



THE
HEART
of giving

A 21-DAY GENEROSITY DEVOTIONAL

Dear Signal Pres,

I'm excited to invite you into a church-wide reflection on biblical generosity. Over the next 21 days, the elders of Signal Pres will be walking us through the what, why and how of the kind of generosity that Scripture holds up as fitting for people who serve a God like ours.

There are numerous ways that you—and our whole church family—might benefit from this guide. Maybe you want to use it on your own for daily devotions. Or perhaps it might be a good source for conversation around a breakfast or dinner table for your family. If you are part of a small group or a Sunday School class, your group might want to take a few minutes to reflect on what you have learned or been made to consider by the previous week's reflections and passages. Feel free even to respond with questions or reactions to individual elders whose words triggered something in you.

Paul writes these words to Timothy: "As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share...so that they may take hold of that which is truly life" (1 Timothy 6:17-19). You have probably already thought to yourself, "It must be stewardship season." Well, it is. But we do not enter into this season to set our eyes on the church budget or pledge cards. Rather, we consider generosity in this way so that our eyes, hearts, and hopes would be set on the God who so generously provides us with all things, and so that we might with renewed hearts take hold of that which is truly life.

I hope you'll join your church family by making use of these next 21 days!

Every blessing,
SCOTT



DAY 1

October 28

AUTHOR

*Glenn Baird,
Ruling Elder*

WHAT IS GENEROSITY?

The work of God in us.

SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 8:1-2

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

REFLECTION

As with all good things in our lives, generosity begins with God. Paul, in his second letter to God's church in Corinth, teaches that the loving-kindness of God is able to be known, observed, and applied in the generous demonstrations of love among the members of the body of Christ.

In chapter 8 of 2 Corinthians, Paul appeals to the members of the church there to provide a gift, a collection, a "blessing" of money that will be used to support the members of the body at the church in Jerusalem. The members in Jerusalem were in dire need of basic necessities like food, clothing, and lodging. One must remember that the Christians in Jerusalem were social outcasts. Most were former Jews who had come to a saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. As such, they lost jobs, social standing, familial relationships, and they became destitute on account of their faith in Jesus. Plus, the economy of Jerusalem was tax-heavy by the Roman government, excising burdensome taxes that siphoned a great deal of potential social-net resources away from the local economy to support the throne in Rome.

The church in Jerusalem was large when Paul was writing to the Corinthian church. The Jerusalem church was trying to meet the needs of its members, but the demands for resources had exceeded the supplies of its members who so eagerly gave in the early days immediately after Pentecost. In Acts 2, this church grew from those who met in the Upper Room to a much larger body of believers that included converts from the rest of Jerusalem and Samaria. Their fellowship centered around worship, prayer, and meeting the needs of those who had given up everything to follow Christ, "They sold property and possessions to give to anyone in need...praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people."

Two decades later, the money had run out in Jerusalem. The church was even larger ("...And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.") and the needs among the members far exceeded the supplies that were available locally.

The Lord used this situation for good to connect the empire-wide body of believers to one another by his grace. The Holy Spirit created joy and thanksgiving in the hearts of far-flung brothers and sisters in Christ at the opportunity and privilege to give a collection to meet the basic human needs of the fellow members of the Christ's body in Jerusalem...to the glory of God!

In his letter to the Corinthian church, Paul begins his appeal by pointing out that the grace of God can be known as the starting point for all good things, including charity, beneficence, and generosity. Generosity begins with God. Generosity is defined by God. Human generosity has its roots in God's grace.

Paul exhorts the Corinthians to know that God's grace is changing them in their individual lives. Their motives are changing because of God's grace. Their desires are changing because of God's grace. Their responses to life's challenges are changing because of God's grace.

Paul also wants the Corinthians to know what God's grace looks like in believers who are doers of the Word and not just hearers of the Word. He then encourages his audience by the example of the Macedonian Christians. He details the work of God's grace that was given to the brothers and sisters in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea and how they joyously provided riches out of their poverty to support the Jerusalem church....all to God's glory because generosity is the work of God's grace!

May his grace spur you and me onward to give generously for the praise and glory of Jesus Christ!



DAY 2

October 29

AUTHOR

*Andy Tucker,
Ruling Elder*

WHAT IS GENEROSITY?

Willful giving beyond one's ability.

SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 8:3

For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord...

REFLECTION

As we consider the question "What is generosity?" and what that means to us as followers of Christ, we can gain some helpful insight from the eighth chapter of Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth. In it, he cites the churches of Macedonia as examples that we would do well to follow. In verse 2 of chapter 8, he tells the Corinthians that though the Macedonian Christians had suffered "a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality." This context is critical to our understanding and appreciation of what follows in verse 3, where Paul testifies "that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord."

These people were going through tough times, but thanks to the "grace of God which has been in the churches of Macedonia (verse 1)," they still were liberal in their giving – even to the point of "beyond their ability." We don't know the exact specifics of their "ordeal of affliction," but we don't need to. All we need to know was that they were suffering and in "deep poverty" – and yet still were liberal in their giving to others. That should be a powerful witness to us and a key to answering our "what is generosity?" question.

