

*Acts 20:35 NLT - 35 And I have been a constant example of how you can help those in need by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*"

As Paul reminded the Ephesians, we should be a people concerned for the welfare of others above ourselves, and that is not a burden but a blessing according to Jesus. So how do we change our hearts? We start by rejecting the idea that happiness comes from the stuff we amass and recognizing the danger of believing that lie. Our Lord said it is more blessed to give than receive. If we are his followers, we will align our hearts with his and develop rhythms and practices in our lives that reflect generosity of our time, our talents, our hearts and our money.

*What are some of the ways you can practice generosity of your heart, your time, your talents and even your money?*

## WRAP-UP

The size of your donations is not the measure of your generosity. The measure of your generosity is the condition of your heart. Generous people move beyond external motivation to internal motivation. Has God filled you with compassion for others and a concern for their welfare? Do you trust that God is able to provide for you even if you open your hands to give freely? It is not easy to live a countercultural life, but as the proverbs tell us, it is God's wisdom for us to live generously.

## MEMORY VERSE

*Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything.  
- Proverbs 11:24 NLT*

## PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life

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*Challenge- Ask God to open your eyes to the ways you can live more generously as you love and follow Him.*

## **“Generosity”** Wisdom #3

### INTRODUCTION

When you think of someone who is generous you probably think of someone who donates lots of money to a good cause. Or maybe you think of someone who dishes up bigger portions than you expect or gives extravagant presents. In our culture generosity is typically thought of in terms of transactions, or inspired random acts and doing more than expected. But as we find throughout the bible, generosity is actually more of a heart issue. It is about who you are becoming, not what you are doing. Curious? Let's start by checking out what the Book of Proverbs teaches us about generosity.

### Ice Breaker

Who is the richest man in the town of Bedford Falls and what was it that made him rich (It's A Wonderful Life)? *Here's a hint- it's not Mr. Potter.* If you don't know the answer you have to watch the movie or ask a Boomer.

### Key Passage

*Proverbs 11:24-26 NLT - 24 Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything. 25 The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed. 26 People curse those who hoard their grain, but they bless the one who sells in time of need.*

### STUDY QUESTIONS

#### 1. Your Heart, Not Your Bank Account

There is a reason Jesus spoke so often about money (about 25% of his teaching referred to money). It is because money has the ability to entangle our hearts and keep us from living the vibrant, “fully alive” life He wants for us. God wants to be our provider, and He gives good

things to us. But the world tells us to hold tightly to what you've got, grab what you can and look out for #1.

Genesis 1:27-29 NLT - 27 So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground." 29 Then God said, "Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food.

From the beginning, God gave Adam and Eve all they could possibly need. But in Genesis chapter 3 Eve took the fruit God hadn't given them (for good reason) and she gave it to Adam. The sin of Adam and Eve was not so much about eating a piece of fruit. It was about not trusting God to provide for them and deciding to take for themselves something that He hadn't given them.

*Was there ever something that you felt you just had to have, but after you got it, you were disappointed and felt unsatisfied?*

Solomon also addressed generosity in his proverbs. The style of writing used in the Book of Proverbs very often gives us a contrast between what it looks like to live well, versus living poorly in God's world. We see this done three times in our key passage.

Proverbs 11:24-26 NLT - 24 Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything. 25 The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed. 26 People curse those who hoard their grain, but they bless the one who sells in time of need.

*What characterizes those who are living well in this passage? What do you see about the relationships of the generous versus the stingy?*

Whether you are generous or not may be summed up in the answers to a couple of simple questions- *Are we concerned more about ourselves or others? Do we trust God to be our provider, or do we trust in what we can accumulate?*

As we read the contrast between those who are generous and those who aren't, we see that their actions reflect the attitude of their hearts. The measure of our generosity isn't found in dollars and cents.

## 2. Who Are You Becoming?

Luke 11:39-42 NLT - 39 Then the Lord said to him, "You Pharisees are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy--full of greed and wickedness! 40 Fools! Didn't God make the inside as well as the outside? 41 So clean the inside by giving gifts to the poor, and you will be clean all over. 42 "What sorrow awaits you Pharisees! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore justice and the love of God. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.

In this passage, Jesus skipped the ceremonial washing that Jews observed as he took his place at the table. The Pharisees were offended. Surprisingly Jesus explanation included teaching about generosity.

*What did Jesus say the Pharisees were full of? How did Jesus instruct them to make themselves clean? What was their outward expression of generosity? What was their heart attitude towards God and towards others?*

There was a disconnect between the Pharisees practicing the Levitical laws of washing to be clean before God, tithing even little bits of herbs, and their true hearts that didn't honor God nor love people. It was not what they did that mattered, it was who they were. We can fall into the same trap of going through the motions of generosity without honoring God or caring about His people. If the heart is rightly aligned with God, the actions will naturally follow.

## 3. What Are You Doing?

Let's face it, generosity is counterintuitive. We will always struggle to be generous if we don't begin with a change of heart.

Matthew 6:24 NLT - 24 "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.