

sermon study guide

May 15/16, 2021

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“How Then Shall We Live?” Part 4: Pursue Generosity

Dr. Henry Schorr

IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. Tell of a time when someone was generous to you in a time of need.
2. Would you say you are most generous with your time, talents, financial resources, other?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read Psalm 24:1, Psalm 49:16-17, 1 Chronicles 29:14-16, 1 Corinthians 3:9

3. What do we learn about ‘God’s economy’ from these scriptures? How does this contrast with that of the world?

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

4. How does Paul interconnect generosity with thanksgiving and righteousness? How does generosity impact us, those around us, and God’s mission?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. Pastor Henry highlighted three keys to God’s plan for generosity: God owns it all, God gives to us, God gives through us. Discuss which of these concepts you find most challenging to accept, and to live out in daily life.
6. What two tangible things can you initiate this week as a response to the call for generosity? How can you express your gratitude for God’s generosity to you?

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Reflect on Philippians 4:19.

Pastor Henry told the story of Robert Reid, a man who suffers from cerebral palsy, but proclaims, “In Christ, I have everything I need for joy”. Reflect on the ways God has provided for you, even in the midst of struggles and disappointments. How can you declare “In Christ, I have everything I need for joy” over your life?

THE WORD (NIV)

Psalm 24:1

The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it

Psalm 49:16-17

16 Do not be overawed when others grow rich,
when the splendor of their houses increases;
17 for they will take nothing with them when they die,
their splendor will not descend with them.

1 Chronicles 29:14-16

14 “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. 15 We are foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. 16 Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you.

1 Corinthians 3:9

For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.

2 Corinthians 9:6-11

6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9 As it is written:

“They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor;
their righteousness endures forever.”

10 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. 11 You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

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The lives of two very different men are described. One man who amassed wealth and power had three neglected wives who left and a daughter who refused to speak to him. He had nothing but bad memories; caring about no one, and no one cared about him. Another man was born with cerebral palsy. Despite being physically unable to care for himself, he graduated from university with a degree and taught at a junior college. As a missionary in Portugal, he introduced over 70 people to Jesus. He proclaims, “In Christ, I have everything I need for joy”. The decisions we make in life have consequences. How then shall we live?

We learn from the Scriptures that the highest value of life is to pursue a loving friendship with God, with others, and serving those God brings into our lives. There is another pursuit - that of generosity. When we truly understand God’s love and grace and the high price Jesus paid making a way for us to be forgiven and redeemed, we can no longer live for ourselves alone.

A financially blessed man proposed the following to a young pastor: he would give him \$5000 to meet the legitimate needs of the hurting. Whenever the money ran out, the pastor was to call him, tell him their stories over lunch, and he would replenish the money to start the generosity cycle over again.

This is a picture of how God’s economy works, and the friendship we enjoy with God when we are generous with what he has given us. Our economy is based on acquiring and accumulating; God’s Kingdom economy is about giving and sharing. God expresses his generosity, and accomplishes his mission, through us (1 Cor 3:9). Generosity does not come easily, so our minds must be renewed (Romans 12:2) to embrace God’s plan for generosity. God’s Kingdom Plan is based on three key principles.

- 1. God owns it all** (Exodus 19:5, Psalm 24:1). He created and sustains it all. He gives the gift of life. We bring nothing into the world and we take nothing out (Psalm 49:16). We’re simply managers of what He’s given to us.
- 2. God gives to us** (1 Chronicles 29:14-16). He has blessed us with minds, talents, abilities and bodies. Without God’s generosity we would never have any opportunity to give at all. Our problem is we think we own instead of manage. Often we want what others have instead of being content and grateful for our gifts.
- 3. God gives through us** (Philippians 4:14-19). God promises to meet our needs, but not necessarily our wants. There are needy people because of selfishness and injustice. If we are disobedient to God in generosity, we can’t claim his promise.

When we fail to do our part, the Kingdom economy breaks down. An estimated 21 trillion dollars is stashed in offshore accounts - enough to meet the needs of everyone on the planet. A survey of charitable giving elicited this most common answer, “I don’t have enough to give.” People choose to invest 97% for themselves rather than be generous to others.

How does God’s Plan for Generosity work? First, he gives us a deposit into our trust account. Then God makes us aware of a need to transfer part into another’s trust account, and promises to compensate us (Luke 6:38). Giving with a pure heart, you’ll be blessed in unexpected ways (2 Corinthians 9:11). As we exercise faith when listening to his promptings and as we obey the Lord, we are making the invisible Christ visible through our lives and our generosity.