If times are good and we're feeling financially secure, isn't that a much easier time to give money away and help others? If we have a job and steady income, we feel like we can afford to do these things. But how about when our circumstances change? If we're out of work or experiencing some sort of financial hardship, it's much harder to feel that "liberality" to help others.

So what do the Macedonians show us about generosity? That giving is more about the attitude behind the giving and less about the actual amount given. Since they were in what Paul describes as "deep poverty," we can assume they didn't have a ton to give. If they gave the same amount as a wealthy person, wouldn't their gift – in the face of their great challenges – have to be considered the more generous? And the more pleasing to God? I would think so.

God doesn't need to receive a specific number of dollars from each of us to accomplish his will in the world. But I think he wants us to be liberal in our giving according to each of our abilities, regardless of our current financial circumstances.

DISCUSSION

Can you think of a time in your life when you were facing financial hardship and how that affected your giving to the Lord?

What would giving "beyond your ability" look like in your life?



DAY 3

October 30

AUTHOR

*Peggy LaRochelle,
Ruling Elder*

WHAT IS GENEROSITY?

Giving of ourselves to God and each other.

SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 8:5

...and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

REFLECTION

Paul is writing to the Corinthian church encouraging their participation in giving to the needs of believers in Jerusalem. He refers to the remarkable generosity of the Macedonian believers who, despite their poverty, were overflowing and proactive in their giving. The text, in fact, states in 2 Corinthians 8:4 that they were "begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints."

Paul goes on to write in 2 Corinthians 8:5-7, "This [giving] was totally spontaneous, entirely their own idea and caught us completely off guard. What explains it was that they had given themselves unreservedly to God and to us. The other giving flowed out of the purposes of God working in their lives" (The Message).

The Macedonian believers already had a vibrant relationship with the Lord. Yet, hearing of the need in Jerusalem, their response was to corporately and humbly submit themselves and all they had to Jesus. They reaffirmed their allegiance to God who owned everything and provided for their every need.

This renewal of their surrender to God awakened their sensitivity to Kingdom needs and the desire

to be a part of meeting those needs. Their surrender opens the way for the Holy Spirit to work in and through them giving them the desire and will to give, even beyond their means. And in their giving, it is not to their credit but to God's glory.

God desires for the fruit of generous giving to be cultivated in each one of us. As my relationship with Jesus grows, my heart is sensitized to the needs around me. It is God's desire and will that I be responsive to those needs with myself and the resources I've been given. Who I am and what I have belongs to God, and it is his generosity to me that propels my giving to the Kingdom.....all for his glory!

DISCUSSION

What might be one thing you'd like to do to "give yourself to the Lord?"

The Macedonian churches were an example of generosity flowing out of their commitment to God and his people. How might this play out in your own life?



DAY 4

October 31

AUTHOR

*Dan Stanley,
Ruling Elder*

WHAT IS GENEROSITY?

A basic spiritual discipline.

SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 8:7

But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

REFLECTION

Every good thing that we receive in life is an act of grace from our Lord. If we excel in faith, speech, knowledge, earnestness, or even the amount of love that we received from those around us, these are all disciplines and gifts which are acts of grace from the Lord.

When I was a child the Lord gave me the gift of observing missionary parents who greatly cared for others. I remember seeing my dad work in clinics for poor people in Appalachia. I remember my mother raising money for the poor and other countries. I remember my aunt and uncle giving of their time and energy and living lives of scarcity in order to reach people across the world as missionaries. I also remember my parents being an example and teaching me to make a yearly pledge and give regularly of what I had earned as a child, not as a requirement but as a privilege. Being surrounded by such great examples in my formative years was an act of grace from the Lord.

I was taught how Jesus indeed gave his life in order that I may have life. I've been given the understanding that God owns everything that I have and who I am. He blessed me with an understanding of the joy that comes from blessing others.

It is both a joy and a challenge to know where and how much to give of myself, my time and money for the benefit of others in order that I can participate as an act of grace in what the Lord is doing in the world. I know I can do better. May the Holy Spirit give us discipline in living, joy in giving and vision toward what he is doing in the world through us!



DAY 5

November 1

AUTHOR

*Joe McCall,
Ruling Elder*

WHAT IS GENEROSITY?

A proof of genuine love.

SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 8:8

I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.

REFLECTION

Generosity cannot be forced. I think this is why Paul starts this verse by reminding the Corinthians that he is not commanding them to act a certain way or give in a certain manner. Through his encouragement to the Corinthian church, Paul is reminding us today that our giving should flow naturally out of our faith and love for Christ and the perfect gift given to us; the gift of salvation. We are reminded in James 1:17 that he has freely given us every good and perfect gift.

Likewise, it is impossible to encourage someone to give their resources by guiltting them through an example of how someone else is acting. When I was first introduced to this passage, I read it from the wrong perspective. "Look at the Macedonians. Look how they give even through their trials. Not only do they give, but they give sacrificially. You should be doing the same thing." After struggling with the thought of comparing ourselves to others, I finally understood that Paul is making exactly the opposite point. He is simply saying look at how they give and be encouraged that you can also give in such a manner. The point is not how much (I am reminded of the widow's mite, Mark 12:42) but the heart and the motivation from which the gift is given.

