

The Generous Life Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. What is one of the most memorable presents that you have received for Christmas or your birthday? What about it makes it memorable?
2. Can you think of a time when you enjoyed the act of giving to someone else? Share that story with the group.

Read the following passage: Acts 20:11-38.

This passage describes a significant meeting between Paul and the leaders of the church in Ephesus. Ephesus was a city where Paul had spent a considerable amount of time teaching and discipling new believers, so he had a strong relational connection with these leaders. It seems likely that Paul expects this meeting to be the last time that they would all see one another, due to the growing opposition and persecution that he was experiencing from the Roman authorities. The tone and content of his communication with these men emphasized that the heart of their leadership was to be marked by humility and genuine service, which Paul himself has modeled for them. In verse 35 he quotes the Lord Jesus as having said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This beautifully underscores the heart of the truly Christian lifestyle: The Christian life is to be marked by gracious generosity and service to others, even in the midst of personal hardship.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Read Matthew 5:3-12. What does it mean to be "blessed"? Do you see any differences between our contemporary culture's understanding of what it means to be blessed and what the scriptures present as a blessed life.
2. Romans 5:8 says that "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Why is it significant that God demonstrated his love for us? Have you received God's love? How do you know?
3. Read Matthew 12:33-34. Where does Jesus say that good or evil deeds originate? Are there any mindsets or attitudes that are hindering you from being a more generous person (ie. fear, cynicism, no vision)?
4. Psalm 24:1 says "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it." Do you believe that everything you "own" actually belongs to God? If so, how is this reflected in the way that you manage these resources for God?
5. Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19 and 2 Corinthians 5:9-10. By global standards, virtually all of us in the U.S. would be considered "rich." Each one of us will give an account for what we did with what we were entrusted to manage for God. By being generous, Paul says that we are laying a firm foundation for the coming age. How often do you

think about living for eternity? If you made it a practice to think more regularly about “the coming age” how might it affect your actions in this life?

6. Proverbs 3:9-10 says “Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops: then your barns will be filled to overflowing and your vats will brim over with new wine.” “First” fruits implies that honoring God with our material resources needs to be a priority, not an afterthought. Generosity happens by choice, not by accident. What can you do to be more purposeful in your generosity?

Pray