

Appendix C

Session 3 Resources

GENEROSITY 101

These messages are provided as a resource for you on our website. The links below will allow you to access them. We will email them to you after session 3 so you can merely click the links in the email rather than typing them into your browser.

https://rockprodresources.blob.core.windows.net/media-resources/8d1d0feb95e841899f3eb3e3c79f121b_Generous_Giving_101___Ed_Owens.mp3

https://rockprodresources.blob.core.windows.net/media-resources/8d1d0feb95e841899f3eb3e3c79f121b_Generous_Giving_101___Ed_Owens.mp3

https://rockprodresources.blob.core.windows.net/media-resources/28c36f0fe5fc4e3aa3adfdc064732941_Generous_Giving_101___Scott_Lewis.mp3

Fear and Identity in Generous Giving

By Patrick Johnson | From Generous Church, August 16, 2021

I recently led a survey of more than 20,000 U.S. Christians about their giving. Pouring over the results, I learned something critical: the two biggest obstacles to living generously are fear and identity. The data showed that all believers, whether they are rich or poor, wrestle with these same insecurities.

It's no surprise that fear and identity are huge barriers to generosity. In the U.S., narratives of scarcity surround our culture and stoke fear that we must accumulate as much wealth as possible to secure a future of "taking life easy." Modern marketing tells us that if we don't have a certain car, a 401k, or particular lifestyle, then we don't have enough.

This mindset runs counter to the mental maps that Jesus gave us, which is the biblical narrative of abundance. The Bible tells us that Christ is enough for us and that, through our loving Father, we have everything we need. We can seek first the Kingdom of God and know that what we need will be provided.

Think about this: During his ministry, Jesus gave up all worldly possessions. The Son of God, who owned everything, became poor to walk the earth. He wasn't getting rich in ministry. In fact, he was funded by a group of women who provided for him with their own means (Luke 8:1-3). Yet when he spoke, he had this amazing abundance mindset because he knew who his Father was.

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Jesus compassionately urged his followers not to fear. But it was not empty encouragement. The reason they didn't need to fear is that their Father owns everything. That's why Jesus could tell them, "Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys" (Luke 12:32-33).

Our Father owns everything, and he has given us the role of stewarding all of it. And he's generous, which means he has given us the role of being generous sowers in his image. As we are faithful stewards, we can also be generous sowers...without fear.

How do we shift (or maintain) a mindset that leads to fearless generosity? Here are three questions that can help.

1. Who is God?

Knowing who God is has to be the first step, and we only need to look at nature to see he is generous. If we think about how he provides for our daily needs and gives us a life and a world full of wonders we could have never dreamed up ourselves, we will see God's generosity. We can walk with gratitude and without fear, knowing God is enough and, through him, we have enough.

2. Who am I?

If we believe God is a generous Father, and that we are made in his image, then we must believe that we are invited to reflect that generosity too. He shares the joy of generosity with us, making us his generous disciples. We are made in the image of God to live gratefully and generously—to live with an abundance mindset. If we chase the things of this world, we live a counterfeit life, because we are hardwired to reflect the image of a generous God. In him, we are enough.

3. How can we live together?

When we know who God is and are grateful that we are created in his image, then we can live out who we are made to be. And that brings joy. When Jesus came to announce the good news of the kingdom, it was one of sharing, community, and relationship. It was not a kingdom of saving money so that we would, one day, be financially independent. Imagine what it might look like if we poured ourselves out for those around us in a generous way. We could truly change the world for good!

In Proverbs 30:7-9, a wise man named Agur prayed that God would not give him more than he could handle, either in wealth or poverty. In both cases, Agur was afraid that he might fail. There's that fear and identity again. But what a precious, humble, relatable prayer. Agur knew who God was and wanted nothing to separate him from his Father's love.

May we, too, know who our Father is, and generously sow all he has entrusted to us with joyful gratitude every day.

Patrick Johnson is the founder of GenerousChurch and has a passion to see a revolution of whole-life generosity flourish in churches and ministries. Over the last 15 years, he's partnered with Leadership Network, the Wesleyan Denomination, Converge, and other church networks to equip leaders to unleash generous disciples.

John Wesley on Stewardship

“Gain all you can, save all you can, and give all you can.”

John Wesley, *The Use of Money*, 1744

John Wesley’s emphasis on stewardship began with his theological understanding that everything we are and have comes from God. God is at the very beginning of our existence—we did not bring it about ourselves. We are not the creator—we are the created. We did not create the materials that we use to make various items. God has provided us with life, but even more importantly, God provides the grace that leads us to the full life of salvation.

