



MERGE

the community we are meant to be

June 26th, 2016

The Generous Community

Embracing The Deeper & Truer Christ Story –

The Gospel of Abundance Rooted in the Theology of Enough

I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than receive' - Acts 20:35 ESV

*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom
- Luke 12:32 ESV*

And Moses told them, "It is the food the lord has given you to eat. ¹⁶These are the lord's instructions: Each household should gather as much as it needs. Pick up two quarts for each person in your tent." ¹⁷So the people of Israel did as they were told. Some gathered a lot, some only a little. ¹⁸But when they measured it out, everyone had just enough. Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough. Each family had just what it needed. - Exodus 16:15-18 NLT

Values That Harm versus Help Generosity

- Autonomy versus Interdependence
- Scarcity versus Prosperity
- Entitlement versus Stewardship

The Five Primary Areas of Personal Stewardship

1. SOUL

And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul? - Matthew 16:26 NLT

Luke 12:13-21

2. BODY

You can't say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies...¹⁹Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself,²⁰for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body. - 1 Corinthians 6:13, 19-20 NLT

3. TALENT

God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. - 1 Peter 4:10 NLT (see the greater context of verse 11 too)

4. TIME

So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise.¹⁶Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. - Ephesians 5:15-16 NLT

5. TREASURE

Honor the lord with your wealth and with the first/best part of everything you produce.¹⁰Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with good wine. - Proverbs 3:9-10 NLT

Becoming A Generous Community

1. Embrace The Spirit of Giving.

Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." - 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 NLT

2. Practice The Power of Margin.

Good people leave an inheritance to their grandchildren, ... a prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions. - Proverbs 13:22; 22:3 NLT

3. Invest into Real Human Need.

Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father - Matthew 5:16 NLT

I Will Merge by...

- Memorizing [2 Corinthians 9:7](#).
- Embracing the Gospel of abundance & the theology of enough.
- Creating margin in my life so I can always practice generosity.
- Giving my life to Jesus as Savior and Lord, for the first time.

WALK THE TALK A Growth Group Guide

1. Have you ever felt compelled to help someone in real need who you didn't know? How did it feel before, during, and after helping this person?
2. Look back through the three values that either harm or help with being generous. On the negative side, have you ever bought into any of the three negatives? How have the positive values helped you in becoming more generous?
3. Have you ever been able to receive a generous gift from someone without feeling the need to repay them somehow? Why do you think the humility of receiving is as important as the joy of giving?
4. Look at three ways of "Becoming a Generous Community." Which of these is most lacking in our faith community? How could you increase your knowledge and skill in this area to help support a change in our faith community?
5. READ the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man in Luke 16:19-26 and the parable in Matthew 25:32-46. Since both are a call to see and meet human need in this life, and both show that we only have this life to do such things, what changes do you have to make in your daily life? How can your abundance meet a real need around you?

SOUL TRAINING – STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES

A Personal Transformation Exercise

The Principle:

One of the principles this week is that frugality creates margin, which enables generosity. When we are frugal and wise, we can then free up more resources in order to be generous.

Sometimes frugality can mean sacrifice. For example, a parent who works at a job that demands a lot of time in the evenings or weekends may want to spend more time with their family. In order to accomplish having a job and spending time with their family, they may need to either sacrifice some hours on the job, or sacrifice the job entirely and find one that allows for more time at home. This same principle can be used in all five of the stewardship areas (soul, body, time, talent, treasure).

The Plan:

This week, try to accomplish two of these three activities, and if you are able to, try to work all three into your life.

1. Being Frugal, then Generous, with your Time.
This week, find ways to trim some of the activities in your life. Don't trim back on important things like family, church, or caring for others. Instead, look for things that are not "essential." Once you have created some margin of time, find ways to spend time with friends or serve others in some way.
2. Being Frugal, then Generous, with your Talent.
So often we can overextend ourselves. People can come close to exhaustion because they have trouble saying no. This week, try saying "no." If you have found margin with your talents, then you are in a position to let God use your gifts in a more balanced way. Take the posture of praying and listening. Be open to letting God deploy your gifts in new ways.
3. Being Frugal, then Generous, with your Treasures.
There are many ways to be more frugal with your financial resources, but perhaps the easiest is to not spend as much, or even any, on things that are not completely necessary. Once you free up your treasure, find a way to give to someone in need. If you do not tithe regularly at church, consider putting this spiritual discipline into practice.