



As followers of Jesus we are called to live within the reality that we are “image bearers of God”; literally that we reflect His nature within our world. One aspect of this is to live generously toward others as God has been exceedingly generous to us with life, salvation, provisions, and grace. In living generously we reflect His nature, receive blessings, and reveal to ourselves and those around us that our faith and hope are truly anchored beyond our own possessions and securities.

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## DISCUSSION #1: THE GENEROSITY OF GOD

As followers of Jesus we are called to live within the reality that we are “image bearers of God”; literally that we reflect His nature within our world. One aspect of this is to live generously toward others as God has been exceedingly generous to us with life, salvation, provisions, and grace. In living generously we reflect His nature, receive blessings, and reveal to ourselves and those around us that our faith and hope are truly anchored beyond our own possessions and securities.

In this discussion we will unpack how the nature of God is one of generosity, sharing everything that is available to him with all.

### MY STORY | Starting Place

What is the greatest present you have ever received? Why was it the best?

### DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application

Look up the following verses: John 3:16; Ephesians 1:3; Philippians 4:19; James 1:17

Make a list of insights gained on the generous nature of God.

In light of this, why do you think so many people see God as angry and waiting to discipline us when we mess up?

### GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship

Flowing out of James 1:17, which of the “good and perfect gifts” of God you are most thankful for?

Is there something God gave you that you didn’t think was good at the time, but now look back and are thankful for it? Explain.

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

In conversations with people this week, consider how you might share about the “goodness of God” with others. Purposely give God credit for the blessings in your life.

# DISCUSSION #2: GENEROUS LIKE JESUS

As followers of Jesus we are called to live within the reality that we are “image bearers of God”; literally that we reflect His nature within our world. One aspect of this is to live generously toward others as God has been exceedingly generous to us with life, salvation, provisions, and grace. In living generously we reflect His nature, receive blessings, and reveal to ourselves and those around us that our faith and hope are truly anchored beyond our own possessions and securities.

In this discussion we will discover how, being created in God’s image, the follower of Christ is called to live like God in being generous to others.

## **MY STORY | Starting Place**

What is the most costly gift you have ever given to someone else? Something that you had to suffer a bit to make happen?

## **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

*By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. (1 John 3:16-18)*

It’s a beautiful picture that we know love by how Jesus laid down his life for us. In addition to what He did on the cross, discuss various other ways Jesus expressed and continues to reveal his generous love.

If a person does not have excessive “worldly goods,” how can they exercise generosity?

Is there any practical reason why a follower of Jesus might not exercise generosity? Is there any season or situation where a Christian might be exempt?

If a person knows that they do not have a bent toward giving, how can they cultivate a spirit of generosity?

Additional verses: 1 Timothy 6:17-19; James 2:15-16; Mark 12:41-44; Hebrews 13:16; Deuteronomy 15:7-8

## **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

Talk about how to open your life and resources up to be more generous. What practical lifestyle changes could help someone live this way at home, in the workplace, or other environments?

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

God blesses godly and sinful people each and every day (Matthew 5:45). Look for opportunities to randomly bless people in your path.

## DISCUSSION #3: REWARDS OF GENEROSITY

As followers of Jesus we are called to live within the reality that we are “image bearers of God”; literally that we reflect His nature within our world. One aspect of this is to live generously toward others as God has been exceedingly generous to us with life, salvation, provisions, and grace. In living generously we reflect His nature, receive blessings, and reveal to ourselves and those around us that our faith and hope are truly anchored beyond our own possessions and securities.

In this discussion we will explore the correlation between the generosity we exercise and the generosity of God we will experience.

### **MY STORY | Starting Place**

What was the most extravagant meal, hotel, or vacation you have ever experienced? Tell the story...

### **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

Read the following verses to get a biblical overview of the correlation between being generous and receiving blessing for it. (2 Corinthians 9:6; Proverbs 11:24-25; Luke 6:30-38; Proverbs 19:17; Proverbs 11:24-25; Proverbs 28:27; Psalm 112:5; Proverbs 19:17; 1 Timothy 6:17-19)

*Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. (Malachi 3:10)*

Can someone just apply this verse at face value, or should there be caveats to applying it? Explain.

