

2. What are some of the attitudes and actions that should accompany God's blessing?
3. Why is it wrong for God's people to be "hardhearted or tightfisted toward" the poor?

THE PATTERN OF CHRIST

PHILIPPIANS 2:3–8 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. ⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

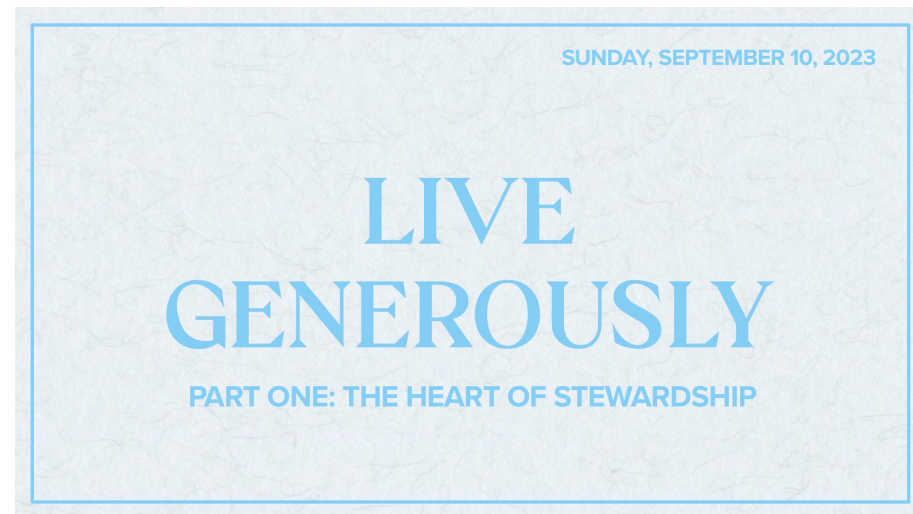
1. According to verses 3 and 4 what are some of the attitudes that are absolutely inconsistent with our new life in Christ?
2. What are the attitudes that should replace them?
3. What was Christ's attitude toward the power, privilege and prerogatives of being a beloved member of the God head?
4. Describe the contrast between what Christ was and what he was willing to become for the sake of others.
5. How should this shape our attitude toward others?

2 CORINTHIANS 8:9 But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving... 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 through his poverty might become rich.

How should the pattern of Christ's generosity shape our generosity?

© 2023 Paul Kemp and Christ Church, all rights reserved. Feel free to make copies for distribution in personal and/or small group Bible Study.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan.



Following Christ is not simply a matter of working a few religious activities into an already busy schedule, rearranging a few priorities here and there, or getting your act together. All of those are noble endeavors, and they may be the inevitable results of your new life in Christ, but they do not go nearly far enough or penetrate nearly deep enough.

Following Christ involves a fundamental change in orientation. Paul simply describes it as "no longer living for ourselves, but living for him who died and rose again (2 Corinthians 5:15)."

The heart of the reformed tradition has always been "living for God's glory." The theme is so pervasive in Scripture that Paul challenges us, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31)."

Following Christ inevitably changes the way you think about yourself, those around you, and even the stuff you have in your garage.

Over the next three weeks we are asking every member of Christ Church to prayerfully consider being more deeply vested in the life and ministry of the church. As we consider what it means to live generously we want to ground our giving in the person and the character of the one who gave himself for us, rather than simply responding to the need of the moment.

Paul describes the generosity of the Macedonian Church in a powerful sentence, "They exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us (2 Corinthians 8:5)" May the same be true of us.

This week we will look at how some of the big ideas in Scripture shape our generosity.

THE CREATION MANDATE

GENESIS 1:26, 31 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground...” ³¹ *God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.*

GENESIS 2:8, 15 Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east... ¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

1. How does Scripture describe the pristine state of creation?
2. What is significant about the fact that God created humanity as a reflection of himself (in his image and likeness)?
3. How does Scripture describe humanity’s responsibility in creation?
4. How do the words “work it and care for it” broaden our understanding of what it means “to rule over...?”
5. We can summarize the creation mandate, “We were created to reflect the heart and character of God as we steward the works of his hands for his glory, the benefit of others and our joy.”
 - a. How do we best reflect God’s heart in character in our care for the works of his hands?
 - b. What happens when we steward the works of God’s hand primarily for our joy and benefit, rather than realizing our highest calling is to steward everything that he has placed in our hands for his glory, and the benefit of those around us?

1 CHRONICLES 29:10–14, 16 David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying,

“Praise be to you, Lord, the God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. ¹¹ Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. ¹² Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. ¹³ Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.

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... 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. What are some of the echoes of the “creation mandate” that resound in David’s prayer of thanksgiving?
2. How does this prayer establish a foundational framework for “living generously?”

THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

GENESIS 12:1–3 The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. ² “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

The key word in this initial expression of “God’s Covenant with Abraham” is the word bless. In the previous nine chapters the word curse has been used six times. In the span of three verses the word bless occurs six times. The clear implication is that God is reversing the curse of the fall through his promise to Abraham.

According to this passage why does “God bless” Abraham?

DEUTERONOMY 15:4-11 However, there need be no poor people among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, ⁵ if only you fully obey the Lord your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today. ⁶ For the Lord your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations but none will rule over you.

⁷ If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them.

⁸ Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need. ⁹ Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: “The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near,” so that you do not show ill will toward the needy among your fellow Israelites and give them nothing. They may then appeal to the Lord against you, and you will be found guilty of sin.

¹⁰ Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. ¹¹ There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.

1. How does Deuteronomy 15 pick up on the theme of “blessing?”