

# Living Generously

## Session 1: Your Money or Your Life

Edited Transcript

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Well, good morning men. It is great to see you this morning, thanks for joining us today. And we are starting a three-part series on the idea of generous living. So when I say the word generous, especially in a Christian context, what's the first thing that pops into your mind? Giving, right? Money. So, that's what we're going to talk about. No, we're not going to just talk about that. We are going to talk about what does it take to live a generous life? And we're going to come at it from three aspects and three underlying spiritual principles. We're going to talk about ... Today we're going to talk about faith and trust. To live a generous life requires faith and requires trust. Then the next session we'll talk about love and putting that love into action. And then finally we're going to talk about what do you place your hope in, what do you hope for, and then what are the habits that you need to establish for those hopes to come true to live a generous life?

Here's what I got, I got a little contest for you. At your tables, I'm going to give you 90 seconds because the concept of generosity is throughout scriptures. Would you agree with me on that? So I'm going to give you a contest, 90 seconds, at your tables, for you to come up with the most stories from the Bible that have generosity as a major theme of the story. For example, I'll give you an easy one, the Good Samaritan. He was generous with his time, he brought the guy to the innkeeper, he paid for everything, he was generous with that. He was generous with his reputation because a Samaritan and the Jew would not typically help each other. So there's a story where generosity is a significant theme. So you have 90 seconds at your tables. Go.

All right, five, four, scribble 'em down, three, two, one. All right. Who came up with four? Who doesn't want to raise their hand 'cause it's too early? Who came up with four? Six? Who came up ... Anybody come up with more than six? How many? No. Six? Nine. They made up a couple. You guys in the back more than nine? Seven, wow. So give me a couple off your list.

The widow's mite. Right, that's good. That's the story of the widow who gave the two coins. It was hardly anything but it was more of what she had than anybody else was giving. Joseph of Arimathea giving his tomb. That's a great one.

How about you guys? What are the couple that you came up with? Good, Rahab risking her life for the spies. Got another one? Rebecca. Okay, the kid that had the fish named Rebecca. No, I'm sorry. I got confused. So the kid that gave his fish when Jesus fed the five thousand and Rebecca's ... Yeah, Rebecca watering the camels. Yeah, that's great. Who up? Jesus giving his life for us. I can't believe that was like the eighth one that came up, you guys. How about-God gave his son. Now, we're competing for the best story. Okay, what do you guys have back there? You got a bunch. The good Samaritan. Thank you so much. How about Abraham and Lot or Abraham and Lot when Abraham said, "Lot, you take your pick of

the best land and I'll let you have the best land." The woman who came in and washed Jesus' feet with their expensive perfume and then dried it off with her hair? And there are story after story after story in the scriptures where generosity plays a major theme in that story. Why? Because from what you gentlemen already said, generosity is an attribute of God. And we're made in the image of God and so there's something in us that's sparked when we hear a story of generosity.

I mean, when you hear about the guy at Christmas time that puts, I don't know what it is, the gold coin in the Salvation Army pot and it turns out to be worth \$5,000 or \$10,000. And you hear stories like that. Or we hear things like Pay It Forward where ... I don't remember what restaurant it was but the drive-through line, you hear about this, that like 70 or 80 people, the one person said, "Hey, I'll pay for the person aback of me." And then that person paid for the person aback of them and then that person paid for the person aback of them. And on and on and on and on and on it went throughout the day. People that had no expectation that they would ever do that, why would they do that? Because there's something in us that craves, that longs to be generous.

Generosity is not really something that we have to sort of force ourselves into. I really like to be a greedy self-centered son of a gun but I guess I'll be nice to somebody. That's not how we're ... It's not really how we're made, that's the corruption of sin in us sometimes. But we are really made to be generous and so when we have the opportunity to live generously, then it sparks something in us. So when we think about ...

Today we're going to talk about your money or your life, what you're going to put your faith in, what you're going to trust in. You're going to have to make a decision at some point and you're going to trust in your money? Are you going to give up your money or are you going to give up your life? And Jesus uses a parable in Luke 12 to talk about this. Here's what we're going to talk about today. Your money or your life? We're going to start with talking about your life is not your possessions. Jesus said your life is not your possessions. And then we're going to talk about, then what are you building and then finally you can trust God to provide.

Now, how many of you know somebody that's a saver or anybody in here a saver? Like you just love to save, save money. And how many of you know somebody who's a saver? Are they fun to be around or ... They have nothing wrong with them, right? How about spenders? Spenders, they are much more fun to be around. So it's interesting, I've got two kids that are very generous kids. But one of my kids is a spender and one of my kids is a saver and yet they're both very generous.

So my daughter is the saver, so you would say, "Well, if she's a saver, she's holding everything close to her so how can she be generous?" Well, my daughter is ... If you are my daughter's friend, she has a loyalty to her friends that is just amazing to see. She's very generous with her time, with her energy, even with her money to her friends. Now, don't go trying to befriend my daughter in Facebook so you can get stuff from her. But she's very loyal to her friends and she's very generous with her time and with her resources to her friends.