In short, God is telling us that he knows us, he loves us and he is keenly aware of how he gifted us. His only expectation is that we do the best we can with what we have. The accountability is not by way of comparing ourselves to others, but our relationship with our savior who uniquely gifted us and only wants us to be genuine in our love for him and our response to him through our gifts. Instead of using someone else as a comparison, see them as an encouragement and then go do what is within our means to share our gifts with others.

Christ withheld nothing from us. What a joy it is to be able to offer back to God even a portion of that with which we have been entrusted.



DAY 6

November 2

AUTHOR

*Bob Marshall,
Ruling Elder*

WHAT IS GENEROSITY?

The faithful presence of Jesus' love.

SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 8:9

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

REFLECTION

Not long after I became a believer I went to a friend with an inquiry about giving. "Do you calculate your tithe on pre-tax or after-tax earnings?" was my question. My friend, a beloved brother who was instrumental in my early walk with Christ, simply shook his head and said, "You don't really get it, do you?" As embarrassing as it is now to admit, I viewed giving then as a mathematical exercise versus an act of the heart.

Fortunately for me, I had this special friend who was willing to call me out and this sparked an effort on my part to really understand what Scripture teaches about giving. Ultimately I came to the knowledge of the foundational principle of stewardship and that is the fact that God owns it all. And if he owns it all, then I am merely a trustee of his resources. As secularly defined, a trustee is an individual given the power of administration of property with a legal obligation to administer it solely for the purposes designated by the owner. Taking that from a biblical perspective, I have been given the power to administer what has been entrusted to me but solely for the purposes of God's kingdom.

So what do these purposes include? In the book of John (15:12), Jesus commands us to "love one

another as I have loved you.” And how does he love us? Well, 2 Corinthians 8:9 provides a very clear answer, “for our sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.” Said differently, with his presence on earth and death on the cross, he gave everything so you and I might have everything.

So what an awesome responsibility we have been granted as Believers in Christ! While we may not all have the same level of wealth to administer, we all have been entrusted with the same assignment and that’s to direct this wealth toward tangible expressions of his love. We see that through the church as our financial offerings turn into outreach to youth, meals for the inner city poor, or support for a missionary sharing the Gospel on the other side of the globe.

To paraphrase Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, with my initial formulaic approach to giving, I was nothing but a noisy gong. But in embracing my role as trustee, I have the opportunity to be the faithful presence of Jesus’ love through obedience to his Word. Praise the Lord!

DISCUSSION

In what ways has Christ made you rich?

As you think about your personal giving what is the relative importance of math versus love?



DAY 7

November 3

AUTHOR

*Jean Smith,
Ruling Elder*

WHAT IS GENEROSITY?

A means of supplying for our neighbor's need.

SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 8:13-14

For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.

REFLECTION

When I want to understand a passage in Scripture I ask questions of it. I usually start with these two. What does it say about God? And what does it say about us?

So when I look for something about God here I see that he has great concern for the needs of his children and wants there to be fairness, or equality, among them. It's not fair that some don't have enough to meet basic needs while others have more than enough to meet these needs. The solution? Those who have more than enough are to give to those who don't have enough. It's so practical and should be a no-brainer. However, the fact that Paul is spelling it out here tells me something about us, that this type of generosity doesn't come naturally to us humans.

What does come naturally to us when we have an 'abundance' is spending it on ourselves. These verses call us out of our self-absorption into the consideration of others. When I dare to look into my own heart I see that I have failed to recognize that all I have belongs to the Lord and that he has a right to use it as he wishes. Once I nail down that truth, then my call is to go to him first with

any 'abundance' I may have and offer it to him. Then he can dispose of my 'disposable' income in ways that meet the needs of others, blessing them and accomplishing his will for them as their Provider.

But wait, there's more. He will also bless me, the giver, with the privilege of being in a kind of partnership with him that lets me see into his heart as I learn what he cares about. In the process my own self-absorbed heart will be changed into one that looks more and more like his...one that is moved by the needs of others and then generously provides.

DISCUSSION

Have you 'nailed down' the truth that all you have belongs to the Lord and that he has a right to use it as he wishes?

If you're struggling with this concept, can you identify two reasons why?

Do you have an abundance right now? Have you offered it to him to use for the needs of others?



DAY 8

November 4

AUTHOR

*Scott Ferguson,
Ruling Elder*

WHY IS GENEROSITY IMPORTANT?

Because we are called to care for the needs of the saints and to foster mutual love.

SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 9:12-14

For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you.

REFLECTION

It seems that at times we think of generosity as a unilateral act of giving by one individual to another; that one gives up something and another gains something. Our scripture reference for today teaches that the act of giving is much more powerful and far reaching in that it bonds the hearts together of the giver, the receiver, and the Lord, from whom all blessings flow.

