

CHAPTER 1: WHY IT'S GENIUS TO BE GENEROUS

Sunday School Leader's Guide

Introduction

Generosity is not something that comes very naturally to most of us. In fact, the opposite is generally true – we would usually rather accumulate than give. Most of us are not eager to give away our “stuff.” We would rather hold onto things for a time of emergency rather than give something away that we are potentially going to need at a later time.

Our culture also teaches us to hoard rather than to give. As we read the news and listen to the stories of our culture, it becomes clear that we admire people who have been able to accumulate financial wealth. We dream about what life would be like if we had the money of Bill Gates. We imagine what we could do if we won the grand prize from the Publisher's Clearing House. We look at television celebrities – and although we don't usually want their lifestyles – their nice cars and luxurious trips around the world seem appealing.

If we are really honest, there is a certain amount of fear that is associated with giving. Once we give away money, we cannot get it back. And we may need it down the road. The car may break down or we may break down (we may have a medical emergency). We may just need it for a family vacation or a cruise. We don't know what life is going to look like six months from now, so generosity often feels like a risk.

At the very least, we tend to think of generosity as something “extra” in life. When we have all the bills paid and when we are comfortable with our finances, then we are ready to give. We use everything we need and then we'll consider giving what is left over.

That was Chip Ingram's mindset for the first part of his life, too. He says, “I'm not sure where I got the idea, but until my mid-20's, I thought generosity was something reserved for people who were either very rich or very holy.” He goes on to say that he didn't feel like he really fit into either of those categories. Instead, he felt very middle-class and very average spiritually. Part of that mindset was due to the way he was raised as a boy in central Ohio.

Question 1: When you were growing up, how would you describe your family's view of money and generosity?

Question 2: How would you say your upbringing has influenced your current views of money?

Lesson Passage

Luke 12:13-21

Big Idea

Imitating God and living generously provide far more security than material possessions.

Lesson Outline

I. Introduction

- Generosity can be a frightening idea.

II. How Does God Feel About Money?

- 1 Timothy 6:10
- Luke 12:13-21

III. Why Trusting in Money is Unwise

- Matthew 6:19-24

IV. (Optional Exercise) Watch DVD - 12 minutes

V. Why Generosity is Genius

VI. Conclusion



HOW DOES GOD FEEL ABOUT MONEY AND POSSESSIONS?

There is a verse in scripture that many people often quote when they are talking about money. Unfortunately, when it is referenced, it is often misquoted. Have you ever heard this before...“Money is the root of all kind of evil.”?

That idea comes from 1 Timothy 6:10. But what Paul actually says is, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” So, Paul does not say that money is the problem. Actually, he says that the love of money is the problem.

Money – in and of itself – is not evil. It is part of our fallen world, but by itself money is not evil. It is the value that we place on money that can become evil. It is our desire for money that can cause us to “wander from the faith and [be] pierced...with many griefs.”

Like Paul, Jesus had a lot to say about money. It wasn't always because He was trying to inject money ideas in the conversations, but many times He was simply responding to the immediate needs of the people around Him. In one case, a man came to Jesus and asked Him to help settle his money dispute with his brother. He was mad over his share of the inheritance. (Does this sound familiar to anyone?) And he really wanted Jesus to take his side in this money battle. But instead of taking sides, Jesus told him a simple parable about the love of money.

Read Luke 12:13-21

Question 1: This farmer's first reaction to his financial gain was to build a bigger barn. Why do you think Jesus said this was a bad idea?

Question 2: What would have been a “wise” thing for this farmer to do with his abundance?

Luke 12:13-21 (NIV)

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

¹⁴ Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” ¹⁵ Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”

¹⁶ And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest.

¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’

¹⁸ “Then he said, ‘This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain.’ ¹⁹ And I'll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’”

²⁰ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’

²¹ “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”



WHY TRUSTING IN MONEY IS UNWISE

The reason that Jesus warns us about putting our faith in money is because He has our best in mind. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told his disciples that they should not store up for themselves treasures on earth (Matthew 6:19-24). The reason He said this was because earthly treasures disappear very easily: The stock market can crash, the house can flood, a job can be cut and our possessions can be stolen. Nothing is perfectly secure; it's all vulnerable.

Jesus wants to protect us from such vulnerability. Whenever we put our trust in gaining wealth and property and developing our own security, we are not being very wise. It is not very smart to stake so much on uncertain things.