In many Christian circles there is deep concern with what is known as the “prosperity gospel.” It is defined as, “A religious belief among some Christians that financial blessing and physical well-being are always the will of God for them, and that faith, positive speech, and donations to religious causes will increase one’s material wealth.”

In the above passages, there does seem to be some correlation to God’s generosity and ours. Discuss various angles of this and try to frame a biblical view of God’s response to our generosity that correlates with Scripture.

### **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

Assume you had a friend who had a more transactional relationship with God (i.e. they do things to get things from God.) How could you encourage them back to a more healthy view of God?

### **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Often good works and generosity are done in public view and, as Jesus said, we receive our reward in public awareness (Matthew 6:2). Bless someone this week and work very hard to be anonymous about it.

# DISCUSSION #4: FINDING YOUR TREASURE

As followers of Jesus we are called to live within the reality that we are “image bearers of God”; literally that we reflect His nature within our world. One aspect of this is to live generously toward others as God has been exceedingly generous to us with life, salvation, provisions, and grace. In living generously we reflect His nature, receive blessings, and reveal to ourselves and those around us that our faith and hope are truly anchored beyond our own possessions and securities.

In this discussion we will explore how where we place our security reveals the true “treasure” of our heart. Treasure can be finances, energy, possessions, time, etc., or a healthy dependence on God.

## **MY STORY | Starting Place**

Regarding physical possessions, what is the item you are most proud of or value the most? What could you not imagine losing?

## **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

*(Matthew 6:19-21)*

Jesus left defining “treasures” very open. What things could easily become a treasure?

Make two lists from this passage. #1 Things Jesus is saying, #2 Things Jesus is NOT saying.

If you “love” a possession in your life, does that make it a treasure? Why or why not?

Additional Verses: Luke 21:1-4; Luke 12:33

## **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

What are some ways you could safeguard yourself from your possessions becoming a treasure, (that is, putting an unhealthy level of security in them)?

How do you know if your possessions have crossed an unhealthy line of becoming treasures?

How can a person honestly discern where their treasure really is?

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Often the best way to see how much security you put in a treasure is to share it or give it away to someone else. Prayerfully ponder this idea and allow God to reveal anything you possess that He might want you to share or give away.

# DISCUSSION #5: FAITH AND WORKS

As followers of Jesus we are called to live within the reality that we are “image bearers of God”; literally that we reflect His nature within our world. One aspect of this is to live generously toward others as God has been exceedingly generous to us with life, salvation, provisions, and grace. In living generously we reflect His nature, receive blessings, and reveal to ourselves and those around us that our faith and hope are truly anchored beyond our own possessions and securities.

Often people think of spiritual maturity as Bible knowledge and rule following. Though these are not bad things, in this discussion, we will unpack how in God’s Kingdom, generosity, and service to others is a sign of maturity and health.

## **MY STORY | Starting Place**

Is there a particular Christian you admire? What is it about them or their life that appeals to you?

## **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

*What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

*But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! (James 2:14-19)*

A great debate in the church has been over “works” and “faith” in regards to salvation. Clearly the Bible teaches that salvation is by faith alone (Ephesians 2:8-9), but how do you reconcile that with James’ admonition toward action?

The final part of this verse that reads “so also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” is jarring. How would you explain this to someone who struggles with wanting to earn their salvation instead of just receiving it by faith?

How should salvation through faith motivate or animate our actions?

Martin Luther said, “God does not need your good works, but your neighbor does.” What do you think he means by this?

Additional Verses: Acts 20:35; Philippians 2:4-8

## **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

If you had a continuum of faith alone and trusting in your works on each side, where do you naturally fall? What steps could you take toward being more healthy in receiving salvation in faith, and allowing your works to be a joyful response to God and a desire to show His love for others?

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Keep your eyes open to where God might want you to express your faith in actions and generosity this week.