

## The Art of Following Jesus

### Part 6: What does money have to do with faith?

Luke 12:13-34 - [watch online](#)

#### Summary:

It is possible to really see concrete proof that God sees you, knows you, cares for you, and is intimately involved in your life. This kind of life... this kind of faith and trust comes from practicing the Art of Following Jesus... And Jesus said there was one practice that grows our faith like nothing else.

#### Main Points:

[01:45] Generosity is the key practice that both strengthens and proves our trust in God.

[02:30] Greedy people are miserable people. Generous people are happy people.

[03:42] Life isn't measured by what we get for ourselves but by what we generously give to others.

[05:22] The first step in practicing generosity is acknowledging God owns everything.

[06:13] Fear of not having our "enough" keeps us from experiencing the life Jesus offers.

[09:00] Contentment is the antidote to fear and the source of generosity.

[11:40] Frugality frees us to be generous.

[12:10] How we use our money shows what we truly value.

[13:30] Citizens of the Kingdom of God live and spend differently than citizens of other kingdoms.

[14:30] *The Tale of Five Actual Families.*

[22:25] We are never more like Jesus than when we give for the good of someone else.

#### Invitation: [17:05]

In the next 90 days take a step toward greater generosity.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. What stood out, bothered, confused, or motivated you in this week's message?
2. Why do you think talking about money can be such a sensitive topic? What do you think are common barriers that keep people from being as generous as they may want to be?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15. What stands out to you? Do any other Scriptures or principles come to mind in reading this?
4. In what ways can you practice frugality and trust that God will take care of your needs... this week? Month? In the next 90 days?
5. How can your group pray for you this week?

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#### Transcript:

**INTRO:** No matter what happens to you you can trust you will truly be taken care of... no matter how uncertain the future looks there is a way to be confident that whatever happens is what is ultimately best. It is possible to really see concrete proof God sees you, knows you, cares for you, and is intimately involved in your life.

This kind of life... this kind of faith and trust is 100% possible and available to every single person.

It comes from practicing the Art of Following Jesus...

And Jesus said there was one surefire practice that grows our faith like nothing else... So Let's talk about it... together.

**WE:** Jesus offers all of us a life of purpose and meaning. Peace and Joy and confidence and hope... here and now.

We discover this life as we practice the art of following Jesus... this art is like a dance w/ God himself.

- God leads but we also have steps to take.

He transforms our minds and hearts from the inside out as we purposely work w/ HS and practice to become the already not yet people living in the KoG now.

Throughout the BW's and Jesus' own teachings there is one practice discussed, modeled, explained, encouraged and even commanded over and over again.

A practice that not only grows and strengthens our faith but allows God to use us to grow and strengthen other people's faith.

Developing a lifestyle of Generosity... purposely and consistently giving away money.

**Generosity is the key practice that both strengthens and proves our trust in God.**

If not JF... you are completely off the hook... you don't have to do anything I'm about to talk about... but I do think that applying the following principles will make you happier and give you a more fulfilling life.

But if we say we follow Jesus we need to take what he says very seriously... especially if it's something he says over and over.

And the truth is... how we use our money directly affects our personal happiness. It's true whether we choose to follow Jesus or not...

**Greedy people are miserable people. Generous people are happy people.**

- It's why we love Scrooge: A Christmas Carol.

So let me show you just one example of what Jesus has to say about how we use our wealth.

**GOD: Luke 12:13-15** Jesus says... Life is not measured by how much you own.

Stop there... We nod and agree but... DO you agree w/ that? Really? Would your bank statement and credit card bills say you agree w/ that?

If life isn't measured by how much we own... then what is life measured by? How do you measure whether a life is full and great?

- What did Jesus say? If you want to be great be the servant of all... a great life is a life focused outward.

**Life isn't measured by what we get for ourselves but by what we generously give to others.**

Then to illustrate his point...

**V. 16-21** Fool? Why does Jesus call this guy a fool? Makes sense to us right? He finally has enough to retire so he does... good for him.

Why does Jesus call him a fool?

**1st** he's a fool b/c he actually thought everything he had was his... "MY crops, my barns, my wheat"

Did he make the ground fertile? Did he make the dirt? Did he cause the sun to shine and the rain to fall?

Shoot since he's a rich man in the 1st century... he didn't even plant and harvest it himself; he paid others to do it.

Universal truth... whatever we have ultimately isn't from us.

Everything we have originates from God... he is King and Creator of the universe... therefore whatever we have is actually on loan from the true owner...

**The first step in practicing generosity is acknowledging God owns everything.**

Now this guy is also a fool b/c he doesn't realize he's stuck in a never ending cycle... same cycle we get stuck in

He kept chasing *ENOUGH*... and the problem is... Enough always becomes more...

What do you think would happen if he lived and the next year's harvest was just as good?

- "Oh well he has enough so he'd probably be generous and give it to those in need"

No he wouldn't. You know what he would do b/c it's exactly what we do... He would just build bigger barns again.

