

Created for Generosity*Luke 18, 19, 21*

Introduction: As Steve mentioned on Sunday, one of the things that the Bible tells us about God is that He is generous. And since God has been so generous to us, we too are to be generous in every way: generous in the way we speak, generous in the way we serve, generous in the way we forgive, etc. And we are supposed to be generous in the way we give financially. This week and next we are going to look at generosity in giving – not as an add-on to the Christian life, but as something inherent in our calling. Today we are going to consider a cluster of passages in the gospel of Luke in which Jesus noticed people's generosity in giving (or the lack thereof). May these passages give each of us a vision for our lives when it comes to money and generosity.

Opening Discussion: "My life is characterized by generosity." Agree/Disagree? Why?

Read Luke 18:18-27

1. Why does Jesus ask this man to give away all his money?
2. Does Jesus' challenge to this man mean that the only way we can fully follow God is if we give away all our money? Why or why not?

Steve said:

We have to wrestle with Jesus' teaching here because the vast majority of us in this room today are wealthy by biblical standards. Biblically speaking, everything above and beyond having our basic needs is wealth (see 1 Timothy 6:6-10). It is incredibly difficult to have money and not put it above God. Money is a powerful influence in our lives. Figuring out how to earn it and how to keep it can consume our lives.

3. In what ways, if any, do you struggle to not put money above God?
4. If you do struggle with this, why do you think the struggle is so hard?

Read Luke 19:1-10

5. How was Zaccheus' relationship to money transformed by coming to faith in Jesus?

Steve said:

Jesus saw Zaccheus' generosity as evidence that "today salvation has come to [Zaccheus'] house"! Jesus saw Zaccheus' new attitude toward money as tangible evidence that he had experienced salvation. This is one of the many transformations that takes place when Jesus "seeks and saves" people. Zaccheus had spent his entire career defrauding people; he could care less whether he was stealing people blind. All he cared about was getting more money. But when his eyes were opened to the life that's available in the kingdom, a transformation took place. Now he was eager to give more than he was required to give. Whereas the rich young ruler went away sad, Zaccheus was exuberant and joyful about giving.

Zaccheus isn't the rare exception. Generosity is one of the most tangible evidences that a person has been thoroughly converted and now puts God first in his/her life. Generosity comes more naturally to some than others, but it's really a natural expression of putting God first.

6. Why do you think generosity is a natural expression of putting God first in our lives?

7. When have you experienced the joy of generosity in your life?

Read Luke 21:1-4

8. What principle is illustrated in the story of the widow's gift?

It's significant that Jesus didn't run up to the woman and say, "That's a very generous thing you're doing. But you need this money more than the temple does. Keep your money and let those who have a surplus fund the temple." No, Jesus didn't deny her the blessing of giving generously and sacrificially. He commended her for her generosity. Giving is important for what the money can accomplish. But giving is also important for the giver. It's important that every believer put God first the way the widow did.

9. Have you tended to think of giving as more of an obligation or as a blessing? How has your thinking changed as you've grown in Christ?

10. What does giving do for the giver?

11. What is your main application from this study?