



GENEROSITY

PRACTICING Jesus

SERMON
STUDY

12.01.2024

Leader Corner

Practicing Jesus

Generosity

Matthew 25:14-30

Every day we have countless opportunities, big and small, to experience and express the mindset of generosity. Growth in generosity comes not from focusing on being generous as much as what's behind the decision to say yes or no to a potential moment of giving. It's the difference between thinking we have enough or we don't have enough.

Approaching these moments with a different spirit, a shift from scarcity to abundance, will transform our mind and hearts and open the door to practicing generosity.

We follow a generous and giving God, and generosity brings us in contact with joy, a deeper sense of purpose, and connection with Jesus and his heart for others.

Main Idea: Generosity is a mindset that transforms our everyday lives and connects us with Jesus' heart for the world.

Also, we always have more than enough in Jesus.

Main Practice: Reorient everyday resources, relationships, and behaviors toward a lifestyle of generosity.

Main Teaching: Matthew 25:14-30

A few more housekeeping items for this week:

- *Pro Tip:* Forecasting the future is good. Look toward a restart date in January to get the group back together.
- As we approach the end of this study, focus your group on the Rule of Life exercise found on the Practicing Jesus webpage.
- Continue talking about the Christmas offering and how you / your group will participate.

As You Begin Your Group Time:

Discuss your experience with Service. What obstacles got in the way of practicing service? How will you continue this practice individually or as a group?

Connect with Prayer

Have someone pray the following over the group:
*Heavenly Father, our generous Provider, there is nothing we have that has not come from your hand.
 Every act of generosity on our part is only a response to the generosity with which You have already blessed us.
 We reject the image of success, into which this world tries to shape us. An image defined by Wealth, Status, and Power.
 Instead, we ask that you would remake us in your image. An image defined by Generosity, Humility, and Servanthood.*

*May we model our giving on the one who gave it all. And may others see in us a glimpse of your character. Against which the riches of this world seem dull and worthless.
 Would you cultivate in us a spirit of contentment? Help us not to strive for more and more, but grow in gratitude for all the ways you have blessed us.
 Would you mold within us a generous heart, empowering us to give sacrificially, not under compulsion, but in joy and faith.
 Amen. (From Christ Church London)*

with Praise

Listen to the song "Generous Giver" by Vintage Worship. As you read through and listen to the song, allow your spirit to contemplate the incredible generosity that God has shown us. Be filled with gratitude for the love He shows and the sacrifices He has made to provide the bridge between His Holiness and our sinfulness. Allow your heart to be inspired by the perfect love that has been modeled for us!

with Principle

“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, and the Son, in turn, gave the Spirit. When we give our money, our resources, our time and love - we get to participate in that divine outflow of love.” (Practicing the Way, page 187)

1. Review as a group the “Learn” and “Listen” portions of the Practicing Jesus journal.
2. Choose a group member to read Matthew 25:14-30 aloud.
 - a. What do we learn about the heart of Jesus?
 - b. How is the theme of generosity exemplified in this story?
3. Author R.K. Hughes says, “The posture of our heart makes all the difference.” Study together the following passages: Acts 2:43-47, Acts 4:32-37, Acts 17:1-9.
 - a. What heart postures are present in these stories?
 - b. In particular, how did apprentices of Jesus live out a life of generosity?
4. When it comes to living a generous lifestyle, each of us relies heavily upon the perception of whether we live a life of abundance or scarcity. (Whether we feel we have enough or don’t have enough)
 - a. On a scale of 1-17, how naturally generous are you with your life and resources?
 - b. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal where you are holding, hoarding, hesitating, or simply living in a mindset of scarcity.
5. What is one area of your life that you can increasingly demonstrate the generous love of Jesus?

with Practice

Many forms of giving exist, so let’s begin with practices that are very realistic & will bring joy. Remember, this is a way of life, not a one-time emotional reaction.

The following are three ways to practice generosity in an ongoing way. The first is an individual practice and the next two are group practices.

- Take a moment and read through the “Everyday” practice. Then journal, and share with your group.
- Next, look at the “Generosity Jar” & “Shareables” ideas. Which one can you practice as an individual, family, or a group this week?

Everyday Generosity: Think of 2 activities you do every day. How might these activities be approached as a form of service to others?

Generosity Jar: As a family or small group, pray & discuss different ways of helping people & organizations. Choose one that everyone is excited about! (Maybe gear towards the Christmas Offering?)

Throughout the week, each time someone has a “want” that money would normally go towards (toy, ice cream, coffee, eating out, Amazon binge), graciously allow that opportunity to pass & put the money in your Generosity Jar. Then choose how you can give to bless someone or something.

- be inspired by a local business “Serendipity Mercantile” that does this practice in their business.

Inventory Your Shareables: In this practice, each person takes an inventory of **good** things that they can share. Your group or family pools the shareables & decides the best way to bless someone! Besides collecting money, here are a few categories you could choose:

- **Mentoring:** Is there a younger person or at-risk child who would benefit from having someone to walk through life with?
- **Time:** How can you share your time with neighbors, a community need, or a particular person?
- **Gifts/talents/skills:** Find ways to share yourself and your unique gifts and skills.
- **Physical space & items:** practice hospitality by inviting people into your space. Go through closets & storage spaces. What do you have that you can let go of & would be a blessing to someone else?

*(Practice adapted from the “Practicing the Way Course Guide,” John Mark Comer)

For Further Study

Bonus idea: play the 30-day Minimalism Game!

Watch the Generosity Video - The Bible Project
Read Luke 12:22-34 & 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

Other Resources:

B.L.E.S.S. - Ferguson & Ferguson
Surprise the World - Robert Frost