



MAY 10TH, 2026

BEHOLDING: DISCIPLINES FOR IMAGERS

OPEN HANDS:

THE DISCIPLINE OF GENEROSITY & SERVICE

SCRIPTURES

⁶ “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to **hide yourself from your own flesh?**”

Isaiah 58:6–7 (ESV)

¹⁵ And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all **covetousness**, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” ¹⁶ And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷ and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ ¹⁸ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”’ ²⁰ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ ²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Luke 12:15–21 (ESV)

¹ “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. ² “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Matthew 6:1–4 (ESV)

⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a **cheerful** giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:7–8 (ESV)

Discussion Questions

Understanding God's Generosity (15 minutes)

1. **The sermon stated that "before the Creator created, He was generous" in the Trinity.** How does understanding God's generosity within the Trinity (Father, Son, and Spirit) change how you view generosity? How is this different from other views of God?
2. **Read Genesis 1-2. What evidence do you see of God's generous nature in creation?** How does this contrast with the pattern of sin in Genesis 3 (see, desire, take, grasp)?

Examining Our Hearts (20 minutes)

3. **Jesus warns against "covetousness" (pleonexia)—the insatiable craving for more.** Where do you see this pattern in your own life? What are you tempted to believe will satisfy you if you just had "more"?
4. **The sermon described the rich fool as "not a monster, just a bent and broken mirror."** What made him foolish in God's eyes? How can someone be externally successful yet spiritually impoverished?
5. **Jesus says, "Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing."** Why is secret giving so important? How does seeking recognition for our giving corrupt the discipline?

Practical Generosity (20 minutes)

6. **The pastor shared about serving in a group home for people with severe mental handicaps—people who could give nothing in return.** When have you experienced the freedom of serving someone who couldn't reciprocate? How did it affect you?
7. **The sermon distinguished between giving when we "feel like it" versus giving as a discipline.** What's the difference? Why does intentional, disciplined giving transform us in ways that emotional giving doesn't?
8. **Diagnostic Question: "Am I practicing generosity in such a way over time that it is producing the kind of person that is genuinely glad to give?"** How would you honestly answer this question? What does your answer reveal?

Key Takeaways

- ✓ **Generosity is not a sacrifice—it's functioning as designed.** We were made to image an open-handed God.
- ✓ **The closed fist misrepresents God and diminishes our humanity.** Selfishness makes us less than we were created to be.
- ✓ **Giving shapes us.** It's not just the fruit of transformation; it's a pathway to transformation.
- ✓ **God loves cheerful (hilarious) giving**—spontaneous, joyful generosity that flows from a transformed heart.
- ✓ **The giver receives more than the receiver.** Generosity makes us lighter, freer, and more joyful.

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge: Choose ONE

Option 1: Secret Generosity

- Give to someone or some cause completely anonymously this week
- Ensure no one (except God) knows about it
- Journal about how it felt to give without recognition

Option 2: Serve Someone Who Can't Repay

- Find an opportunity to serve someone who has no ability to reciprocate
- This could be at a shelter, nursing home, or helping someone with disabilities
- Reflect on how this differs from typical "networking" or reciprocal relationships

Option 3: The Generosity Audit

- Track all your "giving" this week—not just money, but time, attention, service
- Ask yourself: "Am I giving joyfully or reluctantly?"
- Identify one area where you're living with a "closed fist" and pray about opening your hand

Option 4: The Fasting-to-Giving Connection

- If you haven't tried fasting yet, join the Thursday fast mentioned in the sermon
- Use the money you would have spent on food to give to someone in need
- Notice how fasting loosens your grip and makes generosity easier

Going Deeper

For Personal Reflection:

- What am I grasping that I need to release?
- Where am I practicing "willful blindness" to the needs around me (Isaiah 58)?
- What would my life look like if I truly believed "one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions"?
- Am I giving to get something in return (approval, karma, favor from God), or am I giving because I've been given to?

Memorize This Week:

"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." - 2 Corinthians 9:7

Prayer Focus (10 minutes)

Pray together for:

- Hearts that are open-handed rather than closed-fisted
- Freedom from covetousness and the insatiable craving for more
- Eyes to see needs around us that we've been willfully ignoring
- Joy in giving that reflects the generous heart of God
- Transformation from glory to glory as we practice this discipline

Before Next Week

- Practice your chosen generosity challenge
- Read ahead if your group is studying a specific passage next week
- Share testimonies of how generosity transformed you this week when you gather again