Therefore, when this man came to Jesus looking for a financial gain, Jesus told him that he was seeking security in the wrong places. Money cannot make us secure. Only God can do that. So, Jesus told him that he did not need to worry so much about the things of this earth, but to store up for himself treasure in heaven.

Question 1: How do you think the American view of money and possessions compares to God's view of money and possessions?

Questions 2: If you really decided to trust your future to God over your money, what changes would you make in life?

Question 3: What are some practical ways that we can start storing up treasure in heaven instead of accumulating possessions here on earth?

Optional Exercise - Watch Session 1 of the DVD (12 minutes)

Additional Bible references for consideration:

Deuteronomy 8:18; Proverbs 23:4-5;
Proverbs 30:8-9;
Ecclesiastes 5:10-15; Matthew 19:27-29;
Mark 10:17-31;

WHY GENEROSITY IS GENIUS

In *The Genius of Generosity*, Chip Ingram lists four reasons that generosity is really more intelligent than hoarding earthly possessions.

Read through this list and talk through each point with your class.

- 1) *Generosity is genius because it changes our lives.*
 - Sample questions: When you have been generous in the past, how has it made you feel? How did that incident influence your perception of money?
- 2) *Generosity is genius because it connects us with others.*
 - Sample question: God says that the most important thing in the world apart from loving Him is loving our neighbors as ourselves. How can generosity help you to get closer to that goal of loving your neighbor as yourself?
- 3) *Generosity is genius because it helps us invest in what matters.*
 - Sample question: Where should we really be investing our money, our time and our talents?
- 4) *Generosity is genius because it frees our hearts.*
 - Sample question: The Bible says that we can only serve one master: either God or Mammon (Money). How does dependence on money enslave us?

Final Thought

Generosity is a gateway to intimacy with God. If we really want to know God more and if we really want to become more like Him, we will start thinking more generously and less selfishly.

For additional insights into this subject, you may want to see:

<http://bible.org/seriespage/greed-affliction-affluent-luke-1213-21>

-or-

<http://www.biblestudytools.com>



CHAPTER 2: THE PRINCIPLE WITH SECRET POWER

Sunday School Leader's Guide

Introduction

Until the days of ATM's and direct deposits, most people had some sort of relationship with their banker. On a regular, sometimes daily basis, they would go to their local bank and make deposits or withdrawals. When they needed to take out a loan, they did not compare prices online. Instead, they went and talked to the banker that they saw throughout the week.

If you have ever seen the Christmas movie, *It's a Wonderful Life*, you may remember how this worked for George Bailey. He worked at a bank and the customers depended on him for the safe keeping of their money. At one point in the movie, there is a run on the bank and it looks like the bank will run out of funds. So, George takes \$2000 of his own (money that was supposed to be used on his honeymoon), and hands it out to the customers to ease their fears. That's a pretty good banker!

Imagine for a minute that ATM's, direct deposits and internet connections did not exist. Imagine that your life was similar to George Bailey's and you still had to walk inside a local bank each week to deposit checks or withdraw your cash. How would you feel if you walked up to your banker, asked to withdraw \$100 and were told that you could not get the money? What would you think if he went on to tell you that he took his wife on a date last night and spent most of your money? How would you feel if he said he had been dreaming about a new barbeque grill for weeks and decided to use your money to make the purchase? If you are like most people, you probably would be tempted to say things to that banker that you would never say in Sunday School.

*(**Leader's note: This is probably not a good time to ask for examples!)*

We would have a big problem if our bankers decided to act like the owners of our money instead of the managers of those resources. Do you remember the Bernie Madoff Ponzi scheme? In one sense, Madoff was the "banker" for hundreds of families. Eventually, greed triggered him to treat the money that he was managing as his own. That self-entitlement attitude leads to devastation for hundreds of families.

Lesson Passage

Luke 16:1-13

Big Idea

We are stewards of God's resources and God trusts us to manage His property well.

Lesson Outline

I. Introduction

II. The Ownership of God

- Luke 15:1-16:13

III. Can God Trust You?

- How are you doing as God's manager?
- Optional Exercise - Watch Session 2 of the DVD (12 minutes)

IV. Three Question Smart Stewards Ask

V. Final Thought



THE PRINCIPLE WITH SECRET POWER

Who would you rather have serving as your banker...George Bailey or Bernie Madoff?

