

**Scripture**

Acts 20:35; Romans 12:2; Luke 12:15; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 8:43-48; Matthew 19:14; Luke 21:1-4

**Big Idea**

We all have a particular view of money, and generosity, and how it functions in our lives...but are we willing to have those thoughts challenged? What if the purpose of money was bigger than having something to show for it?

**Outline**

***#1 Calling out the elephant in the room/Confront the uncomfortability of talking about money***

● Pastors don’t want to talk about money...they are afraid it will come off like guilt

* You don’t want to hear a talk about money...we get weird when it comes to our money
* And for some of you in the room you stopped going to church because you were convinced all they wanted was your money and today I’m giving you you’re *“I told you so”* moment when you’re at lunch with the people who dragged you to church today
* Today we are talking about money but it’s not because I want any money from you
* Today we are talking about money because I want something for you...I want your life to flourish.
* I want you to experience God’s best for you.
* I want you to thrive spiritually and often times how we view our money, how we understand money’s role in our life, and what we do with our money, can either be a help or an obstacle to becoming all that God has planned for you.

***#2 The way we approach our money reflects our heart and determines our approach to life.***

● $20 Bill Illustration (Hold up a $20 talk about some of its features   
 ultimately landing on the phrase, “In God We Trust”)

* With each $20 we receive that says “In God We Trust,” we tend to trust God a little bit less and begin to trust our $20 bills a little bit more
* This leads to a view of money that requires getting more and more and a view of life that’s based on scarcity rather than generosity. Soon this becomes a false god.
* And honestly as a culture we’ve convinced ourselves that Greed and Trust in money works.
* Possible Movie Clip Set Up from Wall Street starring Michael Douglas: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVxYOQS6ggk
  + Key Quote from clip: *The point, ladies and gentlemen, is that greed, for lack of a better word, is good. Greed is right. Greed works. Greed clarifies, cuts through, and captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit. --Michael Douglas, Wallstreet*
* Follow-up Quotes/Ideas to drive this point home:
  + There is a fundamental connection between our spiritual lives and how we think about and handle money.” Randy Alcorn in *The Treasure Principle* p. 9 Today we are pressured on every side to accumulate and consume more:
  + *Shop till you drop* has become a moral imperative in our culture
  + We even use the phrase, *Retail Therapy*

***#3 Generosity isn’t natural, but it’s essential***

● We’ve lost our way when it comes to money and its literally depressing

* Social scientists, psychologists, and human development experts and those who work with financial ministries agree on the important role of generosity.
  + Generosity actually leads to godly joy and happiness. <http://time.com/4857777/generosity-happiness-brain/>
  + *How we understand the role of generosity in our lives – and in the Christian communities in which we do life together – perhaps says more about our faith and our understanding of the gospel than any other single aspect of our faith.” Willard and Sheppard in* Contagious Generosity *p. 17*
  + *The challenge that many individuals, families, and churches are facing in the aftermath of the global economic crisis that began in late 2008 makes this topic more timely than ever. “The good news is that God is working in amazing ways as church and individuals choose the opposite approach (which is to lock up what we have stored away.” Willard and Sheppard p. 19*
  + Great Resource to consider: Ted Talk--The Generosity Experiment <https://youtu.be/dhEc5biZOrg>
* But generosity being essential to human flourishing isn’t just a modern discovery. People have known this for thousands of years
* Jesus of Nazareth often spoke of our money and its impact on the outcome of our lives.
* In fact, Luke who wrote one of the Gospels records Jesus saying these words, *Be on your guard against all kinds of* greed*; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions. (Luke 12:15)* 
  + Jesus knew what modern science is just now discovering...life isn’t found in collecting wealth. In fact, he warns us and commands us to watch out for greed because of its destructive force on our lives.
  + Its tendency to keep us from ever becoming the best version of ourselves
* Jesus is also quoted as saying this, *where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. – Jesus (Matthew 6:21*
  + Perhaps we could say it like this...where you treasure is there your *trust* will be also
  + Trust in money, belief in a world of scarcity, or
  + Trust in God that he is the one who abundantly provides all we need
* So why is it we have such a hard time with generosity? If our sharing of our resources is a source of joy and happiness, why do we find it easier to trust money than to be generous?
* I’m sure there’s lots of reasons but one reason I think this is true for us is we believe things about generosity that simply aren’t true. In fact, I think we believe three myths about generosity that keep us from being generous.