Years ago I was blessed in a mighty way to witness this outflow of God's love and the knitting together of God's people through a simple act of kindness and the gift of time and talent. At a Wednesday night supper, the sweet, 95 year old Saint, Cynthia Thatcher (now in heaven), mentioned that she had problems with a shower curtain and a faucet in her house. Jim Abel immediately picked up on it and (without conferring with me) said that he and I would be over that Saturday to see if we could help. As we arrived at Cynthia's house, the humility and gratefulness that she greeted us

with was heartwarming. Jim, being the consummate handyman, quickly sprang into action to fix the shower curtain. My role as the “dumb labor” was to hold the curtain rod while Jim did the necessary repairs. As we worked, Cynthia shared stories of her life as a school teacher and overwhelmed us with her graciousness. As we finished the minor repairs I could see the intense joy that came over Jim in the knowledge that he could be of help to such a lovely and grace-filled sister in Christ. The seemingly small gift of Jim’s time and talent as a handyman, along with his reflecting the love of Christ blessed not only Cynthia but also the curtain rod holder as well. For the remaining two years of Cynthia’s earthly life whenever she saw Jim or me she profusely thanked us and told us she was praying for us and for our families. Through a little handy work and the warm touch of the Holy Spirit, our lives became intertwined for eternity through Christ love.

So, why is generosity important? Sure the receiver of generosity obtains a gift, but if the heart is right, the giver is blessed even more powerfully, God’s people are knit together in his love, and I believe the Lord is indeed glorified.

DISCUSSION

Can you think of a time that you were the recipient of an act of kindness, an unexpected gift, or the heartfelt prayers of a friend? How did it make you feel toward that person and toward God?

How is God calling you to show his love through generosity, an act of kindness, and/or a prayer for a friend in need?



DAY 9

November 5

AUTHOR

*David Barker,
Ruling Elder*

WHY IS GENEROSITY IMPORTANT?

Because discipleship requires everything.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 9:57-62

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

REFLECTION

Luke is writing to his contemporary Jews shortly after Jesus' life, compiling eyewitness accounts of his own and others. This passage depicts three men who encounter Christ as he is travelling, and they consider following him. The main point of this scene is to show that Jesus requires followers to give up everything to follow him, that there is an urgency of his ministry.

The first man is told that to follow Christ means committing to a life on the road, as "the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (v. 58). The second man is told that he must leave even his dying father to follow Christ ("Let the dead bury their own," v. 60). And the third man is told that to follow him, he must leave his family without saying goodbye (v. 62).

The men who ask to follow Christ are told the costly price of following him. They must give up their beds, their families, and their households, not even tending to dying parents or saying goodbye. Though homes and families are good, Christ is saying that they should not preempt our pursuit of him. As fallen creatures, we want to pursue other things before, instead of, or in addition to Christ.

Of course, we all need to hear this, not just these three men. These men all thought they wanted to pursue Christ in discipleship, but when he told them the cost, they hesitated. When we consider giving our lives and our resources to Christ today, don't we hesitate too? I confess that I do. With my lips and my heart, I declare my desire to follow him, but my sinful nature can tempt me to hold back and turn to something worldly instead.

It's daunting to realize that Christ asks these men (and therefore you and me) to drop everything to become his disciples. But then consider what Christ gave up to save us: he left his glorious status at the right hand of the Father; he became fully human, temporarily submitting his deity to the Father's will; and he suffered pain, punishment and death by crucifixion.

As we fully take in what Christ gave up for us, our response should be to give up everything for him. Let's pray that Christ would give you and me the strength to be that bold.



DAY 10

November 6

AUTHOR

*Bob Berry,
Ruling Elder*

WHY IS GENEROSITY IMPORTANT?

Because we desire true wisdom.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 12:13-21

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, 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."

REFLECTION

In this scripture text, a person from the crowd directly asks Jesus to tell his brother to divide the inheritance with him. Jesus avoids getting into the legal aspects of his request and quickly gets to the heart of the matter. He clearly sees the greed underlying the man's request, warns the crowd to guard against covetousness and states that the true value of a person is not found in one's material wealth.

He follows this with the parable of the rich fool who builds bigger storehouses to stash away the

abundance of a good harvest. The purpose of this hoarding is to live a life of leisure; however, God has other plans and that night he dies. The key teaching is to warn us of the dangerous eternal implications of wealth where the tendency can lean towards self-sufficiency and complacency.

When I read this, I don't think that Jesus is speaking against being prudent and appropriately saving for the future. There are other parables where Jesus talks about it being appropriate to plan (e.g. builder of a tower assessing the costs before starting). This parable speaks toward the lack of generosity when having the material means and not fulfilling the moral responsibility to care for others.

When I look at my own life this can be challenging as I consider how much I save and how generous I am. I do want to be "rich toward God", but I also want the security that can come from "laying up treasure" here on Earth. I have noticed that there are many ways to rationalize not being generous, and while a few may be reasonable, many really point to a desire for self-sufficiency and not having the appropriate level of trust and dependence on God for whatever the future holds.

DISCUSSION

Do you find it easy to be generous with the gifts you have?

If not, what are some of the underlying reasons why?

In what ways can you become more generous?



DAY 11

November 7

AUTHOR

*Tony Boals,
Ruling Elder*

WHY IS GENEROSITY IMPORTANT?