In chapter 2 of The Genius of Generosity, Chip Ingram tells us that for a large part of his life, he fell into the trap of believing that he owned the money in his bank account. Even when he began to tithe 30% of his income, he felt like he was doing God a big favor. He felt like He was meeting God's needs.

There was only one problem with this thinking. Chip was not the owner of his possessions. And neither are we. God has given us all we need to meet our needs and for most of us (maybe all of us), He has given us even more than we need. He has allowed us to be stewards - or managers - of His resources.

Question 1: How does it feel to say that God owns everything... even the money in my bank account?

Question 2: Can you think of any Scripture that indicates God is the owner of all things?

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THE OWNERSHIP OF GOD

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus tells a series of stories that portray God as the owner of things. First of all, in Luke 15, He tells three stories about things that were lost and were later found. He starts off by telling the story of the lost sheep. He asks the tax collectors and sinners who are standing around how they would feel if they had 100 sheep and 1 of them wandered off. After acknowledging that any concerned owner would go look for his lost possessions, Jesus says that the Kingdom of God works the same way. He said, "In the same way, I tell you there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who do not need to repent." In other words, God is the owner. And He is saddened by anyone or anything of His that gets lost.

Jesus didn't stop with that one story. In order to drive His point home, He told two more similar stories. He went on to say that God is like a woman who lost a valuable coin. She swept the entire house looking diligently for the coin and when she found it, she threw a party.

Third, Jesus told the story of the lost son. You may remember it as the story of the Prodigal Son. If you think through that story, it again indicates that God is the owner of all things. At the beginning of the story, the man's sons are living with him. The father owns everything. And the only way the prodigal son can obtain personal possessions is if the father gives him some of his inheritance.

In each of these stories, Jesus shows us that we will only properly understand God when we relate to Him as the owner.

Finally, in Luke 16, Jesus tells one more story about this subject. In this case, He goes so far as to say that we should think of God as a wealthy owner and we should think of ourselves as the managers of God's property.

At the very beginning of this story, Jesus says one of God's managers was wasting his Master's money. So, the Master called the manager in and told him that he could no longer manage the possessions that were previously given to him.

Have you ever been at that point? Have you ever taken the possessions that God entrusted to you and mismanaged them? Or have you ever taken the resources that God has given you and treated them as your own? If so, the rest of this story may surprise you.

Luke 16:1-13 (NIV)

¹ Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. ² So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.'

³ "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg—

⁴ I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.'

⁵ "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

⁶ "'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied.

"The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.'

⁷ "Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?'

"'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied.

"He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.'



THE OWNERSHIP OF GOD

Read Luke 16:1-13

When this dishonest manager was forced to admit his failures, he knew that he could not change the decisions he made in the past. What was done was done. So, instead of sulking over the owner's decision to take away his authority as manager, he decided to start immediately planning for the future. He decided that while he still had a little time with the owner, he could start preparing for his next home.

Question 1: In spite of the previous financial decisions you have made, how can you start planning for the future with God today?

Question 2: What are some examples that you can think of where people served Money over God? And what are some examples of people serving God over Money?

Luke 16:1-13 (NIV)

⁸ "The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. ⁹ I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

¹⁰ "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. ¹¹ So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ¹² And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?"

¹³ "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."



CAN GOD TRUST YOU?

Do you see what Jesus is getting at with these stories? He is saying that God is the owner of all things and we are trusted by God to take care of His property. In each of these situations, the context that Jesus uses is money. He tells us about the business of sheep herding; the importance of a valuable coin; the desire of a son for his inheritance; and rich man's relationship to his money manager. But, as Jesus shows us, the promise related to these things goes a lot further than material possessions.

If we are faithful in the small things - handling money for example - we will be entrusted with greater things. But if we are not good managers with the small things, we will not be good managers of God's more important possessions. How we handle something as mundane as money, determines to a large degree what God blesses us with spiritually and eternally. In other words, learning to give wisely and be good stewards of worldly wealth is basic. It's like the ABC's of faithfulness and management. It's a first step.

So, how are you doing as God's manager?

Optional Exercise - Watch Session 2 of the Genius of Generosity DVD (12 minutes)

Question 1: What are some things that God has entrusted to you and asked you to manage for a period of time?