Now, my son is a spender. And I don't mean that like there's a hole in his pocket, I mean he gets what he needs, he spends it on what he's got to spend it on and there's often nothing left over. And the interesting thing is because my daughter is a saver, she is driven. So like she works and works and works and works and works. She really wants to work. My son who you would think because he's a spender would want to have lots to spend, it's not that it's really that important to him, he just gets what he

needs and spends it. And so he's much more ... He would much rather spend his time academic and academic pursuit. So he's doing what? Of course, going to grad school. I mean, that's what you do, right?

But they're both very generous. My son is incredibly generous. Part of the reason that sometimes he doesn't have anything is because he just gives it away and he's so ... Matter of fact about it, he doesn't even have to think about it. It's just a habit that he's built into his life that he's going to be generous, both of my kids. And I would say that they absolutely got that from their mother because I struggle to be generous. I'm worried if I'm going to have enough. And so when you're worried if you're going to have enough, you use what you have to safeguard it and you become focused on protecting yourself from not having enough. And this is the story that we're going to read today.

### **YOUR LIFE IS NOT YOUR POSSESSIONS**

So if you have a Bible, turn to Luke chapter 12 and we're going to read through this passage starting at verse 13, Luke chapter 12. Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?'

And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink and be merry.'" But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?

Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

So before we go any further, let me pray for us as we dive into this. Father, thank you for the way you made us, thank you for your example that you give us, the way that you sent your son to us, Jesus the way that you gave your life for us, spirit the way that you give us council, you give us your wisdom and your direction. And Lord help us to figure out how we can trust you enough to live generously, to have lives that are known for being givers and not takers. Lord we lift up the rest of this morning to you, guide our discussion in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

All right, so let me just point out a couple of quick things about this passage and then we'll go to our table time. If you look at the first few verses, we have a little story that sort of starts this off. So Jesus is teaching to the people and he's saying all these really cool, theological things, spiritual things. And so a guy in the crowd raises his hand maybe and he says, in verse 13, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

So it's like, "Thanks for sharing these deep spiritual truths with us Jesus. Now, could you tell my brother to give me some money?" Like it kind of feels like a little break and it's weird. Why would the man say to Jesus, "Tell my brother to give me some of the inheritance." Yeah, 'cause the father died. In the Jewish culture, who would get the inheritance? The oldest son. How much of it would he get? All of it. And then he would provide for the family as he saw fit. Out of that apparently, this is a little brother. I am a little brother, I don't have an older brother but I am a little brother so I understand that sort of like give me mentality maybe that he's got. And Jesus just shuts him down. He says, "Who made me your judge or arbitrator?" He's like basically this is legal issue, that's not what I'm here for.

But then he goes to the heart issue so ... He say, "I'm not your judge, I'm not the legal arbitrator over this. Maybe you should be giving. Maybe your brother cheated you, I don't know." I mean, he does know but, "That's not my responsibility. But here's the bigger issue that I see in you sir, you are so consumed with getting this inheritance that your heart has been overtaken by covetousness because ..." And then he calls out the lie that this man is living his life by. He says, "Your life does not consist in the abundance of your possessions."

And we live in a culture of acquisition. I think I just read a story that by the time a kid's 18, he's seen a million commercials. What is those commercials ... Those commercials do not ... I mean, most of those commercials like one tenth and 1% say, live a generous life. The rest say get stuff. If you get this thing, you'll be happy. If you drink this beer, if you buy this game, if you go to this vacation spot, if you invest your money here, you will get more and more and more and more and more and more. Our culture constantly bombards us with the message that it's about what we get. We live in a acquisition culture. And Jesus says, "I hate to tell you this, but it's just not true. Your life is not based on the abundance of your possessions."

And then he goes on to tell this story. He tells the story that often is called the Parable of the Rich Fool. So a man is focusing on his wealth. He says, "I don't have anywhere to store my crops?" Now, does he have nowhere to store his crops? Well, he has somewhere to store his crops. He has barns he's willing to tear down. And so, what's the problem? Like you would say, what's the problem? I mean, he's a good capitalist. I love capitalism by the way, don't get me wrong. But he's a good capitalist, he's making more and more but his storehouses aren't big enough and so he's going to tear down his store houses and he's going to build bigger ones.

Now, think about the culture that Jesus is speaking into here. Got a lot of people that are living kind of paycheck to paycheck, for luck of a better word, but they are living sustenance living. And so he's telling a story about a man who's got so much that his barns that he built aren't big enough. He's going to tear the old barns down and build bigger ones. And Jesus says that's stupid, that's foolish.

What's the flip side of this that you might think Jesus is saying? What he's saying is your hoarding is not going to make you happy. I didn't give you more than you can store just so that you could store more. I give you more than you can store so that you will give it away. Randy Alcorn wrote a great book called The Treasure Principle. Have you guys heard of it? Look, this is a great thing about it, look, small. I would

really encourage you to go get a copy. Actually, we helped churches give a couple of hundred thousand copies of this away a few years back. And I would really encourage you to get it.