Because no servant can serve two masters.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 16:1-13

He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.' And the manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.' So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

"One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will

give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

REFLECTION

What is your true Master? In Luke 16, Jesus tells the parable of the shrewd servant who mishandles his master’s assets and then deals with those who owe his master to better his own situation. Jesus says “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despised by the other. You can not serve both God and money.” (Luke 16:13)

I have never considered being enslaved to money. I don’t guess I have ever had enough to consider it my master. But what about other things in our life, family?, especially our kids?; our hobbies?; our jobs/careers?; what about our stuff (possessions and toys)?

My kids and my stuff are important to me. Am I guilty of trying to please and protect them in place of pleasing God? So, by my actions are they my masters?

As we approach this stewardship season may we be mindful that all we have and all that we are is a gift from God, the Creator and Master of All. How can we serve the True Master with what we have been entrusted with? “If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won’t be honest with greater responsibilities.” (Luke 16:10)

So... Who is YOUR Master?



DAY 12

November 8

AUTHOR

*Kenny Davis,
Ruling Elder*

WHY IS GENEROSITY IMPORTANT?

Because the blinding power of money so easily captures our hearts.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 16:19-31

“There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’ And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house—for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

REFLECTION

We are so blessed to live in a community like Signal Mountain that we can hardly imagine what it must have been like for Lazarus. Most of us cannot comprehend not having a house to protect us from the elements, to keep us warm and safe. We don't know what it is like to be truly hungry. Nor can we think what it would be like to be sick and only have the dogs that would lick our wounds. We enjoy unimaginable prosperity even by modern times. We have houses that not only shelter us but make us very comfortable. We live in a place where food is all-you-can eat, super sized and will now even be delivered to our door with the swipe of a finger. We benefit from unthought of medical marvels on a routine basis. Not only can few of us imagine Lazarus' circumstances on our own lives, we often times become so removed or "blind" both mentally and physically that we become oblivious of this reality for many, both in our city and around the world today.

Stewardship season gives us a time to stop and think, not just about our money, but how we can follow what Jesus is calling us to do through parables like this. First, is to be aware. How easy it is to become hardened to the world. How quickly we can move to judge those who stand on the corner with a sign or those we see under a blanket on the sidewalk. Second, it reminds us that our time is limited and the need is great. We are called to serve our neighbors and those in need now. Third, we are given clear instruction. Jesus describes how the people in the parable had been given Moses and the prophets and that they were to be listened to. Lastly, Jesus makes it very clear in this story that there are consequences for those who choose not to obey and follow.

In the parable, Jesus tells of a complete role reversal of the two men. Lazarus once dreamed of scraps from the rich man's table and now the rich man wants nothing more than water off of Lazarus' finger.

I am challenged by this passage to see the world and those in it in a different way—to open my eyes to the needs that are around me and to ask God to show me how I can serve him by serving others.



DAY 13

November 9

AUTHOR

*Tommy Hayslett,
Ruling Elder*

WHY IS GENEROSITY IMPORTANT?

It is a reflection of our hearts.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 18:18-30

“And a ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’” And he said, “All these I have kept from my youth.” When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, “How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” But he said, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.” And Peter said, “See, we have left our homes and followed you.” And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

REFLECTION

Luke 18:18-30 (also told in Matthew 19 and Mark 10) is the familiar (and, at least to me, uncomfortable) story of Jesus’s encounter with the “rich young ruler,” followed by Jesus’s related interaction with the disciples, and particularly Peter.

When speaking with the rich young ruler, and after walking the ruler into affirming just how well he follows the law, Jesus offers the daunting proposal—sell all that you have, distribute it to the poor, and “follow Me.” Then emphasizing his point to the disciples, Jesus first uses the “camel through the eye of a needle” metaphor to explain how difficult it is for those rich in worldly possessions to enter the kingdom of God, and then he assures Peter and the other disciples that they, and anyone whose heart is devoted to Jesus above all other things, will enjoy the full measure of the blessings of God.

Why is this passage so challenging? Maybe because it asks a question that is fundamental to our daily walk as believing sinners (namely, are we clinging first and only to Jesus, in all things), and it poses that question in specific regard to a false god that is so profoundly tempting—material wealth. When we really ask this question of ourselves, in this particular context, the answer we really want to give (or at least I really want to give) is “Would it be okay if I cling to Jesus . . . and to material security too?” When I consider Jesus against financial resources as potential places in which to take my peace, I yearn for the option of “both/and”. Clearly in the passage, Jesus does not afford that option to the rich young ruler.

The depth of devotion that Jesus asks for here seems unsettlingly hard, but on reflection, the ask that Jesus makes of the ruler, and also of us, is no different than what God asks of his people throughout Scripture. “You shall have no other gods before Me.” “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your strength.” “Trust the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your

ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths smooth.” God desires a degree of heart commitment and faith in him that is all encompassing. More than anything else, follow me. My natural response to Jesus’ words to the ruler is some combination of fear, trepidation, doubt, and probably several other unhelpful reactions. But then I find grace in the assurance that Jesus offers to Peter and the disciples. When Peter makes a statement of fact to Jesus—“See, we have left all and followed you”—it seems more like a loaded question. Have we done enough? Can we do enough? Jesus’s response is generously to extend the blessings of God, even eternal life; and he does this not to disciples who are sturdy in righteousness, but instead to disciples who he knows are weak, who will fall asleep in his time of need, who will follow him only in the shadows and even then deny him. Jesus offers his words of assurance and blessing to them first, that even in their weaknesses and doubts to come, they might cling to him more than anything else. He offers the same assurance to us, that we might do likewise.