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THREE QUESTIONS SMART STEWARDS ASK

Chip finishes up this chapter by laying out three questions that we need to ask if we are going to become the kind of managers that God desires.

Take some time to think through these questions with your class.

- 1) *Am I using the money entrusted to me in accordance with God's (the Owner's) wishes?*
 - Additional question: How can we determine what His desires are?
- 2) *Am I carefully keeping account of where the Owner's funds are going?*
 - Additional question: How do you track the way you actually use your resources?
- 3) *Am I becoming best friends with the Owner by the way I manage His resources?*
 - Additional question: How important is stewardship to becoming like Christ?

Final Thought

Your life will be dramatically transformed when you realize, deep down, that everything belongs to God and He trusts you to use His resources well. The resources that have been entrusted to you are your opportunity to join God in His mission.

Additional Bible references for consideration:

Genesis 2:15-20; Genesis 39:1-6; Psalm 24:1; Haggai 2:8;
Daniel 1:8-21; Romans 11:36;

For additional insights into this subject, you may want to see:

<http://bible.org/seriespage/does-christ-commend-crook-or-sting-luke-16-13>

-or-

<http://www.biblestudytools.com>



CHAPTER 3:

WHY GOD PROSPERS GENEROUS PEOPLE

Sunday School Leader's Guide

Introduction

Most of our lives are spent working on things that we do pretty well. The better we are at a certain task, the more often people want us perform that task. For example, if you are seeking a job, you look for a position that matches your abilities. Employers want to hire you to do something that you know how to do well. It wouldn't make sense for a company to hire a computer technician who doesn't know where the power button is located. They hire technical engineers who have been trained in computer programming and repair. They hire people who have experience working with computer networks and who know how to diagnose complex hardware problems. These engineers are "rewarded" with a good job for their expertise.

Similarly, if you go to your ten-year-old niece's ballet performance, there may be twenty spectators present (all relatives of the kids). Your niece may be cute, but she is not experienced enough to be a superior ballerina. So, she is rewarded with a small crowd of family and friends. But if you go to a professional staging of The Nutcracker in December, the theater will be sold out. As the talent improves, so does the "reward" for that talent.

Whether we want to admit it or not, our lives are greatly impacted by the principle of rewards. We are socially rewarded for good hygiene and a nice physical appearance. We often receive higher payouts for advanced education and long-term experience. Those who have proven levels of trustworthy ability receive the largest rewards.

Not only is the principle of rewards true in job markets and performance halls, it is also true in our relationship with God. Have you ever stopped to think about the rewards that are connected to following God?

Lesson Passage

Matthew 25:14-30

Big Idea

God prospers me not to raise my standard of living, but to raise my standard of giving.

Lesson Outline

I. Introduction

- God uses a system of rewards

II. Unequal Rewards

- Matthew 25:14-30
- Optional Exercise: Watch Session 3 on DVD (13-1/2 minutes)

III. Beating Generosity's Biggest Competitor

V. Conclusion



WHY GOD PROSPERS GENEROUS PEOPLE

Throughout the Bible, God offers people all kinds of rewards. Some of those rewards are not experienced until we get to heaven, but many of them are seen during our everyday, earthly lives. Some examples of this can be found in Hebrews chapter eleven. This “Hall of Faith” chapter contains more than good stories of faithful people. It also recounts God’s rewards for the faithful: Noah’s family became the new “seed” of humanity, Sarah received a child in her old age, Moses and the people of Israel were protected from the pursuing Egyptians, other God-followers “conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire” and even “received back their dead by resurrection.” And that doesn’t even mention the greatest reward...the everyday reward of deeper intimacy with God.

So, apparently, God uses a system of rewards, too. The more we are faithful to Him, the more He trusts us with His resources and His name. The more we utilize the spiritual gifts He gives us, the more willing He is to entrust us with the greater gifts.

He rewards us as we become more and more accomplished in exercising our faith.

Question 1: Can you think of any other examples from the Bible where God gives earthly rewards to faithful people?

(Leader hints: Joseph was placed in charge of Egypt, Joshua and Caleb were allowed to enter the promised land, Daniel was protected from the lions, Solomon was given wisdom, Peter was released from prison, Jesus was “anointed” with perfume)

Question 2: How do you feel about working with God in order to receive a reward?

