Faith and Finances - Week 4 – Giving and Generosity

Warmup question – If a friend who knew you well were asked to share a couple sentences on your attitude about money, what would he or she say? (example)

We jump in tonight with the fourth and last of our Faith and Finances series. Over the last three weeks we have covered:

* Provision and Presumption
* Worry, Debt, and Misplaced Affection
* Consumption, Comparison, and Contentment

Is there any Scripture or idea from the first three weeks that you have thought about the most or has most influenced your attitudes about money? (Be ready to share an example.)

As we examine giving and generosity, we start with four mentalities about giving:

1. For the most part I don’t – I must take care of myself
   * + - 1. Genesis 4:1-9 (Even as he gave, it wasn’t his best. Attitude of zero responsibility for brother.)
         2. Philippians 2:4 – Pushing back against our natural tendency. What is the difference between looking out for the interests of others and being a “meddler”?
         3. Last week we considered the dangers of comparison - We are often tempted to think this first attitude is not a struggle for us.
2. Tithe – the word simply means “a tenth part” – some consistencies:
   * + - 1. First and best – Deut. 14:22-23 (Why does giving our first and best to God lead us to “learn to fear the Lord you God always”?), 2 Chron. 31:5, Num. 18:12
         2. Sacred purpose, often tied to provision for Levites and “God’s house” – Num. 18:24, Malachi 3:6-12 (Today many people disconnect tithe and church, but you can’t biblically separate believers from call to be generous to the church – more later).
         3. Starting point – Matthew 23:23; “Tithing is like the training wheels on the bicycle of giving.” – Randy Alcorn
3. Freewill
   * + - 1. Deut. 12:5-6 – concept of going beyond the tithe
         2. I Chron 29:3-6 – Have you ever watched generosity go contagious?
         3. Luke 6:37-38 – God is generous, we should be generous. (Similar idea to the Malachi passage – don’t get it backwards.)
         4. Acts 4:32-35 (followed by Ananias and Sapphira – gave for the wrong reasons) How do you guard your heart to make sure you are giving for the right reasons and that is truly “free will”?
4. Sacrificial
   * + - 1. 2 Samuel 24:24
         2. Mark 12:41-44 (Watch for this language later!)
         3. 2 Cor. 8:1-5

Let’s stay in the 2 Corinthians passage for a while, because chapters 8 and 9 have rich depths about God-honoring attitudes about money. To do this we will divide into 3 groups. Each group will bring back what they experienced in the verses by answering this question: “What key sentences and phrases use the language of money to teach us something about how we trust in and follow God?” The three groups are:

* 2 Cor. 8:8-15
* 2 Cor. 9:6-9
* 2 Cor. 9:10-15

On page 135 and 136 of the Crosson and Talamo book, they give 3 reasons “Why we feel we can’t afford to give.”

1. Not having enough. (We decide to give after we are in a more comfortable position, giving “leftovers” instead of “first fruits” or not giving at all).
2. Lack of giving role models.
3. Not understanding Scripture.

Which of these are your biggest barriers to being generous or can you think of others?

Based on what we have looked at tonight or in other parts of this series, what are some “Why we can’t afford not to give” reasons that come to mind?

“Guess the end of this verse” game - Ephesians 4:28 - “Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that…”

It is important to plan to be generous, because if we don’t, spending it on ourselves is often the common default. (Read story about boy and ice cream from page 44 that reminds us of the power of planning to be generous.)

Have you ever observed the fruits of someone planning to be generous and following up on that plan?

Generosity breaks the power of money over us. Generosity reminds us that God is the provider, not ourselves, so it leads to a more focused trust in Him. Generosity combats worry. Generosity blesses others. Generosity avoids that “I wish I could have helped them” feeling. Generosity is a mark that “we are our Father’s children.”

Are there any adjustments to your life this week to seize opportunities to be generous, whether this means doing a specific act of generosity or starting to set aside money for when the Spirit leads you to be generous? Pray for these opportunities and pray for each other.