Noble Generosity
Not What You Have, but Who You Are
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Not What You Have, but Who You Are

Malachi 3:10–11 NLT
Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies, I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test! Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not fall from the vine before they are ripe, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies.

Matthew 23:23 NLT
What sorrow awaits you, teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.

Deuteronomy 12:4–6 NLT
Do not worship the Lord your God in the way these pagan peoples worship their gods. Rather, you must seek the Lord your God at the place of worship he himself will choose from among all the tribes—the place where his name will be honored. There you will bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, your sacred offerings, your offerings to fulfill a vow, your voluntary (freewill) offerings, and your offerings of the firstborn animals of your herds and flocks.

Leviticus 23:9–10 NLT
Then the Lord said to Moses, “Give the following instructions to the people of Israel. When you enter the land I am giving you, and you harvest its first crops, bring the priest a bundle of grain from the first cutting of your grain harvest.”

Luke 21:1–4 NLT
While Jesus was in the Temple, he watched the rich people dropping their gifts in the collection box. Then a poor widow came by and dropped in two small coins. “I tell you the truth,” Jesus said, “this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them. For they have given a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has.”

2 Corinthians 9:7 NLT
You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. “For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.”

Four Truths About Generosity:

1. Biblical generosity is a *decision* before it is an *action*.

1 Chronicles 29:13–15 NLT
O our God, we thank you and praise your glorious name! But who am I, and who are my people, that we could give anything to you? Everything we have has come from you, and we give you only what you first gave us! We are here for only a moment, visitors and strangers in the land, as our ancestors were before us. Our days on earth are like a passing shadow, gone so soon without a trace.

2. Generosity (or stinginess) is a response to our perspective.

3. Generosity is rooted in our identity.

1 Peter 2:9 NLT
You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

4. Walking in Noble Generosity means recognizing who we are in Christ and seeing our resources in that light.

Genesis 4:2–7 NLT
When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the Lord. Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The Lord accepted Abel and his gift, but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.
"Why are you so angry?" the Lord asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master."

Genesis 14:17–24 NLT
After Abram returned from his victory over Kedorlaomer and all his allies, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High, brought Abram some bread and wine.
Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing: "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who has defeated your enemies for you." Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.
The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give back my people who were captured. But you may keep for yourself all the goods you have recovered."
Abram replied to the king of Sodom, "I solemnly swear to the Lord, God

Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, that I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from what belongs to you. Otherwise you might say, 'I am the one who made Abram rich.' I will accept only what my young warriors have already eaten, and I request that you give a fair share of the goods to my allies—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre."

1 Kings 17:8–16 NLT

Then the Lord said to Elijah, "Go and live in the village of Zarephath, near the city of Sidon. I have instructed a widow there to feed you."
So he went to Zarephath. As he arrived at the gates of the village, he saw a widow gathering sticks, and he asked her, "Would you please bring me a little water in a cup?" As she was going to get it, he called to her, "Bring me a bite of bread, too."
But she said, "I swear by the Lord your God that I don't have a single piece of bread in the house. And I have only a handful of flour left in the jar and a little cooking oil in the bottom of the jug. I was just gathering a few sticks to cook this last meal, and then my son and I will die."
But Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid! Go ahead and do just what you've said, but make a little bread for me first. Then use what's left to prepare a meal for yourself and your son. For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There will always be flour and olive oil left in your containers until the time when the Lord sends rain and the crops grow again!"
So she did as Elijah said, and she and Elijah and her family continued to eat for many days. There was always enough flour and olive oil left in the containers, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah.

2 Corinthians 9:6–11 NLT

Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.

As the Scriptures say, “They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever.” For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous.

Small Group Guide: Not What You Have, but Who You Are

Opening Question

When you hear someone described as generous, who comes to mind, and what is it about them that earns that description?

Rooted in Our Identity

Many of us assume generosity starts once we have enough. The world measures it by how much someone gives, so we wait until we have more to give. Heaven sees it differently. In Luke 21, Jesus watched the rich drop their gifts into the collection box, yet a poor widow's two small coins caught His attention. It was the heart behind the gift, not the size of it.

If the heart is what matters, where does a generous heart come from? Generosity is not a behavior we discipline ourselves into; it grows from how we see ourselves. Take a moment to review the four truths about Noble Generosity that Pastor Jimmy gave in our notes, because they trace that path.

It starts with God, who is generous by nature and gave what was dearest to Him. The word "generous" once described nobility of birth and character, a person responsible to provide for and care for the people under their rule. In Jesus we are royal priests (1 Peter 2:9), sons and daughters of the King, entrusted with a temporary stewardship. That is why David could pray that everything comes from God and we give Him only what He first gave. The question shifts from "How much of mine will I release?" to "How will I steward what was never mine to begin with?"

Three Old Testament stories show what this looks like in practice. Cain gave some out of obligation, while Abel brought his best and trusted God with his future. Abraham turned down the king of Sodom's offer because he

held on to the identity God had spoken over him. The widow of Zarephath gave from what she believed was the last of her food and received God's provision. It is not how much we have, but what we choose to do with it.

So where are we giving from: what we think we lack, or who God says we are?

For Discussion

1. Pastor Jimmy says we tend to measure generosity by how much someone gives. Where have you caught yourself using that measure, and what changes when the heart behind a gift matters more than its size?
2. Generosity is a decision before it is an action. How can you tell the difference between a gift you decided in your heart to give and one you gave out of pressure or reluctance?
3. The word "generous" originally described noble people responsible for the care of those under them. What would it look like to treat your resources the way a good king would, to look after people instead of using people to increase what you have?
4. David prayed, "Everything we have has come from you, and we give you only what you first gave us." If you saw your time, money and abilities as that kind of gift, what would change this week at work, at home, or with a neighbor?
5. Cain, Abraham and the widow of Zarephath each responded to God with their resources. Which of the three stories speaks most to where you are right now, and why?

Closing Prayer

Ask God to help each person see their life, time and resources as a gift to be invested, and to know who they are in Christ. Pray that your group

would grow in cheerful generosity that flows from identity, not from pressure or from what we think we lack, for the sake of God's kingdom.