Matthew 25:14-30 (NIV)

¹⁴ “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talent] of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

¹⁹ “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’

²¹ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

²² “The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’

²³ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’



UNEQUAL REWARDS

Not long before He was arrested and crucified, Jesus talked about God's system of rewards. He was trying to explain to his disciples what they could expect in the kingdom of heaven. So, He told them a few stories to illustrate the way life works under the reign of God.

One particular story that Jesus told was about a man who went on a journey and left his servants to take care of his belongings. You may remember this story as the Parable of the Talents.

Read Matthew 25:14-30

One of the striking aspects of this story is the way God distributes the talents. Some people are shocked that God doesn't equally distribute these resources. They do not like this story because God is not being "fair" to everyone. But, in the end, we see that those who received the greater share of the talents were apparently trustworthy managers. They had a track record of successfully managing the owner's resources. They were entrusted with larger sums - at the beginning and end of the story - because they were faithful to the Master's plan.

When God entrusts us with spiritual gifts, monetary gifts, positions of influence and other talents, He has a plan for those rewards. His rewards are not typically like the rewards we give to our children. They aren't like candy (something to be consumed and forgotten), but they are more like stepping stones that lead to the next level of His plan for our lives.

In 2 Corinthians 9:11, Paul talks about the idea that rewards are given to accomplish a greater good. He says, "You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God." In other words, God rewards you when you are faithful...so that you can be generous (love your neighbor as yourself)...so that God will be praised (resulting in your neighbors giving thanks to God).

Those blessed by God become blessers for God. His rewards are not solely for the benefit of the recipient. They are also for the benefit of the neighbor and so that God may be praised.

Matthew 25:14-30 (NIV)

²⁴ "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

²⁶ "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.'

²⁸ "'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. ³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'



BEATING GENEROSITY'S BIGGEST COMPETITOR

Throughout the Bible, it is clear that the biggest competitor to generosity is greed. When God wanted to tell the people of Israel about some of life's biggest pitfalls, He gave them the Ten Commandments. As part of that list, He says, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house...or anything that is your neighbors." He wanted to make sure that they understood the devastating nature of greed and envy.

Generosity tempers greed and brings us closer to the heart of God.

In chapter 3, Chip mentions two ways that we can overcome greed. Take some time to read through and discuss these with your class.

- 1) *Refuse to chase the wind*
 - o Ecclesiastes 2:11
 - o Sample questions: What does it mean to chase after the wind? How much of our daily time do we spend chasing after temporary things? How much of our daily time do we spend loving God with all of our heart, soul mind and strength? How much of our daily time do we spend re-investing God's rewards and loving our neighbors as ourselves?
- 2) *Refuse to view generosity as depriving yourself of something good.*
 - o 1 Timothy 6:17-19
 - o Sample question: How hard is it to stop thinking like an owner of possessions and start thinking as a manager of God's possessions?

Final Thought

Rewards are not a bad thing. And the Bible does not discourage us from pursuing the rewards of God. However, rewards are not the ultimate prize, either. They are not the goal. Rewards are a resulting part of pursuing the ultimate goal – faithfulness to God and His ways.

"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Additional Bible references for consideration:

Proverbs 19:17; Matthew 10:8; Luke 10:30-37; Luke 19:1-10; Acts 4:32-35; Acts 20:35; 2 Corinthians 9:10-11

For additional insights into this subject, you may want to see:

<http://bible.org/seriespage/parable-talents-matthew-2514-30-luke-1912-28>

-or-

<http://www.biblestudytools.com>



CHAPTER 4:

HOW GOD MEASURES GENEROSITY

Sunday School Leader's Guide

Introduction

It costs something to get the things that you really want. If you want a nice house, it is either going to cost you a lot of money or it's going to cost you a lot of time and energy. If you want to have the "Yard of the Month," you'll have to make a lot of sacrifices to get your lawn perfectly manicured. If you want to have children, they will cost you a lot of freedoms - not to mention all of the money they will consume.

A few years ago, a documentary film was produced to show the sacrifices of following Christ. It follows the true story of five missionaries who desperately wanted an unreached group of Indians to experience the love of God. Beyond the Gates of Splendor is based on Elizabeth Elliot's best-selling book, Through Gates of Splendor. Both tell the true story of Jim Elliot, Pete Fleming, Ed McCully, Nate Saint, and Roger Youderian, who in January 1956 were speared to death in the jungles of Ecuador by the Auca Indians.