***#4 3 Myths of Generosity*** ***(Adapted from Andy Stanley. However,***

***Stanley does not discuss how Jesus dismantles those myths)***

● Generosity is a one-time event

● Generosity is determined by your bank statement

● How much you give matters

***#5 Jesus conquered all of these myths of generosity with his life***

***and death***

● **Myth #1** Generosity is a one-time event

Generosity defined Jesus’ life; it was his nature

* + Jesus wasn’t generous that one time but with all he did – who he spent time with, who he healed, who he taught.
  + The following could be summarized as following or read if the pastor has time:

Jesus ate with a variety of people – Mark 2:13-17

Jesus talked with many different people – Luke 8:43-48

Jesus took time for those often overlooked by others – Matthew 9:14

* + - Who he dined with. He was generous with his reputation   
      ***13*** *Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them.* ***14*** *As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.* ***15*** *While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.* ***16*** *When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”* ***17*** *On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”* Mark 2:13-17
    - Who he talked to ***43*** *And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years,[*[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+8&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25289c)*] but no one could heal her.* ***44*** *She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped* ***45*** *“Who touched me?” Jesus asked When they all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.”* ***46*** *But Jesus said, “Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me.”* ***47*** *Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed.* ***48*** *Then he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.” Luke 8:43-48*
    - Who he had close to him ***14*** *Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” Matthew 19:14*
    - The ultimate example of Jesus’ life of generosity is of course his death when he gives his whole self on behalf of others, even his enemies
  + Generosity for Jesus followers is something that is woven into the fabric of theirbeing
  + Generosity is a trademark of an apprentice of Jesus
  + Learning to live from Jesus *(at this point it would be valuable to communicate why Jesus people believe the way of Jesus is the answer to life’s questions, the path of daily following him, and the source of eternal life )* means learning to live open handed

● **Myth #2** Generosity is determined by your bank statement

Jesus makes no distinction between rich and the poor when modeling a life of generosity

* + Generosity isn’t a moment in time, generosity is a way of life
  + In fact the Apostle Paul quoting Jesus says this, ***35*** *In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ” Acts 20:35*

● **Myth #3** How much you give matters

The widow’s mite “*As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury.* ***2*** *He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins.* ***3*** *“Truly I tell you,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others.* ***4*** *All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”*

* + Jesus spent a lot of time talking about money, wealth and generosity
  + *Jesus’ careful attention to the money question is one of the truly amazing things about the Gospel narratives. – Richard Foster, Money, Sex and Power*
  + And ultimately if we had time to talk about everything Jesus said about money what we’d find is that Jesus believes that your wealth and my wealth, your resources and my resources are not something to collect but a tool to use to tilt the world in the right direction
  + And for many of us this is a dramatic shift in how we see money
  + We shouldn’t be surprised by that. In fact, the Apostle Paul who I mentioned earlier says that following the way of Jesus is the process of “renewing your mind” that we are transformed by changing how we see the world, our possessions, and other people

***#6 Jesus sees your money, your wealth, your resources as a tool***

● We ask the question: What do I have to show for my money?

* Jesus would have us ask the question: Who do I have to show for it? How have I leveraged my money to impact the life of another? Who have I helped?
* Your generosity matters. It is a tool we’ve been given that creates the best version of ourselves and the best version of our world
* Refer back to your $20 (hold it up) as you consider your money, your collection of $20 bills, understand that generosity isn’t born in the midst of our abundance, or extra $20 bills, its born out of trust. You are generous when you actually begin to believe it is in God I trust.

***#7 Next Steps (This last section is where you get more specific to your context and audience)***

Pastor: At this point invite your listeners to participate in the Seven Days of Generosity Challenge. You will want to say something like the following, adapted according to your context and audience:

“We as leaders invite you to join us in a “Seven-Day Generosity Challenge.” We have provided seven days of devotional readings for you which you can begin either today or tomorrow. Each day includes a scripture, a brief teaching section, and a challenge for the day. At the end of the seven days we invite you to use the Discussion Guide that is also provided as part of the package. Use this as the basis for talking through the “seven days” with your small group (Life group; Sunday School; etc.) We feel like this experience with others is almost as important as the rest of the week’s challenge. Will you join us?”

Pastor: Then instruct your listeners to find the Seven Days of Generosity Challenge at the appropriate place for your church family. This could be on your church website, church app, or physical copies to be picked up at a Connection Counter in your church. Make sure everyone knows how to get their copy. If you so choose, you could also provide a copy for each person or family and have it handed out with the worship folder/bulletin at the beginning of the service. That way you could walk your people through the week of devotions with them having it in hand.

Finally, you may want to give your people some next steps on how to begin practicing generosity as an application to the sermon. This could relate to something currently going on in your church or community, or it could be a specific application to the sermon. A sermon discussion guide is also provided for your use as appropriate with your congregation.

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**Discussion Questions** (Sermon Follow-Up)

*1. Do you consider yourself to be generous? Why or why not?*

*2. When you were growing up, what were you taught about money?   
Did that advice help or harm you?*

*3. Which of the 3 myths of generosity, have you believed in the   
past? How did that belief affect your generosity?*

*4. Read Acts 20:35; Is it hard for you to believe that true happiness   
is rooted in giving, rather than receiving? Why or why not?*

*5. Jesus’ whole life (and death) was rooted in generosity. How did   
Jesus display generosity to those around him? What did that look like, and how can we learn to do the same? (Mark 2, Luke 8, Matthew 19)*

*6. When you think about being generous, what negative emotions   
are stirred? Why do you think you feel that way? What would it take for you to overcome those emotions?*

*7. What is one thing you can do this week to begin to see your   
money and possessions the way Jesus sees them? How can this group help support you, and keep you accountable?*