17/04/2024, 18:44 Reader

Living Generously

Generosity Webs	
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SESSION GOALS	
The point of every session is a main idea with the goal of informing our knowing, feeling, and doing.	
MAIN IDEA: Living generously glorifies God and is integral to our expression of the gospel. Head Change: To know that living generously can be challenging, but it's a collective pursuit we undertake with fellow believers, and it liberates us to enjoy God's generosity poured out on us. Heart Change: To give thanks that we don't have to be generous in our own strength because generosity is a gift from God. Life Change: To pray that God will give us the gift of generosity, and to courageously assess our generosity comfort levels.	
OPEN	
Imagine your study group for this series is doing a kind of Secret Santa thing. Whose name do you hope to draw, and what will you get for them? Who do you hope gets your name? Why?	
Thinking about our giving tendencies is a valuable exercise because it shows us what kind of generosity we're good at, and where we need to grow. As Jonathan draws this series to a close, he suggests ways we can do just that.	
ahtnow MEDIA	

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VIEW	
As you watch, write down how Jonathan answers these questions.	
What are the seven different generosities Mary exhibits?	
Why does our generosity glorify God?	
Why is it helpful to be part of a generous community, as we seek to become more generous ourselves?	
How does the generosity web work?	
Show SESSION #8: Generosity Webs (7 minutes)	

REVIEW

Jonathan opens the session by recapping the seven different generosities displayed by Mary as she anoints Jesus' feet with perfume: she was generous with her time, attention, wealth, talent, possessions, how people perceived her, and comfort. Which session of the series have you found most challenging? Why?

Generosity is at the heart of the gospel and our ministry as disciples and as a church. God's generosity is woven through history and creation. To live a generous life isn't some useful side-interest; it's intrinsic to the living out of our faith. Paul explains to the Corinthians that their generosity, 'not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others...' (2 Corinthians 9:12–13) How have you seen generosity glorifying God in your local community? Do unchurched people in your wider community generally respect or despise Christians for their generosity?

As discussed in a previous session, generosity is a spiritual gift, so living generously starts with us asking God to give us the gift of generosity – however that might play out in our individual lives. Have you ever asked God to increase your generosity? If not, why not?

It can be difficult to live generously because it often means living differently from those around us and standing against some of the ways people expect us to live. It really helps to see generous living as a collective – not individual – pursuit, in which we encourage and support one other as we figure it out. Are you part of a generous community? If so, how has it helped you to grow in generosity? If not, what's your next step?

Jonathan and his team have developed a tool that enables us to reflect on the seven generosities, and how comfortable we are with each of them. This doesn't measure how 'good' we are at being generous, just how comfortable we are being generous in these different ways. It's helpful to be aware of which ones we struggle with and why. As a group or individually, spend some time plotting the points of your generosity web as per Jonathan's instructions (mark on a scale of 1–10 how comfortable you are with each generosity, plot those

numbers on a graph, and connect the dots to form

your generosity web). If you feel comfortable to do so, talk about which of the generosities you struggle with most. Have you been able to figure out why you struggle? Is God showing you a way forward in this area? Which of the generosities to you find easy? Jonathan says we can become more comfortable with all the generosities through practice. **Brainstorm some** practical ways you can begin to practise even just one of these generosities, over the next month. Set up a date with some friends, a month from now, to check in with one another and pray together that God would continue to increase your generosity. Jonathan explains that if some of these generosities seem too difficult, and you don't know how you can ever get more comfortable living them out, there's very good news. Jesus said, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.' (2 Corinthians 12:9) We don't have to be generous in our own strength because generosity is a gift. We are completely dependent on God to give us what we need to be the generous disciples He longs us to be. What would help you to be more generous, today? **BIBLE EXPLORATION** Read Proverbs 11:24–25. How would you explain to a Sunday school class that generosity is win-win? If knowing that refreshing others will leave you refreshed too, what's stopping you from doing it? Read Psalm 112:5 and Proverbs 21:13. Is generosity always a kind of cause-and-effect formula? Why, or why not? Read Ephesians 3:20. How do you know it really is possible to become more generous, no matter how uncomfortable you may be with certain types of generosity?

LAST WORD

To live a generous life is to be liberated from thinking everything is ours, under our control, and part of our identity. May we grow to see ourselves instead as receivers of incredible, divine generosity – and the privilege, joy and responsibility that brings. We don't grow unless we face our discomforts. May we be brave enough to explore our comfort (or not) with the seven types of generosity we've learned about, so that we might be set free to become more like our generous God. May we keep on being transformed, more and more, by God's astounding generosity to us.

DEEPER WALK

Select at least one activity below to complete before moving on to another series.

Read: Read aloud Mark 12:41–44 from a different Bible translation to the one you normally use. Does generosity play out in exactly the same way in every person's life? What would giving the way the poor widow gave look like in your life?

Write: Spend some time journaling your reflections on this series. What have you found particularly comforting, challenging, or convicting? What will you do differently, going forward?

Pray: Set up a prayer trigger that will remind you to pray for generosity. For example, every time you open your wallet or tap your card or click 'Add to Cart', pause for a few seconds and pray, *Oh God, create in me a generous heart.*