And hoard it all for himself.

Hoarding: The accumulation of money and things out of a fear of not having enough.

**Fear of not having our "enough" keeps us from experiencing the life Jesus offers.**

No matter how much we actually have, our enough is always just a little more than we have.

And if we ever get to what we thought was enough...our view of enough suddenly changes...

- We need a bigger house/we need a better car/we need a better boat/ we need our kids to experience better vacations

Now... Think of the good this man could've done in the 1st century middle east with all this extra food?

Instead he let fear rule his life and he hoarded whatever came his way and in the end it didn't matter how much he had... He died just like everyone else and his only legacy would be greed and fear and selfishness.

Jesus said he missed the one thing that he was actually created to enjoy... a rich relationship w/ his Heavenly Father.

When we are so focused on getting what we want we miss out on what we actually need... the life Jesus offers.

If you think you own it, you're the one who is going to have to protect it.

But if you know it belongs to God, the pressure is off.

Parents' car- "Well God, there goes your car!"

When you know God owns your money, you know you can ask and trust Him for the wisdom to manage it. It's no longer on your shoulders! Rest, trust, peace, freedom! FULL LIFE.

After telling this story Jesus lays it all out...

**V. 22-30 Contentment is the antidote to fear and the source of generosity.**

Contentment: Acknowledging that God has given us and will give us everything we need.

If God takes care of birds and gives them everything they need then obviously he will take care of you.

God cares so wonderfully for the flowers... Think how wonderfully he cares for YOU... his own beloved child created in his own image.

And when we get a glimpse of just how much God cares about us it starts to grow our contentment and opens us up to the trust generosity requires.

Imagine what it would be like to trust that God will take care of us daily... and then seeing him do it again and again.

- That would strengthen your faith wouldn't it?

So if we don't seek more for us and we want to be content what do we do?

**V. 31** Seek the KoG... Actively working to see God bring his true love and life to our hearts and lives and those of the people around us.

When we are seeking KoG everything else falls into place, makes sense, and our priorities are transformed.

And we get to see God actively work on our behalf in our lives now

**V. 32** We have a Heavenly Father who created, controls, and owns everything... He knows you, loves you and loves to give good gifts to his children.

So why do we ever need to worry about "enough?"

We can trust God b/c God loves to give everything we need.

And if we truly trust God then we are truly able to practice generosity.

HOW do we actually free ourselves to be generous?

**V. 33** get rid of what you don't need. We call it Frugality.

DW: Frugality- We abstain from using money or goods at our disposal in ways that merely gratify our desires or hunger for status, glamor, or luxury.

We keep our spending w/in the bounds of what is necessary to live the life God has led us to.

**Frugality frees us to be generous.**

- Frees us from concerns and desires that would keep us from focusing on the KoG
- Frees us from debt... which forces us to constantly worry and think about money... steals our hope of the future and keeps us from seeing the needs of our neighbors bc we are so focused on what we have to pay back.

Then Jesus basically draws a line in the sand...

**V. 34** **How we use our money shows what we truly value.**

- Do we value ourselves... our comfort/experiences/how we look to others/our current lifestyle and luxuries?
- Or ...the Kingdom of God.

And if we want our hearts to be after that which God is after... The only way to train them is to put our money where our mouth is.

When we invest our money in the KoG we can't help but have our hearts become invested in the KoG.

Being generous with our money allows us to work w/ God in bringing his love and care to those for whom he cares and loves.

**YOU:** Ok but how much is enough to be actually generous?

CS Lewis answered that question in his book Mere Christianity:

*"I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusement, etc., is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our giving does not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say it is too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot because our commitment to giving excludes them."*

**Citizens of the KoG live and spend differently than citizens of other kingdoms.**

When we realize everything we have (including our breath) is on loan from the true Owner, we are more willing to use it for the Owner's purposes.

When we practice the art of following Jesus, investing in the KoG becomes a higher priority than getting everything we want and getting to do everything we want. It actually means we have to change our lifestyle.

How much is that?

Everyone is different but... for thousands of years (even before Xianity) the general idea has been a tithe... giving away at least 10% of our income to invest in the KoG.

"That's impossible!" It's not... let me show you a tale of 5 families... **CHART OF 5 FAMILIES**

These are the budgets of 5 real families who consistently tithe to their local church...

5 things I've discovered by looking at these budgets...

### **Tithing is the result of having clarity in our finances**

- When I asked each family if they would be willing and able to give me this info in the next two weeks... every single one of them was able to give me this info the next day.
- They know where their money is going and how they are spending it.



### **Tithing is the result of purposely planning. (Isaiah 32:8)**

- Also every single one of them listed their tithe/giving 1st in their monthly budgets.
- It is the 1st expense they take out before they spend
- There is no... "we'll spend what we need/want and give what's leftover"
- It's the opposite we will give and then live on what's leftover.

### **Tithing is the result of living frugally.**

- All of these families are living w/in their means
- They drive used cars... even though some could afford a new car
- None paying huge interests rates on credit card debt
- They save and plan for large expenses and buy it when they have the money.