DAY 14

November 10

AUTHOR

*Frank Peele,
Ruling Elder*

WHY IS GENEROSITY IMPORTANT?

It is an important part of our witness to the world.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:42-47

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

REFLECTION

When we think of generosity, we tend to think of philanthropy—financial giving that supports a worthy cause and promotes the welfare of others. While that is certainly a right and true definition, as we learn from the early church, it is that and so much more. Following Peter's passionate Pentecostal prayer, we come to this passage in Acts dubbed "The Fellowship of the Believers". We often read this passage and think "Wow, this is awesome—the early church was on fire". And indeed, they were on fire....I mean they "devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship"....they celebrated communion, they prayed together, signs were performed, they met together and gave as each had need! We may read this and ask "what happened"? Is the church today still like this?

Although we may not always see it, I would say enthusiastically, yes! I see it on Sunday's at worship—I see it in the Healing Service when members pray and care for one another, I see it in the youth wing, when D-Group leaders devote countless hours to caring for our youth, I see it when we "break bread" together at communion, I see it in the hospital room, on mission trips and hear about it in countless ways around town where members of Signal Pres are serving others.

At Signal Pres I see a community of faith coming together to love one another. As Jesus reminds his disciples in John chapter 13:35 "By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you love one another". We don't do it perfectly and this side of glory, we never will—but, the point is, when we love one another.....when we are generous towards each other (think fruit of the spirit), the world will take notice.

As we enter stewardship season, maybe we should think more broadly about what it means to be generous. Generous with the financial resources the Lord has blessed us with—certainly. But perhaps we may also consider the other gifts we have to share—our time, our presence, prayer, encouragement, care for those hurting or suffering in some way. Stewardship should remind us of all of the gifts our Lord has graciously provided to us—whether those gifts are financial generosity, hospitality, exhortation, etc.

This season I pray for myself and for all of us, that we look deeply into what our Lord calls us to give—not out of compulsion, but faithfully and cheerfully as the Lord desires. Recalling my old Bethel Class days, we are "Blessed to be a Blessing". May we bless our Lord and each other with the gifts he has so lovingly provided!



DAY 15

November 11

AUTHOR

*Carter Newbold,
Ruling Elder*

HOW DO I PRACTICE GENEROSITY?

Start with your heart, not your money.

SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 4:23

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

REFLECTION

We have studied what generosity is and why generosity is important. Now, as we turn toward the question of how to practice generosity—surely it is time to act, to do something? Yes and no. For here in Proverbs 4, in the midst of a long teaching by Solomon to his children on the value of wisdom, we find this teaching that seems to hold forth three key components:

“Above all else”

This is a really important thing. Pay attention!

“Guard your heart”

Protect and sustain your hearts in the Lord.

“For everything you do flows from it”

Recognize that the state of your heart will have consequences for the shape of your actions.

So, in the context of generosity, even as we may be convinced of the rightness of what we plan to do, we are guided to ask the Lord to guard our hearts, such that our desires and purposes may be aligned with his. The act of generosity itself does not surely bind our hearts to the Lord. Rather, we must let him rule in our hearts, and then think about what comes next.

DISCUSSION

What practices and habits can we use to guard our hearts?

Do you recall a time when an unguarded heart led either to a lack of generosity, or generosity shaped by a poor or selfish motive?

Take a look at Colossians 3:15-17 for an encouragement to “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts” such that “whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” What would it look like if all our generosity was grounded in hearts ruled by the peace of Christ? Would we worry about our giving? Would we regret our commitments when things are tough? Would we celebrate the opportunity to be used by the Lord to build his church?



DAY 16
November 12

AUTHOR
Drew Fowler,
Ruling Elder

HOW DO I PRACTICE GENEROSITY?
*Worship! Corporately and Privately (this is how
we start with our hearts!)*

SCRIPTURE
Psalm 103

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name!
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,
who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
who satisfies you with good
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
The Lord works righteousness
and justice for all who are oppressed.
He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.
The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who
fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from
us.
As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the Lord shows compassion to those who
fear him.
For he knows our frame;
he remembers that we are dust.

As for man, his days are like grass;
he flourishes like a flower of the field;
for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.
But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting
to everlasting on those who fear him,
and his righteousness to children's children,
to those who keep his covenant
and remember to do his commandments.
The Lord has established his throne in the heavens,
and his kingdom rules over all.
Bless the Lord, O you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his word,
obeying the voice of his word!
Bless the Lord, all his hosts,
his ministers, who do his will!
Bless the Lord, all his works,
in all places of his dominion.
Bless the Lord, O my soul!

REFLECTION

When we gathered at our last session meeting, Scott did something that to my knowledge has never been done before in a session meeting. We read Psalm 103, parts of which are referenced in over 300 hymns. We then sung the hymn "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." This act of praise seemed to "tune" the strings of our hearts to put us in a right posture before God. Twenty seven people with different political persuasions, cultural convictions, and backgrounds now transformed into one body worshipping our God. It was awesome.

