

1

The Character of a Disciple Generosity



Introduction

Generosity is one of the qualities that characterized the Lord Jesus. His life provides an example for us of generosity. Generosity is not primarily concerned with money. It is more concerned with giving. Money may be the thing with which we are generous. However, it could just as easily be your house or your favorite shirt.

How we view the things we have will affect our willingness to share them with others. This study will look at the attitudes necessary for a generous life.

Whose Things Are They?

Small children are often quick to demand control of a toy by saying "mine". They feel the right of possession comes from ownership. Adults are no different than children. We want to hang onto things because we own them. But do we really own them?

¹¹ Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all ¹² Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.

1 Chronicles 29:10-11

- Circle the one word that describes how much of heaven and earth belong to the LORD.
- Underline in verse 12 the two things that come from God
- *Not only does everything belong to God, but as the head over all, He has right of possession to everything under his rule.*

Jesus told a parable about a rich man who accumulated large stores of things.

¹⁶ And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. 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 all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things 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 anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

Luke 12:16-21

- In verse 16, underline the resource that generated the good crop.
- In verse 18, circle the word describing who the presumed owner of the grain and goods was.
- *The man was foolish because he claimed ownership of things and assumed that he would live to enjoy them. In reality, God owned the things and controlled the man's ability to live.*
- In verse 21, underline who will experience the same judgment as this rich man.

Generous

The word generally means liberal or open handed. We can be generous with many categories of our life:

- Our time
- Our money
- Our possessions
- Our talents.

It always involves something that we control or own.

Ownership can be deceptive. While it may seem that we are the owner of a thing, it is clear that we have temporary control of the thing that God owns.

We are the temporary owners of all that comes our way. And, even while it is in our hands, it belongs to God.

This parable is not teaching that laying up for the future is wrong. It is teaching that we must be rich toward God.

How can you be rich toward God?

Being Rich Toward God

How does a person become rich toward God? Jesus helps us to understand by the way He introduced the parable of the rich fool.

Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Luke 12:15

- Underline the thing we are to guard against.
- The word translated "greed" above can also be translated as "covetousness". It is basically a desire to have more and more.

Greed and a desire to accumulate things can prevent us from being rich toward God.

Treasure in Heaven

One way to be rich toward God is to store up treasure in heaven.

¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:19-21

- Circle in verse 19 what we are not to do.
- Underline why we are not to store up treasure on earth.
- Draw a box around what we are to do in verse 20.

According to scripture there are two things that will last forever:

- God's Word (Matthew 5:18) and
- the souls of men and women (John 5:28-29).

Those two things will be in heaven, lasting forever. So it makes sense that one way to store up your money in heaven is to invest in reaching men and women with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. By populating heaven with souls, you will be storing up treasure in heaven.

Giving God His Portion

Another way to be rich toward God is to give God a part of your earnings.

⁹ Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

Proverbs 3:9-10

- Circle how we are to honor the Lord.
- Firstfruits to a farmer are the produce that is harvested first. In other words, before I take any for myself, I am to honor God with the part that belongs to Him.
- Underline the promise in verse 10.

The rich man had no heart for the things of God. He thought that if he had an abundance of things, he had everything he needed.

Jesus taught that God will take care of our needs if we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.



Matthew 6:25-33
Luke 12:22-31

One way to know the things you treasure is to evaluate what it is that you spend your money on. The things you buy reflect the things you treasure in your heart.

What does your spending reveal about your heart?

While the New Testament has no set amount that a person must give, the Old Testament guideline is to give a tithe, which is 10%. Many Christians feel this is a good starting point.

Whatever you choose to give, the New Testament directive is that you give it willingly and joyfully.



Genesis 14:18-20
Malachi 3:9-10
2 Corinthians 9:6-7

Why Be Generous?

There are many reasons why generosity is a good idea. First of all, generosity is an evidence of an inner love.

¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

1 John 3:17-18

- Circle what the observant person possesses in verse 17.
- Circle what the one with material possessions sees.
- Underline the question that is asked of the one who shows no pity.
- In verse 18, draw a box around the way we are to love.
- *Verse 18 implies that the person with material possessions will take action by sharing with the one in need. Words just are not enough.*

Righteousness normally accompanies generosity. That is, when someone is generous with their possessions, they are normally righteous in their dealings with people.

²⁵ I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. ²⁶ They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed.