### **Tithing attaches your heart to the work of the KoG**

- All 5 are committed and active in a local church community.
- Live out Kingdom of God in their daily lives

### **Tithing is an act of faith**

- All 5 families continued tithing faithfully through inevitable hard times of life
- If they lost an income, they continued to tithe even if the math didn't add up (and God made it work!)
- If they got extra (bonus, stimulus, etc.), they tithed on that
- All 5 families at some point and even currently have given more than a tithe (more than 10%)

These 5 Families aren't super saints... they're normal people. Jesus wants all of us to experience a full life of trust and generosity.

So here's my invitation... whatever your income... **In the next 90 days take a step toward greater generosity.**

- Either to Crosscreek or if already have a local church, give to that community.

Why a church and not just a charity... There are amazing charities out there that need financial support but... Jesus is the hope of the world and he has chosen his Church to shine that hope to the rest of the world.

- Pastor and Author David Fitch said... "The Church is the extension of Christ's presence in the world, making his reign over the whole world visible."
- **Pics of Kids.**

We need to 1st invest in Jesus' plan to bring his Kingdom to the rest of the world.

- And then see where we can help charities who are working with the Church to bring the love of Jesus to those who most need it.

Where our treasure is, there our *heart* is... if we put our treasure in Jesus' chosen method to reach the world then our hearts will be more closely attached to his purpose... and that will inform what charities we might support 2nd.

Now as you consider taking a step, pay attention to the tension. Something in you will most likely want to resist becoming more generous... ask yourself... what is that?

For some it will be giving money for the 1st time.

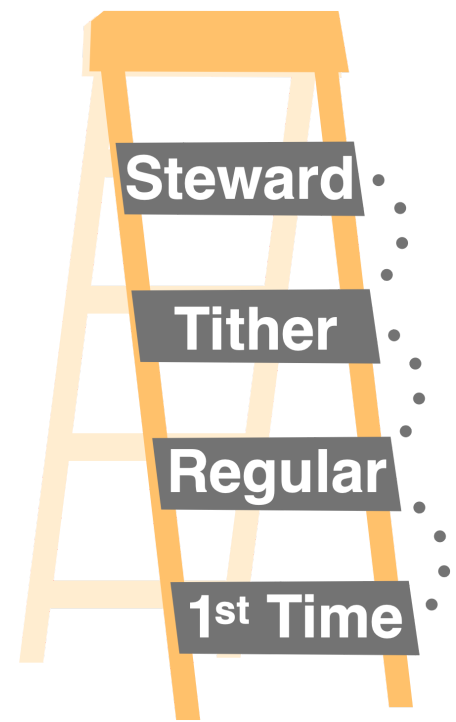
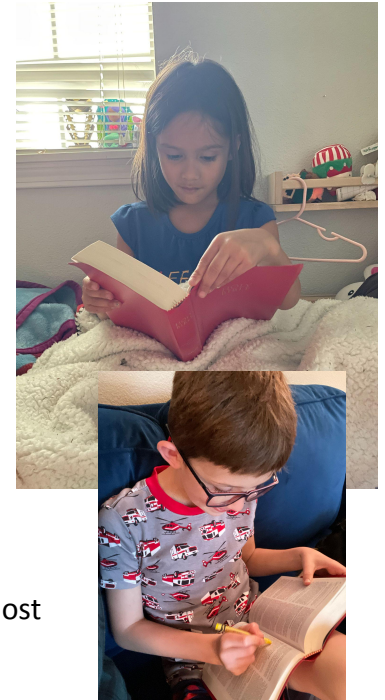
- Pray and ask God what amount you should give.
- And then give it and **trust** that God will take care of your needs

Maybe you have given before maybe even more than once... then your next step would be to become a regular giver...

- Pick a percentage and constantly give that first right when you have money come in.
- And then **trust** that God will take care of your needs
- Online automated giving

Maybe you have done that... so your next step will be to become a tither

- Choose to give 10% away and live on the other 90%.
- You will Purposely have to choose to change some things in your lifestyle
- And then **trust** that God will take care of your needs



And maybe you have been a 10% investor... your next step might be to become a **steward...** one who cares for what another has entrusted to them.

- The tithe was always seen as a starting point for God's people
- Old Testament was actually more like 20%
- 10% never required in New Testament... always give generously as much as you can... Paul says to give as the Lord has prospered you.

**WE: 2 Cor 9:6-11a** God loves a person who gives cheerfully.

When we get to be used by God to bring his love and peace to the world we can't help but be joyful and excited to be a part of his plan to redeem all of humanity to himself.

There is a life of joy and thankfulness and purpose just waiting for all of us... but we have to untighten our fists and let God use us and what he has given us.

God loves to give... For God loved the world so much that he GAVE his one and only son...

Jesus followers are generous because Jesus was and is generous to us.

**We are never more like Jesus than when we give for the good of someone else.**

**Video**