

Managing My Generosity, Values and Growth

“...For I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Philippians 4:11-13

In our world today, so much emphasis is placed on living longer and cramming more into our lives. We seem to be interested more in quantity than quality. Jesus didn't model that value. He taught us that it is not the duration of our lives that counts, but the *donation*! It isn't about what we get out of it, but what we put into it. Consider these questions: When I die, what will I leave behind for others? Will I leave more than an inheritance...will I leave a legacy?

In this session, we will focus on three additional important items to manage in our lives: our generosity, our values and our personal growth.

Our Generosity: My Generosity Today Gives Me Significance

If your income doubled overnight, how much money would you give away? How about if your net worth was suddenly more than you could count? What if you became the richest person in the world?

Yes, those are just dreams, but God asks us a real stewardship question every day of our lives. Our response communicates how much He can trust us with more resources: What are we going to do with what we have? The question isn't what we'll do if we somehow obtain a lot of money someday. The issue is: what are we doing with our resources now?

Case Study: The Rich Man (Luke 12:15-21)

In this famous story, Jesus introduces us to a rich man who illustrates what happens when our lives center on ourselves instead of others. Note the truths in this passage:

1. He was faced with a _____ on what to do with the surplus he had (v. 16-17).
2. He chose to store up his surplus and _____ it all himself (v. 18).
3. He was shocked when his life ended and God found him _____ (v. 19-20).
4. He failed in life because he never developed a _____ spirit (v. 21).

Discussion:

- Why does accumulating more resources fail to lead to generosity?

Why Generosity Matters Today

What about us as leaders? How should we approach giving? Why should we be generous? There are many reasons, but let's look at three of them below:

1. Giving Turns Your _____ Outward.

Jesus said: *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”* (Matthew 6:21). He didn't say it was the other way around. He said to put your money somewhere, and your heart will follow. Giving turns your focus outward, instead of on yourself. Generosity is changing one's focus from self to others.

2. Giving Adds _____ to Others.

Anyone who is generous is valuable. Proverbs 11:24-25 reminds us: *“There is one who scatters, yet increases all the more, and there is one who withholds what is justly due, but it results only in want. The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered.”* When you add value to others, you do not take anything from yourself. In fact, the greater your giving, the greater you’re living.

3. Giving _____ the Giver.

When you are generous to others, you cannot help but benefit yourself. It’s the way God set up His Kingdom. Jesus teaches us: *“Give and it shall be given to you. Good measure pressed down shaken together and running over shall men give unto you.”* (Luke 6:38)

Discussion:

- What prevents you from being more generous?

Making the Decision to Model Generosity

Here are some tips to living a more generous life:

1. Don’t keep score. (Give others your resources without keeping track of your gift.)
2. Give others yourself, not just your money. (Offer your time and energy sacrificially.)
3. Don’t wait for prosperity to become generous. (Manage what you have now.)
4. Find reasons to give every day. (Look for excuses to give generously to others.)
5. Find people every day to whom you can add value. (Be proactive in looking for people to invest in.)

Follow these rules of adding value:

- a. Value people: Treat everyone with respect.
- b. Know what people value: Listen and understand them.
- c. Make yourself more valuable: Grow in relevant ways.
- d. Do things that God values: Since He loves unconditionally, so must we.

Discussion:

- What is one step you should take today to model generosity?

Our Values: My Values Give Me Direction

Over the last five years, global companies in the marketplace have faced lawsuits because of moral and financial crimes. In churches, ministers and priests have also faced criminal charges because of their failure to live a life of integrity. Professional athletes share the same story—somehow they believe they can do whatever they want off of the field. They feel exempt from the “rules” of society.

What do all of these stories have in common? Values. Every story reflects the incredible damage that can be done when individuals lose direction as they forget to practice values. Values give us a moral compass. We need them to make good and wise decisions, especially when we face tempting circumstances.

