

Generous Living

Pastor Brian Flewelling

Story: Alan & Lonnie felt imprisoned to their unfulfilling, but well-paying jobs because they had accumulated 10ks of thousands in consumer debt. Not only that, the stress of their jobs, and their financial situation was having an adverse affect on his health, living under this vise for so long – he ended up in the hospital with chest pains. It was becoming clear something needed to change in their lives. What felt especially personal to them, because of the financial cycle they were in, they couldn't fulfill a life dream of moving closer to their adult children and grandchildren. One day they made a resolution. And with the right tool set, they drafted a plan to manage their money. Within 18 months they paid off all \$96,000 of consumer debts (except for their house). And were generously investing in the mission of their church and charities of their choice. And they felt freer than ever. And they felt empowered to leave the jobs that they had once imprisoned them.

Today we're going to have a family conversation about money. For some of you it's not easy to talk about. It feels very painful. It feels very personal.

That's why we need to talk about. There are few things that impact your life more than money. That can cause you such anxiety, or such joy. Wrap you up in bondage, or set you free. To cause you to live a small and self-interested existence. Or empower you to fulfill your purpose by making an impact in the world around you. God cares about your financial well-being. God cares about how you relate to money. Where you spend it. And he has a few helpful suggestions

3 Habits that we can practice that will bring God-honoring world changing results.

When my resources are in alignment with God's word and his priorities, I experience:

Slide:

1. discipline in spending
2. trust in God
3. generosity in giving

Let's talk about these in reverse:

Habit #3. The habit of giving generously so that my heart becomes generous.

The catch is: Generosity isn't something you gain simply by praying for it. You have to practice it. Train for it. If you wait till you feel generous, you'll never give. Sometimes your hands need to tell your heart what's important.

I think we all can agree that we want to be generous people. That's a virtue we see in our faith, in Jesus. That's where we want to end up. That's where God wants us to end up. God, your

Father, is grooming you, His child, to be like him. He's extravagant. He wants you to be a generous person.

Slide:

I have an extravagant Father.

I am becoming an extravagant giver.

Mark 12:41-44 (an extravagant gift)

The gift was a reflection of the heart.

Story: Gift given to bkflew as missionaries.

Jesus said, "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:21

When you give your treasure away, you're investing it, and your heart becomes selfless. And when you keep your treasure here, you stay self focused.

Irish Family Business

An Irish family business impacted by John Wesley in the 1750s. Wesley didn't just influence church goers. He was urging businessmen that they too have a call from God to use their wealth to impact society for good. "Your wealth is evidence of a calling from God, so use your abundance for the good of mankind." He had a famous saying "Earn all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can,".

Wesley's message so impacted an Irishman named Arthur, that Arthur began to use their burgeoning family business to give vast amounts of money to the poor. Arthur went on to sit on the board of a hospital that was created to serve the lower classes. And he challenged the social structures of their day that were severing the rich class from the poor class.

What Arthur did that was even more amazing was, he imparted this value system to his children. They believed that their business and the wealth of their business could be used to change society.

The generation after Arthur said, we can impact society by bettering the lives of our employees first. They started by paying better wages than any other employer in Ireland. They provided health care for their working class. They employed a full-time doctor on site at their factory. They created affordable housing so that their workers didn't live in the squalor of the ghettos.

By the third and fourth generation the company was so influential that during the years of the potato blight in the 1840s did more to assist the financially destitute of Ireland than the entire national government.

They were given access to company-provided educational and recreational opportunities: lectures, concerts, socials, exercise, cooking, and financial management classes. The company

built playing fields, swimming pools, reading rooms, day-care centers, and parks, and the best medical staff.

Motto: "find out the will of God for your day and generation, and then, as quickly as possible, get into line."

That's a family that grabbed ahold of their calling to live generously.

So whether you're the widow who can give less than a penny, or you've got a family business that can change the landscape of our county, God loves when his children live generously.

There are obstacles to generous living.

I can't live generously if I don't have the first two habits in my life. - Disciple in spending. Trust in God.

#2. The habit of trusting in God by tithing regularly.

You haven't learned to fully trust God, until you've started tithing.

Tithe literally means "tenth." The first tenth of everything I earn or receive belongs to God. Giving God a tenth of everything I own is a Biblical principle that we see as far back as Abraham in [Gen 14](#) and affirmed by Jesus in the New Testament [Matt 23](#).

The tithe teaches me to surrender all that I have to God, and the first 10th is my best. It teaches me that God can take better care of me and my 90% than I can take of myself at all 100%. Some people say it this way. I'd rather have 90% blessed than 100% cursed.

Malachi 3:7-10

Historical research has shown that other deities were worshipped with a tithe. (Even idol worshippers recognized that where I invest my tenth shows who I live for, and who's most important in my life.)

