesus ratifies the concept of a tithe being a good benchmark for you.

Now, as I said before, I can tell you this doctrine and I can tell you it's important to do this. I can give you promises. Luke 6, "Give it and it will be given unto you." I can even tell you that the Bible talks about God saying that when we don't tithe, we're robbing God. I can give you all kinds of warnings. I can give you all kinds of promises. Guess what. It won't make any difference. It won't make any difference in your generosity unless your generosity is rooted in the gospel of Jesus.

You see, generosity is something that happens out of the overflow of our gratitude for our deepening and our growing understanding of what the birth, the life, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the meaning of Christ, the meaning of who he was, the meaning of what he did, the meaning of who he is today that he is actually residing in us in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of Christ. He is in us. We are his vessels. He is interceding for us. The glories of the gospel of Jesus reckoning that he actually meant it when he said that he loves us as the Father has loved him. Imagine how much love the Father has for Jesus. John 15, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you." To come to that place where we are grasping the depth of the knowledge of love and the concern and the care and the sacrifice and all of the other attributes and characteristics of what Jesus is and has done. When we realize ...

I just remembered something I wrote this week. I wrote it down for a later time. Let's see if I can remember what it was. It's just this idea that I will never understand how deeply, how deep of a sinner I really am. I can't begin to imagine how deeply sin pervades my life. It's interesting because the longer I'm a Christian, the more I understand what a sinful nature I have, that I can be praising God, I mean literally praising God one moment and then, literally, the next moment, saying something acerbic to my wife. Absolutely.

There is this sinful nature conversely, but I will never, ever be able to grasp how high, how wide, how deep is the love of Jesus Christ that he sacrificed himself so that I don't have to be in bondage to this sin. Oh, I will sin today. You will sin. Some of you are sinning right now by not listening to me. You will sin today. I will sin today. Our lives are rooted in sin. Do you understand this? We are sinners. We are rooted in sin. Jesus Christ, all day long, is going to be walking beside us to give us victory over our sinful natures.

When we begin to plumb the depths or the more we plumb the depths of this gospel, the more gratitude will fill our hearts for who he is and what he has done. A natural overflow of this gratitude for this gospel is generosity, generosity in every way. I especially see us focusing on the generosity that is financial here today. Why? Because there are very few things that open up a big window into what's going into our heart. Very few things match money as a window into our soul, into our heart.

If you want to self-assess, don't be assessing anybody else. You really don't know what somebody's doing with their money. You see some material things, say, "Oh, they're materialistic." You have no idea what's going on with that person. Trust me. Use it to examine your own heart as a tool to see what's going on in there. The thing is that if you see that you really are not generous ... By the way, the statistics are that 10% to 20% of the people in the church tithe so 75% to 90% of the people in the church don't tithe. The total giving in the church is 2.5% a year. In the Great Depression, it was 3.3%. I really don't expect to see a big change globally anytime soon unless something really crazy happens with like revival and awakening, but we're at 2.5%.

When God says, "You're robbing me of your tithes and offerings," what he's basically saying is that people are giving about 25% of what they ought to be giving, as a rule. 10% to 25%, depending on the church, they are the ones who are doing the tithing. I like the tithe. I like the tithe because it is a benchmark. It's something I don't have to feel like I'm walking around on spongy soil or quicksand like I don't really know what I'm supposed to be doing. I know that a tithe and more. If I'm doing a tithe and more, then when I look into my heart, I'm saying, "Okay. I think I'm doing this because I am so grateful for the gospel." I want to be generous. It's the disposition of my heart wanting to be generous. By the way, 77% of people who tithe actually give between 10% and 20% of their income. 77% give more than a tithe. They give between 10% to 20%, according to Christianity Today, the article that I read.

The principle is proportional giving, the benchmark is a tithe. That's your theology, but you're not going to do that. You're not going to do that unless you are giving out of the overflow of gratitude for you embracing and growing in your spiritual maturity and increasing the understanding. You've heard me say this before. Martin Luther once said, "If you see yourself as a little sinner, then you only think you need a little savior. If you understand that you are a big sinner, then you realize that you need a big savior." We have a big savior! Generosity comes from understanding that we are a big sinner who needs a big savior. You're not tithing, okay.

