



LIVE RICH: *GENEROSITY*

It seems easier to be generous when you have all you need, doesn't it? But it is often more difficult to be generous when

- you don't have much
- you've been wronged
- you feel you deserve a break.

A few months ago, a friend told me he wondered if he should give his rental house to a pastor for free. It

never came down to it, but he said he was ready to do so because he knew God wanted his heart to be free from worry and anxiety.

Perhaps generosity is not an issue of having little or much, but an issue of our hearts being surrendered to God. Greed, fear, and anxiety can lead us to protect ourselves and can cause us to stop being generous with our time, finances, or skills.

In Mark 12:41–44, Jesus tells the story of a widow who gave all she had. This is extravagant generosity and the kind of generosity that pleases God. In the story, many rich people gave larger amounts, yet God was not pleased with them because they gave from their excess; they could trust their wealth to back them up. But this widow had no excess—she had nothing to fall back on. Instead, she trusted and gave all she had. She gave extravagantly.

So, we can say that *extravagant generosity* is:

- Giving what we have to others
- Giving what we ourselves need
- Generosity that is pleasing to God

Study the Scriptures

Mark 12:41–44 NIV

⁴¹ Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts.

⁴² But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.

⁴³ Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. ⁴⁴ They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

Application

1. What could God ask of you to give to others?
2. Do you deal with greed? If so, do you talk to God about it and if so, what is he saying right now?
3. If you live a life of generosity, what has helped you to become this way?

Generosity is an outward discipline that comes from an inward intimacy with God. If you deal with greed or are simply wanting to grow in generosity, draw closer to God, hear his heart for the poor and needy, give of yourself tomorrow, and learn to develop a habit of thinking of others first.

For Additional Study

Matthew 6:1–5

Worship Aids

Responsive Reading

O God, teach us to be generous:
to serve you as you deserve to be served;
to give without counting the cost;
to fight without fear of being wounded;
to work without seeking rest;
and to spend ourselves without expecting any reward, but the
knowledge that we are doing your holy will.

Amen.

(adapted, Ignatius of Loyola)

Prayer of Confession

Lord God, We ask that by your holy light you illuminate the instances in our lives where we have not lived up to your name. We denounce “obvious” evils in our society such as murder, rape, domestic violence, thievery, and sexual exploitation.

However, we often fail to remember that your gospel calls us to see the world as you see it—from the vantage point of the “least of these.” In looking around us in this manner, we see the daily evils that boldly counter your gospel. We see societal ills that habitually oppress the poor. We see societal ills that blatantly disobey your Word. We confess that we have not been extravagantly generous with our time, resources, or prayers.

Worship Songs and Hymns

- “I Surrender All”
- “Surrender” by Vineyard UK, album: Surrender
- “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”

Other Resources

www.generousgiving.org—Generous Giving, a privately funded ministry that seeks to encourage givers of all income levels—as well as pastors, church lay leaders, and others—to experience the joy of giving and embrace a lifestyle of generosity, according to God’s word and Christ’s example.

www.simpleliving.net—The Simple Living Network. The idea for The Simple Living Network originally grew out of Founder Dave Wampler’s work with The Institute for Earth Education. Dedicated to helping people find ways of living more lightly on the earth, Dave wanted to use his skills and knowledge to start a service network that would make information and resources available to those interested in changing their patterns of consumption. Example: November 28, 2008 is “Buy Nothing Day.”

www.philanthropyjournal.org/page15212.cfm—*Philanthropy Journal*, North Carolina page. The vision of the *Philanthropy Journal* is to help people understand, support, and work in the nonprofit and philanthropic world, and help them recognize and solve social problems.

Art: “The Widow’s Mite”, www.louisglanzman.com

Resources: www.textweek.com