As the documentary shows, family members of these slain missionaries eventually returned to the Amazon basin where their relatives were murdered. They did not just return for a memorial, but they returned to actually live among the Indians who killed their dads, bothers and husbands. Their evangelistic efforts eventually help Christianity to flourish among the native people.

In one particular scene, Frank Drown, a pilot and missionary friend, recalls leading the search-and-rescue team in an effort to find the five slain missionaries: "They [the slain missionaries] had guns with them. They had said that they would never kill the Aucas, even if they attacked them, because they made this strong statement: 'They're not ready for heaven, and we are.'"

Those five missionaries were willing to sacrifice a great deal for the betterment of the Auca Indians. They were willing to sacrifice their own lives so that the Aucas could understand the love of God.

While that is a radical example of making a sacrifice for something you love, it is also an accurate picture of how much God is willing to sacrifice in order to have intimacy with us. When God wanted to win your heart and secure intimacy with you for eternity, it cost Him His Son.

Lesson Passage

1 Chronicles 21

Big Idea

Sacrifice is necessary to get the things we really desire in life.

Lesson Outline

I. Introduction

- It costs something to get what you really want.

II. Counting the Cost

- 1 Chronicles 21
- Optional Exercise: Watch Session 3 of the DVD (14-1/2 minutes)

III. Money is Only the Beginning

- God wants us to be generous with our time, talents and treasures.

IV. Final Thoughts



HOW GOD MEASURES GENEROSITY

Today, the desire to follow Christ compels us - like the slain missionaries - to “take up [our] cross daily and follow [Christ].” In each case, there is a sacrifice involved.

Question 1: What do you think...does God measure generosity by the size of the gift or by the size of the sacrifice? Are there any biblical stories that you can cite as examples?

Question 2: What would “sacrificial” generosity look like for a middle-class American today?

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COUNTING THE COST

In 1 Chronicles 21, David is tempted by Satan to count the fighting men of Israel.

Read 1 Chronicles 21:1-28

When you first hear that it was a “temptation” to count people, you may think this story is ridiculous. After all, don’t we count people all the time? We count the number of students in schools; we count the number of people in church; we count the total customers our businesses serve...so what’s the problem?

Actually, God had previously indicated that any time there was a census, a sacrifice – or offering – was required for each person counted. That way, the leaders would remember that these people belonged to God. This offering would have been a reminder to David that the fighting men of the army were not his. They belonged to the rightful King. The sacrifice that was required would have put this census in proper perspective. It would have reminded the people of Israel that they belonged to God and ultimately it would have reminded them that God was the reason for their might, not fighting men. The sacrifice was necessary for proper perspective.

In spite of being warned against this type of census, David really wanted to know how big his army had become. Therefore, he ignored the voice of God and ordered the census. In the end, this action brought the wrath of God on the people of Israel. Seventy-thousand men ended up dying because of David’s disobedience.

God was making an emphatic point – sacrifice was necessary for the proper results.

Later in the story, David was humbled and repented of his actions. As a result, God told him to go to the property of a man named Araunah. It was at Araunah’s house that the plague would stop and God’s mercy would begin. Therefore, David went and prepared to set up an altar on the property. Araunah wanted to donate the land to David for the sacrifices to be made, but David had learned his lesson. He said, “No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing.” He now knew that sacrifice was necessary for proper perspective and results.

David learned his lesson. It costs something to get the things in life that you really want.

1 Chronicles 21:1-28 (NIV)

¹ Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.

² So David said to Joab and the commanders of the troops, “Go and count the Israelites from Beersheba to Dan. Then report back to me so that I may know how many there are.”

³ But Joab replied, “May the LORD multiply his troops a hundred times over. My lord the king, are they not all my lord’s subjects? Why does my lord want to do this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?”

⁴ The king’s word, however, overruled Joab; so Joab left and went throughout Israel and then came back to Jerusalem. ⁵ Joab reported the number of the fighting men to David: In all Israel there were one million one hundred thousand men who could handle a sword, including four hundred and seventy thousand in Judah.

⁶ But Joab did not include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering, because the king’s command was repulsive to him. ⁷ This command was also evil in the sight of God; so he punished Israel.

⁸ Then David said to God, “I have sinned greatly by doing this. Now, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing.”

⁹ The LORD said to Gad, David’s seer, ¹⁰ “Go and tell David, ‘This is what the LORD says: I am giving you three options. Choose one of them for me to carry out against you.’”