I'll tell you a story. It's my favorite tithing story. John Hagee, Christian leader, was driving down the interstate one day with a wealthy businessman and he was talking to him about investing in the ministry and the man said, "Well, John, you know I just I'm really not going to be able to help you. I've been making so much money that it would be crazy for me to be taking all that money and then giving it away." John Hagee, said, "Stop the car! Stop the car! Stop the car!" The guy shakes a little bit, "John, we're in the left hand lane going 75 on the interstate." "Stop the car! Stop the car!" "John, what are you talking about? Are you having a heart attack? Is everything okay?" "Stop the car! Stop the car!" Finally, the guy works over to the edge of the road and stops. He said, "John, what's the matter? Are you okay?" He said, "We need to pray. We need to pray that God will reduce your income to an amount that you can afford to tithe on."

Turn with me. Keep your finger in 2 Corinthians 8, but turn back to Proverbs chapter 3 verse 9. It says, "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops and then a promise. Then your barns will be filled to overflowing and your vats will brim over with new wine." Turn to Malachi chapter 3, the last book of the Old Testament. Malachi chapter 3 verse 6.

Is God a loving god or an angry god? Well, some people might think it depends on the day of the week. Some people might say, "Well, depends on whether you're talking about the Old Testament or the New Testament." God is 100% loving 100% of the time. As a father, you are 100% in love with your children 100% of the time. How you act with your children really depends on how they act. You're not really the one who's setting the agenda. It's the children who set the agenda. When we read the Old Testament, I think there has been maybe in decades past a slight error in reading the tone of the text as God being angry. I don't think that's the way to read the the Old Testament. I'm sure I've done it. I've probably done it to you, but I don't think the tone is angry. I think the tone is rooted in a deep affection of a father for his children. Let's read this text with that tone and I think it's the right tone.

"I, the Lord, do not change." This is verse 6, "So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your forefathers, you've turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me and I will return to you," says the Lord almighty. "You ask, 'How are we to return?' Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. You ask, 'How do we rob you?' In tithes and offerings. It breaks my heart to say this but you are under a curse, the whole nation of you, because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe unto the storehouse that there may be food in my house and test me in this," says the Lord almighty. "And see if I will throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough to take it in. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the Lord almighty. "Then all the nations will call you blessed for yours will be a delightful land," says the Lord almighty.

I don't know if I got the tone right, but I think that's a little closer. I think that's a little closer. You've heard this. "You're under a curse! You have robbed me of my tithes and my offerings!" You've heard that, right? I don't think that's right. I don't think that's the tone that's intended in this text. The promises are so tremendous and I think the warnings come out of heart of love.

Something to keep in mind when you do tithe, if you really embrace this gospel to the point where you really have a heart filled with gratitude and you feel generosity welling up in you, that is something that many of you already have, something that is maybe growing in you. Maybe it's a seed that the Holy Spirit plants today. Maybe it's five or ten years from now until it comes to full bloom. Whatever the Lord is doing in your life, there are a thousand different ways he can be working in our lives, a million different ways he can be working in our lives. Keep this in mind. When you tithe, you are not giving God 10% of what belongs to you. God is giving you 90% of what belongs to him. You're not giving God anything. God's giving you everything. Then he's giving you an opportunity help him give his everything to other people too, especially among the poor, whether it is in spirit or temporal poverty.

By the way, if you think that tithing is sacrificial giving, you are terribly confused. That might be worth writing down. If you think that tithing is sacrificial giving, you are terribly confused about God and money. God is well able, if he can take someone on welfare who tithes and take care of them, he can certainly take care of the rich businessman who he thinks he makes too much money to tithe with the 90% that remains.

Spiritually happy men, they're generous. Specifically, spiritually happy men tithe and more than tithe. The Big Idea today is this. **Have you ever known a spiritually unhappy man who tithes?** Have you ever really run across a spiritually unhappy man who tithes? A guy who's tithing and he's not spiritually happy, I have never known a man who tithes and is spiritually unhappy. Conversely, I've known lots of men who don't tithe that are spiritually unhappy. Personally, I've never known somebody who tithes without also enjoying spiritual happiness. By spiritual happiness, we're talking about joy, peace,

contentment, good relationships. Not without suffering, because it's through many hardships that we enter the kingdom of God. Even in the midst of the hardships, love, joy, peace, contentment, spiritual happiness. There's a cluster, when we talk about happiness, there's a cluster of ideas that are surrounding that. Spiritually happy men, they tithe. Have you ever known a spiritually unhappy man who tithes? Not likely. Possible, not likely.