You will find these verses, some of which recur within the psalm: Praise the Lord, O my soul....all my inmost being. Praise to the one who forgives, heals, redeems, and crowns you with love and

compassion. The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. He is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him. Even the angels praise the Lord in verses 20-22!

Taken together, we see in this psalm a call for personal and corporate praise, not to mention praise from all of creation.

Praising our Lord is an act of worship. It pleases the Lord from whom all blessings flow for us to praise his holy name. I think of the big church universal, and I think of the small church Signal Pres, and I think of how beautiful Sunday mornings are. What a great God that he has blessed us with the ability to pray in unison as a church body, and sing in unison as a church body in an act of worship and obedience to the one who paid it all on the cross. The one who didn't have to come. The one who loved us when we did not love him. What proof of the Father's love for us, that he gave his one and only son to die for us on the cross! How can this not stir our hearts to be generous with all the Lord has given us?

The next time you are in corporate worship and singing hymns or reciting the creeds together with those around you, remember that as we lift our voices we are pleasing Jesus. It has less to do with the sound of our own voices, wrong notes, or other distractions. It is a response to the unmerited overabundance of God's generosity toward us!

DISCUSSION

How can we prepare ourselves throughout the week for worship on Sunday mornings?

How does our worship lead us to generosity?

*It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to you, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting, who in the multitude of your saints did surround us with so great a cloud of witnesses that we, rejoicing in their fellowship, may run with patience the race that is set before us and, together with them, may receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify your glorious name, evermore praising you and saying: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

—LUTHERAN EUCHARIST



DAY 17

November 13

AUTHOR

*Diane Mizell,
Ruling Elder*

HOW DO I PRACTICE GENEROSITY?

*Remember from whom comes everything
you have!*

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 6:25-33

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, 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 of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

REFLECTION

As Terry and I respond to stewardship season it is good to reflect daily upon the source of all that we have materially, spiritually, and emotionally. All are provided by our Heavenly Father who lavishes all that we need upon us. Not lavish in only financial terms but lavish in what he provides and promises when we are his. He knows we need

food, shelter, and clothing. But first we need him. We can't be like the pagans Matthew mentions who run after "things" with no regard for who provided them. First, seek him and then experience rest knowing that he will provide.

Without him I have nothing, I am nothing. With him I know that I am his much loved, chosen one, and he becomes everything to me. He tells me I am more valuable than all his creation. Knowing this, the world is sharper, loved ones are more dear, the troubles of this world don't overtake me. I am his with all the bundle of rights that brings. So how do I respond to his request to give only a small portion in return for all that he has lavished upon me? I answer with my offerings of time and service in addition to a portion of what he has gifted me financially.

DISCUSSION

When someone is everything to you, how do you respond?



DAY 18

November 14

AUTHOR

*Doug Gregory,
Ruling Elder*

HOW DO I PRACTICE GENEROSITY?

Inventory your spending—i.e. see where your functional treasure is.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 6:21

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

REFLECTION

Starting with Abraham, through the exile and restoration, God constantly reminds the Israelites of their shared covenant. Place me first and I will watch over and bless you. “You shall be my people and I shall be your God” (Jeremiah 30:22).

But as sinful creatures, the Israelites constantly placed tangible gods before the true Yahweh. Fast forward two thousand years and you find Paul walking around Corinth and commenting on their many gods and idols. Fast forward another two thousand years and you see modern society glamorizing our idols. “American Idol” is one of our most popular TV shows.

Thousands of years after Abraham, God is asking us the same question— where is your treasure? what is your idol? Each of us will have a different answer. Many times our treasures and idols within themselves are not bad or evil (work, family, activities). Just misplaced gifts and talents we’ve received from God. Satan, the deceiver, knows our weakness, and how to re-direct our hearts to justify our actions.

Have you ever wondered why God chose, “You shall have no other God before me,” (Exodus 20:3) as the first commandment? He knows his

children. When we place treasures and idols before God we have no hope of keeping Commandments 2-10.

When we place God first, we never have to question or justify what we have placed second, third, and fourth. Time, talent, and money become more a returning of a blessing instead of a Christian's act of duty.

Matthew says it best—For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.



DAY 19

November 15

AUTHOR

*Forest Walker,
Ruling Elder*

HOW DO I PRACTICE GENEROSITY?

Talk with your family.

SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 3:9-10

Honor the LORD with your wealth
and with the firstfruits of all your produce;
then your barns will be filled with plenty,
and your vats will be bursting with wine.

REFLECTION

One of the things that we are always trying to teach our kids and ourselves is that our family does not exist to heap blessings or possessions upon ourselves. In other words, we have a desire for our kids to see way beyond themselves when it comes to our call to be first fruit believers. What makes this hard is that our kids hear the the opposite message from the world.

We are called as believers and as families to offer our very best to the Lord. I want my kids to learn that joy and contentment are found in giving themselves away to the Kingdom of God. We see this concept played out in the Old Testament when the Lord required spotless sacrifices at the Temple. We also see this played out when the Lord gave us his best on the cross. The Christmas gifts from two Christmases ago are long forgotten. But the joy of giving our best to the Lord or to the poor are blessings that last a lifetime.