Some of the things that Randy says in here but he talks that God gives us more than we need so that we can participate with him in investing in the kingdom. God gives us more than we need because there are some people that have less than they need and when we take that resource, that excess resource that God gives us and we invest it in that person's life, we are participating with God in redemption. God gives us more than we need so that we can invest in our church as they serve the community and teach God's word and then send missionaries out to other places that need to hear the gospel. God gives us more than we need so that we can take the excess and go invest it in our neighbor and the needs that we see all around us in our community. God does not give us more than we need so we can hoard it. He doesn't give ...

And what I think happens is we just get so worried that we're not going to have enough. Now, there have been times where like this country, for instance, lived through depression and there are times where we haven't had enough. But this is 2018. I mean, this is the first quarter of the 21st century. We have so much and yet many times this anxiety Jesus talks about in the second part of this passage, he's talking about the anxiety that comes from being worried about having enough.

And so, we're like the glutton that just keeps buying food and buying food and buying food and storing it all around us and cataloging it and we're obese. We're spiritually obese, we're materially obese and we're afraid of not having enough. And so, when you think about this, when you're just accumulating, accumulating, accumulating and Jesus is saying, "What happens if you die tonight, what happens if you die tomorrow? What did you accumulate all that stuff for. I didn't give you that stuff to accumulate, I gave you that stuff for a different reason." And this anxiety, it rots your soul. He says, "Soul have ample goods laid up for many years." And God say, "What if your soul is required of you tonight, you fool?" And so, we don't want to live those foolish lives.

## **WHAT ARE YOU BUILDING?**

So what are you building? What are you building? Are you building storehouses that you don't need? Here's our Big Generous Idea for today, **God gives us more than we need so we can invest in his kingdom.** God gives us more than we need so we can invest in his kingdom. Can you believe that? I mean, it's hard sometimes.

So here's why you can believe that, you can believe that because God is trustworthy. And so Jesus gives examples from nature that these folks would understand: raven, lilies. And then he says, and the grass, he says, "Look, he makes the grass beautiful, he makes the lilies beautiful. You don't think he's going to give you enough? He's going to give you enough. You can trust him." And then he gives this very interesting analogy. Look down on verse 30, "For all the nations of the world seek after these things." In other words, this is the way the word works, is to accumulate these things. "For all the nations of the world seek after these things and your Father knows that you need them. But instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you."

Seek his kingdom and these things will be added to you. In other words, don't pursue more and more possessions, pursue building God's kingdom. And then I'm going to give everything you need to build his kingdom as well as everything you need for your own needs and requirements. You might say, "Yeah,

but I lost my job and I don't have enough." Yeah, but he's going to still give you more than you need. He's going to do it in a different way. He's going to do it through your brothers or through your church or through the institutions that he sets up but you are going to have what you need. God is trustworthy, even if you're going through a difficult time. God is trustworthy, he will take you through that time. You don't need to hoard.

## **YOU CAN TRUST GOD TO PROVIDE**

And then he says this, if you remember anything, remember this, "Fear not, little flock," I love that phrase. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." He is going to give us the kingdom. Why? Because we are sons of the king. Why does he start the story when a man asks for an inheritance? Because we have our inheritance. The kingdom is our inheritance because we are sons of the king. And because we're sons of the king, we can trust him to provide. So here's our Big Idea, **God gives us more than we need so that we can invest in his kingdom.**

So let's take ... We're going to take about 20 minutes or so and we got some questions on the tables, we'll come back in about 20 minutes and do a little ... Hear what you guys came up with at the tables and then we'll do a wrap up and then we'll give you some time to pray before you leave together at your tables.

The interesting thing is the first two things were fear and ... what was the other one? Greed. Now, are those physical things? Those are spiritual things, right? So I would say that the number one obstacle to us living a life as generously as we'd like to live it's not the physical things, it's the spiritual things. That's why the man said, "Soul, now you're going to have everything you need. You can eat, drink and be merry." It's the spiritual things that are the biggest barriers. Yes, there's barriers of planning and debt and behavior. There are some of those, but if you don't get past the spiritual things guys, you're never going to be able to live a generous life. And the only way that you can do that is investing in your relationship with God. Is to grow closer in your personal relationship with God and recognize his hand in everything that you do and everything that he gives you. And slowly, some of those spiritual shackles of greed and fear and anxiety, slowly those things will fall away.

And let me tell you, the most effective way to get to that point spiritually is not on your own trying really hard. The best way to overcome those spiritual obstacles is to get with brothers who will go on that journey with you, who will remind you when you are forgetting God's promises, who will hold you accountable when you're not doing what you said you would do, who will pray for you and lift you up and encourage you and bare your burdens and love you. That's the way that you'll overcome those spiritual obstacles. It's the way God made us, is to live in relationship.

So I'm going to dismiss you to your tables to pray before you go. But my prayer for you guys over the rest of this month is that God will slowly begin to remove those spiritual shackles from each of us, starting with me, so that we can really engage in generous living. Go to the tables and I'll see you guys next week.