What does a spirit of generosity look like in action? Well, I guess we'll have to talk about that some other time. You can read 2 Corinthians chapter 8. I've made my point. I've made the point I guess the Lord wanted me to make this morning. You can read 2 Corinthians chapter 8. It's pretty, especially beginning in verse 6. Remember this, "Whoever sows sparingly will reap sparingly. Whoever sows generously will also reap generously." Each man should give what he has decided in his heart, again, it's a matter of the heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, not because of shame or guilt, not because you think you're going to get something out of it, not because you think that it's something that if you do, you'll make God happy or avoid his wrath as performance, for God loves a happy giver.

I was on the phone with a man this week who, one year into the Great Recession, so 2008, he was growing in his faith and he decided the Lord put so much love in his heart for Jesus and he felt so grateful for it that he felt compelled to begin tithing. He had never done that before. He and his wife got together and they decided that they were so committed to tithing that even if they had to sell their house to make it happen or downsize or move into an apartment, that's what they were going to do. They began to tithe.

You know the rest of the story. You already know the rest of the story. Their business took off. They began flourishing. They began giving more than a tithe. Not only did they not sell their house, they have redecorated and added onto their house as their family's grown, more than one time. Two years ago, he sold the business because God had turned him into a millionaire. The spiritual happiness in this man's voice in giving money away, he's thanking me for the opportunity to be able to give money to help reach men for Jesus. He's thanking me for giving. Usually I'm thanking the donor for giving and that's proper to do as well. Before I even got to that, he's thanking me for the opportunity to give money. Isn't that crazy? It's because of this big idea. Have you ever known a spiritually unhappy man who tithes? It just doesn't seem logical. Then, how you can afford to tithe.

Catch on fire. Don't focus on tithing. If you want to tithe, don't focus on tithing, focus on catching on fire. Spend time on your walk with Jesus. Draw near to him. Let him draw near to you. Seek him with your whole heart. Seek the gospel. Seek Jesus. Seek to understand what the gospel means. Then when you feel gratitude welling up inside of you, then you can be moved to make visible expressions of that gratitude through generosity, through tithing. You will experience an exchange for that, the spiritual happiness, the joy, the contentment, the peace, the love that we all long for.

You might be living above your means or at your means. At a practical level, you might want to think about going back to living within or below your means. It might be making some changes in your lifestyle to open up this. If you are already doing this tithing, in your working with other men and your discipleship with other men, show them what you're doing, tell them about what you're doing. I have given more than a tithe on every dime I've ever made since I became a Christian. It was one of the things for some reason I started doing at the very outset. God has never disappointed me, ever disappointed me. I've disappointed him. God has never disappointed me. You can give that story too, many of you. Tell this to the other men. Tell this to the other men. Why should I be spiritually happy and not tell you the secret of my spiritual happiness? Tithing is part of the secret of spiritually happy men.

A question just to think about and you can apply this to yourself as well. Have you ever known a spiritually unhappy man who tithes? Have you? Probably not. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we want to come to you, our dearest Father this morning, and thank you for the gospel of Jesus. We worship you, Lord, in the beauty of your holiness, in the majesty of your creation, and the generosity of your salvation. Today, Lord, especially in the mystery of your providence, how this generosity, you set it up as both a leading measure of spiritual happiness, by telling us that if we do this, then you will bless us. You also set it up as a lagging measure, Lord, of what happens when we are being generous toward you, that the spiritual happiness just flows into our hearts. Father, I pray for each man here. Lord, you could set their world on fire today, for all I know. I just pray that each of us will respond to your Holy Spirit's leading. Holy Spirit, I ask that you now speak to each man's heart. I pray that it would be so clear to him that he would know that it is in fact you.

If there's any man here yet who has not put their faith in Jesus, let today be the day to do that. You could pray a prayer like this. In fact, I would encourage you to pray this now. "Lord Jesus, I know that I am a big sinner, bigger than I probably realize. I know I need a big savior. I want to make you my savior by faith and I want to understand who you are and what you've done and what belief in you means. Today, just as a starting point, Lord, I put my faith in you and ask you to forgive my sins and to give me eternal life and to show me how you want me to live my life." We make this prayer in the name of Jesus'. Amen.