COUNTING THE COST

Optional Exercise: Watch Session 3 of the Genius of Generosity DVD (14-1/2 minutes)

Question 1: What is something a spiritual milestone that you have always wanted to achieve for yourself or your family? What sacrifice do you think is necessary to achieve the proper results?

Question 2: When God calls you to become generous, what perspective do you think He is trying to give you?

¹¹ So Gad went to David and said to him, "This is what the LORD says: 'Take your choice:

12 three years of famine, three months of being swept away before your enemies, with their swords overtaking you, or three days of the sword of the LORD—days of plague in the land, with the angel of the LORD ravaging every part of Israel.' Now then, decide how I should answer the one who sent me."

¹³ David said to Gad, "I am in deep distress. Let me fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is very great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men."

¹⁴ So the LORD sent a plague on Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell dead. ¹⁵ And God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem. But as the angel was doing so, the LORD saw it and was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "Enough! Withdraw your hand." The angel of the LORD was then standing at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

¹⁶ David looked up and saw the angel of the LORD standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand extended over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell facedown.

¹⁷ David said to God, "Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? I am the one who has sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done?"



MONEY IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

When it comes to generosity, God makes it clear that money is an important beginning step, but far from what the genius of generosity is all about. As Chip points out through the Christmas story, God invites us into increasingly deeper levels of generosity. He wants us to imitate His generosity. Therefore, He calls us not only to be generous with our possessions, but also with our time, reputation, future, dreams and anything else that we cling to in life. He calls us to be generous with these things – to make personal sacrifices with these things – in order to accomplish His purpose for our lives. In the end, He wants to give us far more than most of us are ready or willing to receive.

Chip lists three truths that help us understand how money is only the beginning of generosity. **Read through these truths with your class and discuss the implications of each:**

- 1) *Generosity always begins with God.*
 - Sample question: How has God been generous toward us?
- 2) *Our generosity is the visible expression of our love for God.*
 - Sample question: How does your generosity show your love for God?
- 3) *Generous living begins with money and possessions, but it applies to every area of our lives.*
 - Romans 12:1
 - Sample question: Which is more of a sacrifice for you – to be generous with your possessions or to be generous with your time? Why? What is God calling you to sacrifice in order to become more like Him?

¹⁸ Then the angel of the LORD ordered Gad to tell David to go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. ¹⁹ So David went up in obedience to the word that Gad had spoken in the name of the LORD.

²⁰ While Araunah was threshing wheat, he turned and saw the angel; his four sons who were with him hid themselves. ²¹ Then David approached, and when Araunah looked and saw him, he left the threshing floor and bowed down before David with his face to the ground.

²² David said to him, "Let me have the site of your threshing floor so I can build an altar to the LORD, that the plague on the people may be stopped. Sell it to me at the full price."

²³ Araunah said to David, "Take it! Let my lord the king do whatever pleases him. Look, I will give the oxen for the burnt offerings, the threshing sledges for the wood, and the wheat for the grain offering. I will give all this."

²⁴ But King David replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing."

²⁵ So David paid Araunah six hundred shekels of gold for the site. ²⁶ David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on the LORD, and the LORD answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering.

²⁷ Then the LORD spoke to the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath. ²⁸ At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, he offered sacrifices there.



THREE QUESTIONS SMART STEWARDS ASK

Final Thought

Many people understand the concept that Christians need to be careful in the way that they judge others. The reason we need to be careful is because Jesus told us that “in the same way [we] judge others, [we] will be judged.” In other words, our judgment comes back on us to some extent.

In much the same way, Jesus said that we should be careful about the way we handle our time, talents and treasures. He said, “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

In the kingdom of God, our generosity also comes back to us. Therefore, the sacrifices that we make to imitate God and to help others are acts that God does not forget. So, our final questions are: “What is it that we really want in life?” And, “Are we willing to make the necessary sacrifices to start living out our dreams?”

Additional Bible references for consideration:

Deuteronomy 15:10; 1 Kings 17:8-16;
Luke 6:27-36;
Luke 21:1-4; 1 John 3:17; James 2:15-16

For additional insights into this subject, you may want to see:

http://www.walkwiththeword.org/Studies/01_OT/13_1_Ch/13_1_Ch_21.html

-or-

<http://www.biblestudytools.com>