The first tenth of everything you spend gives honor & thanks to your provider. If you spend your first tenth on yourself, you're honoring yourself. If you spend your first tenth on God, you're giving recognition and thanks to Him...as the ultimate financial provider in my life.

There's no doubt that Tithing tests your faith. It is a mental hurdle.

- It touches the Insecurity in me of whether I will have enough.
- And it touches the self in me- "I worked hard to get it. I deserve a little something..."
- The tithe is God's test. Will you really trust me? And do you really believe in my mission in the earth enough to invest in it.

Story of Janelle, a single Mom

"God was really convicting me to start tithing. I was looking at my income and going how am I going to wring out another 10% from what I'm making. And I felt like God said to me, 'If you take care of my business, I'll take care of yours.' So I just started giving 10%, not knowing where

it would come from. Somehow, week after week I always had enough. Sometimes I really had to be careful on how I spent my money, but God came through big. And I realized as I gave that 10% week after week that my heart started to change from 'How God?', to 'Thank You God.'

I love that subtle shift to trusting faith.

I believe a large part of financial anxiety stems from 2 reasons:

1. We've lived as though it were all up to me, when the tithe teaches us to trust that God.
2. We've overextended ourselves financially.

#1. The habit of spending conservatively so you can give generously.

Learn to live within your means.

If you make \$100, you're not spending \$102 or \$130.

I can't live in financial freedom, if I'm in financial bondage.

And I can't set others free when I'm in financial bondage.

The Bible doesn't call debt a sin. But it does call it a bondage.

- I.e. Credit card debt, car loans
- Our society is rigged to take advantage of the borrower at a higher interest rate.
- **Proverbs 22:7**
The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender.
- Get out of debt
- Learn to live within your means

Don't spend all your money on self-interest.

If 10 out of every 100 dollars to spend as discretionary income, don't spend it all on yourself.

I cannot belong to the kingdom of selflessness and spend my money only on myself.

if I don't manage how I spend it on myself I won't have any money left to spend on others

Acts 4:32-34

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all, that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

Summary:

When a community lives in the power of God, they change the world through his generosity.

John 12:24

...unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

Seed of Barley:

Hoard the seed it remains a single seed. Give it away – it multiplies.

I've got 5 - \$20 bills in my wallet that I want to give to somebody this morning.

How many of you would feel blessed, if I walked up to you and gave you a free \$20 bill?

- You know what it feels like to be blessed.

Now here's my game. I want 5 people to take this \$20 bill and bless somebody else outside of our Petra community.

- Pay for their gas, pay for their groceries, buy them a book, etc.

Unused Notes:

Sacrifice of Cain & Abel. Their heart

Worship used to require a financial commitment.

Bring your best animal. Your best grain.

Sacrifice of Cain & Abel. Their heart

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Could you imagine if God had skimmed out on us.

Sowing sparingly. Reap Sparingly.

Have to invest them into someone's life.

Petra tithes 12% to missions.

Church budget is transparent.



Discussion Questions:

May 28th 2017

Living Generously

Message by Pastor Brian Flewelling

ICE BREAKERS:

- What is one activity you are looking forward to doing this summer with your family?
- What is one activity your small group can do together this summer?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. On Sunday Pastor Brian gave us three financial habits that guide us into godly results. On a scale of 1-10 (highest) grade yourself in each of these habits.

Habit 1-The habit of giving generously so that my heart becomes generous.

Habit 2-The habit of trusting in God by tithing regularly.

Habit 3-The habit of spending conservatively so you can give generously.

- Which of these habits do you do well at?
- What is one simple step you can take to improve in one of the three habits?

2. Read Mark 12:41-44

- Have you ever known anyone in your life like the poor widow, who despite her poverty, was a generous giver? What did you learn from that person?
- God honored the small costly sacrifice of the widow over the large gifts of others? What does that teach us about God and what's important to Him?
- Beyond finances, what are some other areas of life that we are called to practice generosity?
- What are the hardest ways for you to express generosity? Why?

3. Generosity is an act and not a feeling. Whenever you give a generous gift to someone how often do you feel like being generous verses simply acting generously because it's important?

4. One of the reasons we are called to be generous people is because we are being shaped into the image of our Father who is a generous Father. Go around the room and have each person read one of these verses. Then discuss how we see God acting generously.

Ephesians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

John 15:15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

Ephesians 1:7-8 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding.

Ephesians 2:4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.

Romans 8:31-32 What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Psalms 84:11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.

Deuteronomy 28:2-6 All these blessings will come on you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God: You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.

Matthew 5:44-45 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

John 16:15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

- What do you learn about God's generosity from each of these texts?
- How does God's example of generosity reshape your perspective on generosity?

5. Could your small group community identify a ministry, mission, or financial need that you could invest in together in collective generosity?