Just as our lives come from God, the ways we use the gifts of life and grace are our offerings back to God. Therefore, Wesley emphasized that both inward and outward holiness matters. How we respond in various circumstances, how we utilize our time, how we spend funds, or how we treat others can be gifts to God when they reflect the holiness of Christ.

One of John Wesley’s famous statements of advice is, “Gain all you can, save all you can, and give all you can.” Why? What did he really mean? Wesley talked and wrote at length about how to carry out this advice. Sarah Heaner Lancaster has summarized his thoughts well:

- Wesley put restrictions on the way we gain all we can. Earning money was discouraged if it came at the expense of our own health, whether physical or spiritual. This caution rules out gaining all one can through “workaholism” or through any means that leads us to cheat, lie, or in any way violate the standards that Christians ought to hold. Nor should we earn money at the expense of another person’s physical or spiritual health. The business we conduct should be fitting to a life dedicated to God.
- Similarly, the way we save all we can also matters. Wesley’s idea runs much deeper than getting a good deal or buying things on sale. What we buy matters as much as what we pay for it. For Wesley, saving meant avoiding any expense that was simply for our own pleasure, rather than for taking care of a legitimate need. He understood that indulging our desires could lead us away from God. He also understood that spending money on unnecessary items left less for us to give to others. The point of saving is not hoarding; it is giving.

- To give all we can is to reflect God's own generosity and thus to participate in God's work. We are to manage our money and property to be able to use it for God's purposes. If we think about the use of money as a spiritual discipline, then we can see that the point is not to give away what we think is extra. The point is to play our role in distributing God's resources equitably, not denying our own needs, but seeing the needs of others to be as legitimate as our own.

From *A Year with John Wesley and Our Methodist Values* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2008), 48.

Coach Turns Down “Significant” Raise: The ‘Five Pillars’ of True Prosperity

September 19, 2019

In *The Daily Article* today:

- A coach has found the purpose of life
- Why money is both “a test and a trust from God”
- How the temporal can affect the eternal

Ask the average American to identify “Tony Bennett” and they’ll point you to the big band singer. They might even have “I Left My Heart in San Francisco” playing in their mind as they do so.

Today, however, the “other” Tony Bennett is making headlines.

The one who just declined what his employer called a “substantial” raise so others could make more money. The one who, after his Virginia Cavaliers won this year’s NCAA national basketball championship, told his players: “Promise me you will remain humble and thankful for this. Don’t let this change you. It doesn’t have to.”

That Tony Bennett is making news not just for what he does, but for who he is.

The “Five Pillars” of Life

When his team won the national title last April, Bennett told a post-game interviewer, “I do want to thank the Lord and my Savior.” He regularly prays for his players in the hope that “they’ll be able to find the truth in their lives that has really transformed my life.”

He has built his basketball program around the biblical principles of humility, passion, unity, servanthood, and thankfulness. He calls them the “Five Pillars.” He posted them in Virginia’s locker room and emphasizes them in everything the team does.

It’s therefore not surprising that when the University of Virginia offered Bennett a large raise as a reward for winning the national title, the coach turned it down. “I have more than I need,” he said. “I’m blessed beyond what I deserve.”

He credits his wife, Laurel, with the decision to redirect the money into additional compensation for his staff and improvements for their program. He and Laurel have also pledged \$500,000 toward a career-development program for current and former Virginia basketball players.

Coach Bennett has life figured out: “If my life is just about winning championships—if it’s just about being the best—then I’m running the wrong race,” he says. “That’s empty. But if it’s about trying to be excellent and do things the right way, to honor the university that’s hired you, the athletic director you work for and the young men you’re coaching—always in the process trying to bring glory to God—then that’s the right thing.”

“A test and a trust from God”

Jesus would agree with Tony Bennett. Our Lord taught us to “be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12: 15). Scripture warns: “He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income” (Ecclesiastes 5: 10).

In fact, the love of money is actually dangerous. In Ezekiel 7 we find God’s warning to his sinful people: “Their silver and gold are not able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord. They cannot satisfy their hunger or fill their stomachs with it. For it was the stumbling block of their iniquity” (v. 19).

Here we find the folly of materialism. What we need most, our money is completely unable to buy. Trusting money not only relies on that which cannot save—it depends on that which corrupts and condemns.

By contrast, using money to glorify God and advance his kingdom turns the material into the spiritual and the temporal into the eternal. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Barnabas come to mind as wealthy people whose wealth served a higher purpose.

Rick Warren is right: “Most people fail to realize that money is both a test and a trust from God.”

Jim Denison—*Daily Article*.