Small Group Guide: Giving Cheerfully and Strategically

Pastor Mark Lee

Introduction

This week's sermon explored what it means to be truly rich in God's eyes -- not just in material wealth, but in generosity, faith, and character. Using 1 Timothy 6:17-18 and 2 Corinthians 9:7 as anchors, we examined two core principles of biblical giving: giving cheerfully and giving strategically. This guide will help your group dig deeper into those principles and explore what they look like in everyday life.

Key Takeaways

- God blesses us not only for our own enjoyment but so that we can be a blessing to others (1 Timothy 6:17-18).
- God loves a cheerful giver -- someone who gives from a place of genuine joy rather than obligation or guilt (2 Corinthians 9:7).
- Strategic giving requires intentionality, prayer, and planning rather than purely reactive generosity.
- The tithe is a spiritual discipline that puts God first financially and creates room for God to work in ways we cannot manufacture on our own.
- The New Testament does not lower the standard of the Old Testament law -- it raises it. Love always goes further than law.
- Generosity is not primarily about how much we give. It is about who we are becoming.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question

- Think of the most generous person you have ever known personally. What made their generosity stand out to you? How did it affect the people around them?

Digging Into the Text

1. Pastor Mark referenced 1 Timothy 6:17-18, where Paul instructs those who are wealthy not to be arrogant or to place their hope in uncertain riches, but in God, and to be rich in good deeds and generous. In what ways can wealth -- even modest wealth -- become a source of identity or security rather than a tool for generosity? Have you ever noticed that tendency in yourself?

2. The passage says God "richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment." How does it change your perspective to think of God as someone who takes delight in blessing you? Does that feel natural or difficult to believe? Why?
3. 2 Corinthians 9:7 describes the kind of giver God loves as someone who gives what they have decided in their heart -- not reluctantly or under pressure. The sermon pointed out that the Greek word for "cheerful" here is the root of our English word "hilarious." What do you think it looks like practically to give with that kind of joy? Have you ever experienced it?

Going Deeper

4. Pastor Mark drew a contrast between spontaneous giving and strategic giving. Both were affirmed as valuable. In your own life, which comes more naturally -- responding to needs in the moment, or planning and praying about your giving in advance? What are the strengths and limitations of each approach?
5. Pastor Mark described the tithe as a spiritual discipline that teaches us to put God first -- not just a financial transaction. He also said that tithing creates room for God to show up in ways we cannot manufacture ourselves. How do you respond to that idea? Does it resonate with your experience, or does it raise questions for you?
6. Pastor Mark made the case that the New Testament does not lower the bar set by the Old Testament -- it raises it. The law said do not murder; love says do not even harbor anger. The law said do not commit adultery; love says guard even your thought life. Applying that same logic, how might the New Testament standard of generosity actually exceed a simple 10% guideline rather than replace it?
7. Pastor Mark said: "God ain't in the business of raising money. God is in the business of raising children." What do you think he meant by that? How does framing generosity as a matter of spiritual formation rather than church funding change the way you think about giving?

Personal Reflection

8. Pastor Mark closed with this statement: "Generosity is not as much about how much I give, but it's about who I'm becoming." Where do you feel God is currently growing you in the area of generosity -- whether financially or in other ways such as time, attention, or encouragement?
9. Is there an area of your financial life where you sense God is inviting you to trust him more? What would it look like to take one concrete step in that direction?

Practical Applications

Consider choosing one or more of the following to put into practice before your group meets again.

Pray Before You Give Before your next opportunity to give -- whether to your church, a person in need, or a mission effort -- spend time in prayer first. Ask God what he is inviting you to give and why. Notice how that changes the experience of giving.

Review Your Giving Take an honest look at your current giving habits. Is your generosity mostly spontaneous and reactive, or is there a plan behind it? Consider sitting down with a spouse, a trusted friend, or even on your own to pray and map out a more intentional giving strategy for the coming year.

Take the Tithe Challenge If you have never tithed, consider committing to it for 90 days as an act of faith. Treat it as the "test" described in Malachi 3:10, where God invites his people to trust him and watch what he does. Journal what you notice during that season.

Identify a Specific Act of Generosity Think of one person, family, or cause that God may be placing on your heart. Decide on a specific and tangible way to be generous toward them in the next two weeks -- and do it with a cheerful heart.

Talk to Your Family About Giving If you have children or a spouse, consider having a conversation about your family's values around money and generosity. How are you modeling a generous spirit in your home? What is one thing you could do together as a family to practice giving?