Biblical Case Study: David and Saul (I Samuel 24:1-22)

In this story, David is a leader who lives by his values; he demonstrates that he’s a better man than King Saul. You remember the story... Saul has chosen to hunt for and kill David, because he feels threatened by David’s popularity and strength. When Saul enters a cave where David and his men are hiding, David has a perfect opportunity to kill his enemy and assume his promised role as king. But he doesn’t. Why? It’s all a matter of values.

SAUL'S VALUES CAUSED HIM...

1. To harm those who threaten him.
2. To possess rage, jealousy and envy.
3. To be volatile in behavior.
4. To disobey God in the little things.
5. To lose integrity by covering his sin.

DAVID'S VALUES CAUSED HIM...

1. To harm no one.
2. To be at peace with himself and God.
3. To be predictable and righteous.
4. To obey God in the little things.
5. To keep his integrity by respecting Saul.

Why Values Matter Today

Here are three word pictures that describe why values are so valuable!

1. Values are your _____.

They can hold you in place during the storms of life when everyone else is wavering.

2. Values are your faithful _____.

They remind you of your intentions and hold you accountable to do what's right.

3. Values are your _____.

They guide you when your future is unfamiliar and uncertain.

Discussion:

- What is one of your top values that you try to live by?

Where to Start with Values

1. Create a list of _____.

List words that describe your core values. (No more than six words)

2. Make a _____ to embrace those values daily, regardless of your feelings.

How will you do this?

3. _____ your values to others.

Who will you share them with?

4. Compare your values to your _____ each day.

Where are you strong? Where are you weak?

5. _____ each day in light of your values.

List the ways that you implemented your core values.

Our Growth: My Growth Gives Me Potential

This final issue may be the most important one. If you are still growing in any area, there is hope for you. The truth is—it's not so much where you are, but what direction you are going that matters. Robert Louis Stevenson said, *"To be what we are, and to become what we are capable of becoming, is the only end of life."* One Pulitzer Prize winning composer said it this way, *"Hell begins on that day when God grants us a clear vision of all that we might have achieved, of all the gifts we wasted, of all that we might have done that we did not do."* A life that is positively changing is the proper measure as to whether information is making a difference in one's life.

Misconceptions About Growth

1. Growth is automatic: false. Many grow older without growing up or growing wiser.
2. Growth comes from information: false. Knowledge without application means little.
3. Growth comes with experience: false. Experience is only good if it improves us.
4. Growth is unnecessary for me: false. If you plan to lead, you must keep growing.

Discussion:

- What hinders you from continuing to grow personally?

Biblical Case Study: The Apostle Paul (Philippians 3:12-14)

1. He _____ he wasn't where he wanted to be.

Paul admitted he wasn't perfect and that he still needed to grow as a person.

"Not that I have already obtained it, or have already been made perfect..."

Philippians 3:12

2. He _____ what he wanted.

Paul figured out exactly what it was that was worth working for and growing toward.

"...but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which I also was laid hold of by Christ Jesus."

Philippians 3:12

3. He _____ what hindered him.

Paul uncovered exactly what it was that would prevent him from reaching his goal.

"...forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead..."

Philippians 3:13

4. He _____ how to get it.

Paul learned the steps he needed to take to gain the outcome he was pursuing.

"...I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 3:14

Discussion: Think about what would happen if you never grew intellectually, spiritually or emotionally any more for the rest of your life. What would it cost you?

Steps for Personal Growth

Here are some practical steps to ensure personal growth in your life.

1. Make a _____ to grow in some way every day.
2. Establish _____ for growth in key areas of your life.
3. Put yourself in a _____ environment.
4. Learn to enjoy the _____: learn all you can from each person, resource and opportunity.
5. _____ what you learn in a place where you can find it when you need it.
6. _____ what you learn.

Assessment and Application

Assessment:

- In what area (generosity, values or growth) do you most need a plan?

Application:

- What step will you take to grow in this area?