Psalms 37:25-26

- Underline in verse 25 the kind of person not forsaken.
- In verse 26, circle the thing that characterizes the life of that righteous person.
- *Notice the effect of generosity on a person's children. Rather than taking away from his children, generosity results in blessing for the children of the righteous person.*

Another reason for generosity is the principle of return.

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."

Luke 6:38

- Underline the thing that happens to one who gives.
- Circle the measure used to give back to the giver.
- *Another way of stating the principle is that God gives back in proportion to what you give. If you give a small amount, it will come back to you in small amounts. If you give a large amount, it will come back to you in large amounts.*

Notice that the verse does not instruct what is to be given. The loving gift might be food or clothes or a place to stay. The thing given is determined by the need of the brother.

You don't need to be wealthy to be generous. Everyone has some measure of material possession.

In His parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus attributes acts of generosity to the righteous, and acts of selfishness to the unrighteous. The generous feed the hungry, give drinks to the thirsty, invite the strangers in, clothe the naked, look after the sick and visit those in prison.

The full passage is in Matthew 25:32-46

The intent of giving is **not** to get something in return. But it is a firm principle of scripture that the one who gives will also receive.

You can never out-give God!

Anonymous

Paul states the principle in a little different way.

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

2 Corinthians 9:6

- Circle the reward of one who sows sparingly.
- Underline the reward of one who sows generously.
- *The word picture is of a farmer planting seed. If you put in few seeds, the harvest will be small. But if you plant generously, your harvest will be great.*

Generosity is a good idea because it not only benefits the one you help. It benefits you as well!

²⁴ *One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.* ²⁵ *A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.*

Proverbs 11:24-25

- Underline the thing that happens to one who gives freely.
- Circle the result to one who withholds unduly.
- Underline in verse 25 the result of generosity.
- Circle the effect on one who refreshes others.

To Whom Should We be Generous?

There is no limit to the way we can show generosity. Yet, there are certain people who should get special consideration.

⁷ *If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother.* ⁸ *Rather be openhanded and freely lend him whatever he needs. ...* ¹⁰ *Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to.* ¹¹ *There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.*

Deuteronomy 15:7-8,10-11

- In verse 7, circle the one to whom we should be open-handed.
- Underline how we are **not** to behave toward our brother.
- In verse 8, draw a box around the actions we are to take toward our needy brother.
- In verse 10, underline the way we are to generously give.
- Circle the reason we are to not have a grudging heart.

Those who are poor and needy are the ones on whom we are to focus. God places them before us, to give us the opportunity to show generosity to them.

The directive is not just limited to those in the Old Testament. Consider Paul's instruction to the Christians at Rome.



Jesus said that we would always have the poor with us.

Why do you think God allows poverty?

Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Romans 12:13

- Underline with whom we are to share.
- *There is a priority placed on God's people who are needy.*
- *Do you think that showing hospitality is a type of generosity? Why or why not?*

Even though we are to have special grace towards God's people who are needy, there are others to whom we should also show generosity.

Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.

Galatians 6:6

- Underline the one who is to give.
- Circle the one who is to receive.
- *A generous gift to the Christian who instructs you is a right and proper act of generosity.*

On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Romans 12:20

- Circle what we are to do to a hungry enemy.
- Underline what we are to do to a thirsty enemy.
- *This verse is set in the context of **not** taking vengeance for an enemy's wrong. God's prescription is generosity instead of vengeance.*

Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Matthew 5:42

- Circle the one to whom you are to give.
- Underline the one to whom you are to lend.

Jesus gave another piece of direction concerning those who would be generous.

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:3-4

- Circle the word in verse 4 that should describe the manner with which you give.
- Underline the promised result of secret giving.

Often times, our primary teacher is the church we belong to. Regular giving to your fellowship should be a characteristic of your life.

Showing generosity to our enemies is a unique way of fulfilling Jesus' command to love our enemies.

Is it ever right not to give to someone who asks you for a handout? Why or why not? What would Jesus say?

Generosity is not meant to be seen by others. It is a quality that God sees every time it is exercised. In a certain sense, letting others know about your generosity cancels the reward.

Summary

Look back over the study. In the space provided, write a summary of the thoughts presented in that section.

Whose Things Are They?

Being Rich Toward God

Why Be Generous?

To Whom Should we Be Generous?

Application

What truth most impressed you from this study?

Is there something God wants you to do?

What is your Plan for accomplishing the thing God wants you to do?

How will you check-up on yourself?

When you write your summary, try to put the key thought from the section in as few words as possible.

The spaces are purposely small!

Don't let the study go by without applying it to your life.