

DAY 4 GIVING

Jesus talked a lot about giving. In fact, Jesus talked more about money than He talked about love, heaven, or hell. He talked about money more than any other topic except the Kingdom of God.⁸

Why? Because people desperately need wisdom when it comes to their finances. Many of us are living paycheck to paycheck and drowning under debt. Money is the one thing people argue about most in their marriages. No matter who you are, saving, giving, and managing money is probably a challenge.

So let's start with this statement. You are rich.

Andy Stanley says, "It's funny, rich people are in denial. And normally we are not in denial about things we know. For instance, tall people admit they're tall. Short people admit they are short. Athletic people admit they're athletic. Artsy people admit they're artsy. And they don't mind telling you that...their car is a mess, their room is a mess, their life is a mess, and they are as happy as can be. Introverts don't even mind telling you they are introverts, and extroverts can't wait to tell you they are extroverts. Like they really need to tell you. But when it comes to rich people, they won't admit it, they live in denial." ⁹

According to statistics, if you make \$40,000 a year you are in the top 4% in the world, and if you make over \$48,000 a year, you are in the top 1% of earners in the world. We enjoy a quality of life that very few in the history of the world have ever experienced. Our biggest concern is not starvation, but obesity!

However, the more Americans make, the less they give away.

When Allison and I first got married, our apartment was inside a home built around 1900. This apartment only had one very small closet. At this time in history a man probably had one suit and one or two nice shirts. He had some jeans and a couple casual shirts, maybe two pairs of shoes, and that was about it. Ladies, I have no idea what you wore but evidently it would fit in the closet next to those few things. One little closet.

Today it's very different. Our homes have closets in almost every room.

Some have walk-in closets. Some have walk-around closets! And some of us still say we have nothing to wear! Not only that, many of us have so much in our closets that it spills into the garage...and then to clear out our garage we have to store our extra stuff someplace else. I've heard that the storage industry, which barely existed 25 years ago, is now larger than the music industry in our country. There are 52,000 storage facilities worldwide, and 46,000 of those are in the USA. We love our stuff! We are rich. And yet we experience financial problems and stress like never before.

Our priorities have gotten out of whack. When we care more about the stuff we've accumulated than helping out those in need, when we care more about the money we're making than spending time with our family, and when we look to the money in our bank accounts instead of looking to God for our security, we need to totally change our relationship to money.

In the fourth full week of this Challenge, we will see that Jesus challenges His followers to be generous. The more I read the words of Jesus, the more **I'm convinced it's impossible to be a stingy Christian**. We cannot follow Jesus well and at the same time ignore his teaching on money. **If you are truly following Jesus, you are generous.**

And just as we serve out of a response to God, we give because God gave to us. The most famous verse in the Bible is John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he **gave** his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." God showed His love for us by giving His Son. Jesus showed His love for us by giving up His life. When we give, we reflect the heart and character of our God. The week of giving will definitely challenge you because our "normal" approach to finances is not working. Let's try doing what Jesus asks of us!

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