

growing further

Christmas Is... Generosity

"Christmas Is..." Week 2

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"A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."
Proverbs 11:25 NIV

We are never more like Christ than when we are generous, because God is an extremely generous person. There are only three things that we possess on earth: our time, our talents (abilities) and our treasure (money, possessions). God created us, so our abilities are from Him, the time we have on earth is totally in His hand and since our treasures are a result of taking the time God has given us and applying our abilities to it, our treasures are from Him also. We are told this over and over in scripture. Jesus used His time on Earth and His abilities totally for the benefit of others and He gave up all of the riches of heaven to become a man so He could serve us. As His children, God expects us to do the same with everything He has given us.

OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER.

THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.

"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.

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

2 Corinthians 9:6-11 (NIV)

1. This passage uses the idea of sowing and reaping as a metaphor for being generous. The "seeds" that we have that we can sow are the seed of time, the seed of treasure, and the seed of ability. What could you do to begin sowing the seed of your time in a way that brings glory to God? What are some ways you could sow the seed of your time in a way that does not glorify God? How about the seed of your treasure? Your talents? According to this passage, what will God do if you sow your seed generously for the benefit of others?

2. Whatever you give, God says He only wants you to do so with what kind of attitude? What two attitudes does it say you should not have when you give? If I do "sow my seed" with one of the wrong attitudes mentioned, what does it communicate to God? Last week we talked about thankfulness. This week generosity. Do you think there is a connection between thankfulness and generosity? How are they connected?

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“Now about the collection for God’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.”

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

3. This passage specifically talks about money that is to be given for “God’s people.” Who are “God’s people”? Where do you find God’s people? What organization is charged with taking care of God’s people? When he told the Galatian churches to set aside an amount of income on the first day of every week to help God’s people, what does this tell us about how we are to give? As we prioritize how and when we give to others, where do you think our giving for the people of God through the local church should fall in that list? Why? Look up and read aloud 1 Corinthians 4:2. How can we apply this verse in the area of giving?

4. According to statistics and practical experience, the area of a Christian’s life that is the hardest to become faithful in is giving of our money. Why do you think this is? What is it about giving faithfully of our finances that is so hard? Share what you think is wrong in the thinking of a Christian who is not willing to give faithfully through their local church. Can you think of any scriptures that refute that kind of thinking? What would some of them be?

5. Name some ways that you could become faithful in giving: a. Of your time b. Of your abilities c. Of your treasures. What could you do as a group to help each person experience the joy that comes from giving?

“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. O LORD our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. O LORD, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you.”

1 Chronicles 29:14-18 (NIV)

6. This passage is a prayer of David after the people of Israel were challenged to give towards the building of the temple of God. Pick out and discuss the ideas in this passage that we should believe and practice to become generous people.

MAKING IT PRACTICAL (OPTIONAL)

Below are some practical exercises that your group could incorporate as a means of developing a grateful heart.

Level 1 Challenge: “ Give 1 million to Save 1 million.”

Start paying attention to the needs around you. There is no greater gift of generosity you can give than to see people come to know Christ and avoid eternity in hell. Whether it is here in Arvada, throughout the Metro area, online, or in our churches in Peru, help us to reach a million people with the Gospel by giving financially above what you already give for the operation of the church. God wants everyone to hear of His generosity!

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Level 2 Challenge: Give something up and divert that cash

Do you eat out on Thursday evenings? Do you make frequent trips to Starbucks? Take a break for a month and donate the money you would have spent to your church, a local food bank, or a person in need. Giving sacrificially is at the heart of God's type of giving. David, once said "I will not give God anything that costs me nothing." You might use this challenge to meet the first challenge.

Level 3 Challenge:

As a small group, make 100 sack lunches, go to downtown Denver, and give them away to homeless people. But do not stop there: Do the most generous thing that you can for a person, share the gospel with them and ask them to trust Christ as Savior.

SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE LEADER NOTES

Suggestions for This Week's Study

- Have each person in the group share a time when someone was generous to them with their time, talents, or treasure. How did it make them feel?
- Focus on helping your members understand that our giving is the main way that we express our trust in God and our love for God.
- Help the people of your group understand that being generous to our family and friends is not going far enough. Everyone does that. It is when you are generous and there is no obvious reward to you that you are beginning to give as Christ did.
- Ask your people to share if they have ever experienced giving sacrificially and then seen God meet their needs. These stories help people overcome the fear that is associated with giving sacrificially: God always comes through.

PREPARING TO LEAD YOUR GROUP

PRAY for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God's wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God's instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.

PLAN where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God's five purposes for the church: Glorify God, Relate to Everyone, Act Like Jesus, Care for Everyone, Express God's Love and make a plan to encourage your members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.

PONDER YOUR PROGRESS after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn't. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment.

USING THIS SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Going Further is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We've designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is more important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.

- 2.** Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group.
- 3.** Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as “I need to spend more time in prayer.” It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, “How are you going to begin?” An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- 4.** Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.