DISCUSSION

What are some concrete ways that your family can be more generous?

What are some cultural messages that your family is fighting compared to Proverbs 3: 9-10?

Does your family discuss and practice the discipline of tithing? If not, is this something that you should start doing?

What does it mean to give our best to the poor?



DAY 20

November 16

AUTHOR

*Jarrell Reeves,
Ruling Elder*

HOW DO I PRACTICE GENEROSITY?

Pray for wisdom & strength.

SCRIPTURE

James 1:5

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

REFLECTION

As I sit here this morning and reflect on generosity, wisdom, and strength, my first thought is of God's creation and this beautiful Fall morning. I am humbled by the unlimited love God gives generously in our relationship with him. His outpouring of compassion, grace, and redemption is abundant through his Son, Jesus Christ, who is the wisdom of God.

Since we do not have spiritual wisdom, we must ask God for it in faith. As Proverbs 2:6 reads, "For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding." I know often my mind wonders, I'm indecisive, or I have normal doubts in making the right decisions. I understand that my faith and God's will go hand in hand. This is why we must ask God for the wisdom he gives generously.

In James 1:5, James is speaking to those times when we just don't know what to do or which way to turn. What's the best choice, or which path do we go down? But if we truly trust in God, we will ask him for wisdom. Asking God for wisdom is evidence that we trust in God. Asking God for wisdom gives us the strength and courage to walk through life with confidence knowing that we are participating in his good work in our lives and in the lives of others.

We find inner-strength in knowing that God is not stingy in providing insight into how we make the best choices. Furthermore, God does not find fault with us concerning previous foolish choices. God never finds us not worthy of receiving wisdom and strength from him.

Let us not forget that during life's struggles and challenges, that God is a giving God, that God gives generously and in abundance, that God gives generously to all believers in Christ who asks in faith, and that God gives wisdom and strength to us again and again without making us feel irresponsible.

During this Stewardship Season, let us be reminded of 2 Corinthians 9:6: "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."

Being generous and kind encourages us to see others in a more positive light and fosters a sense of community, a feeling of connectedness and makes us feel better and more confident about ourselves.

Stewardship refers to the way time, talent, abilities and financial resources are used for the service of God. Stewardship isn't just one element of the Christian Life; it is the Christian Life. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

As we are in prayer, searching our hearts, and seeking God's wisdom during this Stewardship Season, let us be ever so thankful for God's generosity in his word, the delights which he gives generously in our relationship with him, taking

care of our daily provisions, the outpouring of his Holy Spirit, and the hope we find in his Son, Jesus Christ.

God desires that we are wise, for wisdom and strength enables us to walk through life in confidence that we are generously participating in his good works.

Are we participating and becoming more generous Christians?

Let us be in prayer for wisdom, strength and generosity during this Season of Stewardship.



DAY 21

November 17

AUTHOR

*Bruce Novkov,
Ruling Elder*

HOW DO I PRACTICE GENEROSITY?

Start Now!

SCRIPTURE

Luke 21:1-4

Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

REFLECTION

As we finish this stewardship devotional book with this familiar verse known as "the widow's offering", a few points come to my mind. The first is that Jesus "looked up." He had so many things that could have been on his mind—his judgement, the cross, and his death—but he is watching what we do all the time. This teaches us that he does not miss a single gift, large or small. He knows every giver rich or poor.

Additionally, Jesus was observing the amounts given. For the rich, who were giving large amounts, you wonder if they were giving to be noticed, or for self-gratification, or for recognition, while the widow was giving out of love. Her gift came from what she needed to live, which made her dependent on the Lord to meet her needs. That is true faith—giving while looking to God to supply all our needs.

As this parable takes place during the Passover, the widow was also giving out faithfulness. She gave no matter her circumstances. She wasn't pressured to give, she gave out of routine faithfulness.

Next, I do not believe that when Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, this widow has put in more than all of them," that he was passing judgement. I feel that he was evaluating the giver. The large givers gave out of their surplus, or leftovers, it did not cost them anything, but the widow could have gone without food because she gave to the Lord. She believed in the Mission of the Church and wanted to forward its vision. The amount didn't matter; the motivation of the gift is what matters.

Jesus is after our hearts, not our money. Our hearts follow our treasure. If we invest in God's Kingdom, our heart will be drawn to God. The widow's gift taught us that in giving, the motive is everything, those who give out of love and gratitude to him, possess the proper motivation. Her giving shows us how we should respond to the great love of Christ. He wants our very hearts, which include our money.

The final point I get from this verse is Christ's total self-giving for us on the cross. Our Lord became poor, so that we might become rich. We need to understand the faith that it takes to practice generosity no matter our circumstances, and we should give faithfully as the widow did. What matters is willingness, which is the motive of true generosity, no matter how small the amount that can be afforded. Think through the questions below as you discern what God is calling you to give.

DISCUSSION

Must we give so much that we live in poverty?

How can we understand better our reasons for our giving or our primary hindrances we encounter to giving?

