

## **Sermon #4: Generosity Outline**

*As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life. (1 Timothy 6:17-19)*

*Some give freely, yet grow all the richer;  
others withhold what is due, and only suffer want.  
A generous person will be enriched,  
and one who gives water will get water. (Proverbs 11:24-25)*

*Those who are generous are blessed,  
for they share their bread with the poor. (Proverbs 22:9)*

### **I. A Theological Foundation for a Generous Life**

#### **A. Created to Be Generous; Tempted to Hoard**

God created us with the willingness to give—to God and to others. This design is part of our makeup; we actually have the *need* to be generous. Yet there are two voices that “war” against our God-given impulse toward generosity, tempting us to keep or hoard what we have.

##### **1. The voice of fear.**

Fear, of what might happen to us, along with a misplaced idea about the true source of our security, keeps us from being generous and leads us to hoard what we have. The truth is that hoarding offers us no real security in this world.

##### **2. The voice of self-gratification.**

Our culture tells us that our lives consist in the abundance of our possessions and pleasurable experiences. So we find ourselves thinking, *If I give, there won't be enough left for me.*

#### **B. Defeating the Voices**

When we give our lives to Christ, invite him to be Lord, and allow the Holy Spirit to begin changing us from the inside out, we find that our fears begin to dissipate and our aim in life shifts from seeking personal pleasure to pleasing God and

caring for others. Although we still may wrestle with the voices from time to time, we are able to silence them more readily and effectively the more we grow in Christ. And the more we grow in Christ, realizing that our lives belong to him, the more generous we become. Generosity is a fruit of spiritual growth.

### **C. Biblical Reasons to Give to God and Others**

- We find more joy in doing things for other people and for God than we ever did in doing things for ourselves. (Acts 20:35)
- In the very act of losing our lives, we find life. (Matthew 16:25)
- Life is a gift, and everything belongs to God. (Psalm 24:1; Leviticus 25:23)

### **D. Biblical Guidelines for Giving**

From the early days of the Old Testament, God's people observed the practice of giving some portion of the best of what they had to God. A gift offered to God was called the *first fruits* or the *tithe*, and it equaled one-tenth of one's flocks or crops or income. Abraham was the first to give a tithe or tenth.

- Genesis 14:20b
- Genesis 28:18-22
- Leviticus 27:30-33

#### **1. Giving a tithe.**

As Christians who live under the new covenant, we are not bound by the Law of Moses; we look to it as a guide. Yet most Christians agree that the tithe is a good guideline for our lives, and one that is pleasing to God. *(Suggestion: Use the video clip "Tithing and the Ten Apples.")* Though tithing can be a struggle, it is possible at virtually every income level. If you cannot tithe right away, take a step in that direction. Perhaps you can give 2 percent or 5 percent or 7 percent. God understands where you are, and God will help you make the adjustments necessary for you to become more and more generous.

#### **2. Giving beyond the tithe.**

Tithing is a floor, not a ceiling. God calls us to grow beyond the tithe. We should strive to set aside an additional percentage of our income as offerings for other things that are important to us, such as mission projects, schools, church building funds, and other nonprofit organizations.

## **II. What Our Giving Means to God**

### **A. How Does Our Giving Affect God?**

From the earliest biblical times, the primary way people worshipped God was by building an altar and offering the fruit of one's labors upon it to God. They would burn the sacrifice of an animal or grain as a way of expressing their gratitude, devotion, and desire to honor God. The scent of the offering was said to be pleasing to God. It wasn't that God loved the smell of burnt meat and grain. Rather, God saw that people were giving a gift that expressed love, faith, and the desire to please and honor God; and this moved God's heart. When given in this spirit, our offerings bless the Lord.

### **B. What is God's response to our giving?**

- Luke 6:38
- Matthew 25:14-30

## **III. How Our Generosity Affects Us**

### **A. Through It Our Hearts Are Changed**

When we are generous—to God and to our families, friends, neighbors, and others who are in need—our hearts are filled with joy. They are enlarged by the very act of giving. When we give generously, we become more generous.

### **B. In It We Find the Blessings of God (Malachi 3:10)**

Many Christians have it wrong. They say that if you give, then God will give more back to you. But that is not how it works. We do not give to God so that we can get something in return. The amazing thing is that when we give to God and to others, the blessings just seem to come back to us. Of course, there is no guarantee that if you tithe you will never lose your job or never have other bad things happen to you. Nevertheless, when we give generously, the unmistakable blessings of God flow into our lives.

*(Suggestion: Insert the Personal Goals and Commitment card in the bulletin and use it at the end of the sermon. Have a time of silent meditation and prayer, inviting everyone to complete a card at this time. )*