

celebrate generosity



- Sunday 3rd Sept – The heart of generosity
- Sunday 10th Sept – The joy of generosity
- Sunday 17th Sept – The practice of generosity

Willesborough Baptist Church
Personal & Small Group Study Notes

CELEBRATE GENEROSITY Study 1

THE HEART OF GENEROSITY

1 Timothy 6.6-10 & other selected passages

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

As we take the theme of generosity does it surprise you that Jesus speaks so much about handling our resources – it is estimated, at least 15% of his teaching in the gospels? Can you recall a particular parable where this theme is highlighted?

How do you understand the concept of contentment that Paul refers to in 1 Timothy 6.6? Would you think of yourself as being content? What can easily hinder people from being content?

Do you remember the video clip we had about the gold prospector in a recent Sunday morning service? You will find the clip - www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHQNN9Taw40

1. CELEBRATE GENEROSITY BY DISCOVERING TRUE SPIRITUALITY

Alan offered a number of illustrations regarding the connection between our spirituality and our possessions.

- John the Baptist (Luke 3.11-14) where the fruit of repentance is in a transformed life
- Jesus and the widow's mite (Mark 12.41-44)
- Zacchaeus (Luke 19.1-10)
- Rich young ruler (Luke 18.18-30)

2. CELEBRATE GENEROSITY BY DETHRONING THE GOD MAMMON

Jesus spoke (Luke 16.13-14) of how no servant can serve two masters...you cannot serve God and Mammon (the Aramaic word for money/material possessions).

The statement is often made 'Money is the root of all evil' – why is this not what Paul says in 1 Tim 6.10

Why is it crucial that we hold on to what Paul does say?

3. CELEBRATE GENEROSITY BY DELIGHTING IN GOD AS OWNER OF ALL THINGS

The scriptures that Alan referred to that indicate how God is the creator and owner of all we have: Gen 1.1; Deut 10.14; Psalm 24.1; Psalm 50.10; Haggai 2.8.

Who owns your house, your car, your career, your wardrobe, your time...?

How do we allow God to transform our value system?

4. CELEBRATE GENEROSITY BY DETERMINING TO BE A FAITHFUL STEWARD

A steward is entrusted with the possessions of another. Everything is on loan to us by God and I need to discover how God wants me to handle his assets.

Randy Alcorn 'God owns everything – I'm his money manager.'

There were many reminders of the need to put GOD FIRST in the OT.

The whole sacrificial system was a profound call on the lives of God's people.

Firstfruits – Prov 3.9 (Deut 26.1-10) First fruits of the land were to be given to God. The early part of the harvest given to God expresses trust in God for the full harvest.

Tithes – Lev 27.30 There was a law to give back to God a tenth of personal income.

Offerings – over and above the regular giving were special offerings

All these expectations of giving were a reminder that all belongs to God and that the worshipper is intent on putting God first in their life.

CELEBRATE GENEROSITY Study 2

THE JOY OF GENEROSITY

2 Corinthians 8-9 & other selected passages

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

The section of scripture is a large one and so you will only be able to look at some of the key verses in these two chapters of 2 Corinthians.

Our God is a generous God – share together some scriptures that indicate God's generosity and use them to affirm our generous God in a time of praise and thanksgiving.

In reading Acts – in what ways do you think the first believers reflected practical joy-filled generosity?

There is a great promise in **Phil 4.19** about God supplying all our needs. The promises of God have a condition and here it was the believers faithfully supporting Paul in prison.

1 Cor 16.1-2 offers us five key instructions for giving. A good check list for our giving!

In **2 Cor 8 & 9** there are a number of principles linked to the joy of generosity.

1. Grace filled generosity. The word grace is used numerous times to describe the kind of generosity Paul is highlighting to the Corinthian Church (v.1; v.4; v.6; v.7; v.9).

Our giving is to be motivated by grace.

- What does it really mean to give on the basis of grace?
 - How does grace become the number one stimulation for biblical giving?
- The Macedonian believers were physically suffering and were financially depleted and yet they gave generously with abundant joy.

- Do you sometimes find you are giving out of guilt more than out of grace?

2. Cross-centred generosity. 2 Cor 8.9 where Paul sets his focus on Jesus. Once again the word grace comes into v.9.

Note the contrast with the Macedonians who were poor and how they gave with Jesus who was rich and also gave. Phil 2.6-8 is a further declaration of the riches of Jesus.

3. Consistent generosity 2 Cor 8.10

There is the call to be consistent in our generosity. The Corinthians said that they would give to the mother church and then failed to follow through. There is the challenge to be consistent in our giving.

4. Expectant generosity 2 Cor 9.6

Paul takes the imagery from agriculture and the sowing and reaping principle to apply further spiritual truth. Generous sowing leads to a plentiful harvest.

See how Jesus used this principle in Luke 6.38.

5. Cheerful generosity 2 Cor 9.7 *Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

Personalise this verse; instead of 'each man' put your own name.

Once again we see the heart issue of how our giving is not from external pressures but from within as we seek to be faithful to God's instructions.

In what way have you sensed God speaking to you about celebrating generosity?

'Grace comes down, joy rises up and generosity flows out'. John Piper

CELEBRATE GENEROSITY Study 3
THE PRACTICE OF GENEROSITY
Malachi 3.6-12 & selected passages

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

Take time within your group to further reflect on the generosity of Jesus. Share together some episodes in Jesus' ministry where generosity was expressed.

Alan spoke of a little known OT prophet Malachi. It is the last book in the OT and therefore it is easy to find!

Historically the exiled Jews had returned to Jerusalem, rebuilt their homes and the temple. What concerned God was their spiritual lethargy and he raises up a prophet to call them to a spiritual check-up. This particularly focused on the Israelites attitude to worship and the offering of sacrificial animals.

Read **Mal 1.6-14** and try to picture the scene of the prophet's concern.

A.W. Tozer spoke about a 'perfunctory spirit in the performance of the work of the Lord.' Do you identify with what he is saying?

There was a distinct casualness about how the people were coming to worship.

- In what ways did they fail to take God seriously and what challenges does it present for us today in our worship?

Read **Malachi 3.6-12** where the focus continues on faithfulness in giving to God.

- There is the call to repentance 'return to me and I will return to you.' Why is repentance so important? In the seven letters of Jesus to the churches in Rev 2 & 3 they all call God's people to repentance.
- What is the difference between tithes and offerings – and are such guidelines relevant today?
- There is an amazing reward detailed in v.8 where God says '*test me in this...and see if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it*'. How does this picture speak to you?

- What did you think of the illustration of the THREE BUCKETS?

How practical do you think the scriptures are regarding money management for the 21st Century?



THE GIVING BUCKET



THE SAVING BUCKET



THE SPENDING BUCKET

1 Chron 29.14 (Msg) '*Everything comes from you; all we're doing is giving back what we've been given from your generous hand.*'