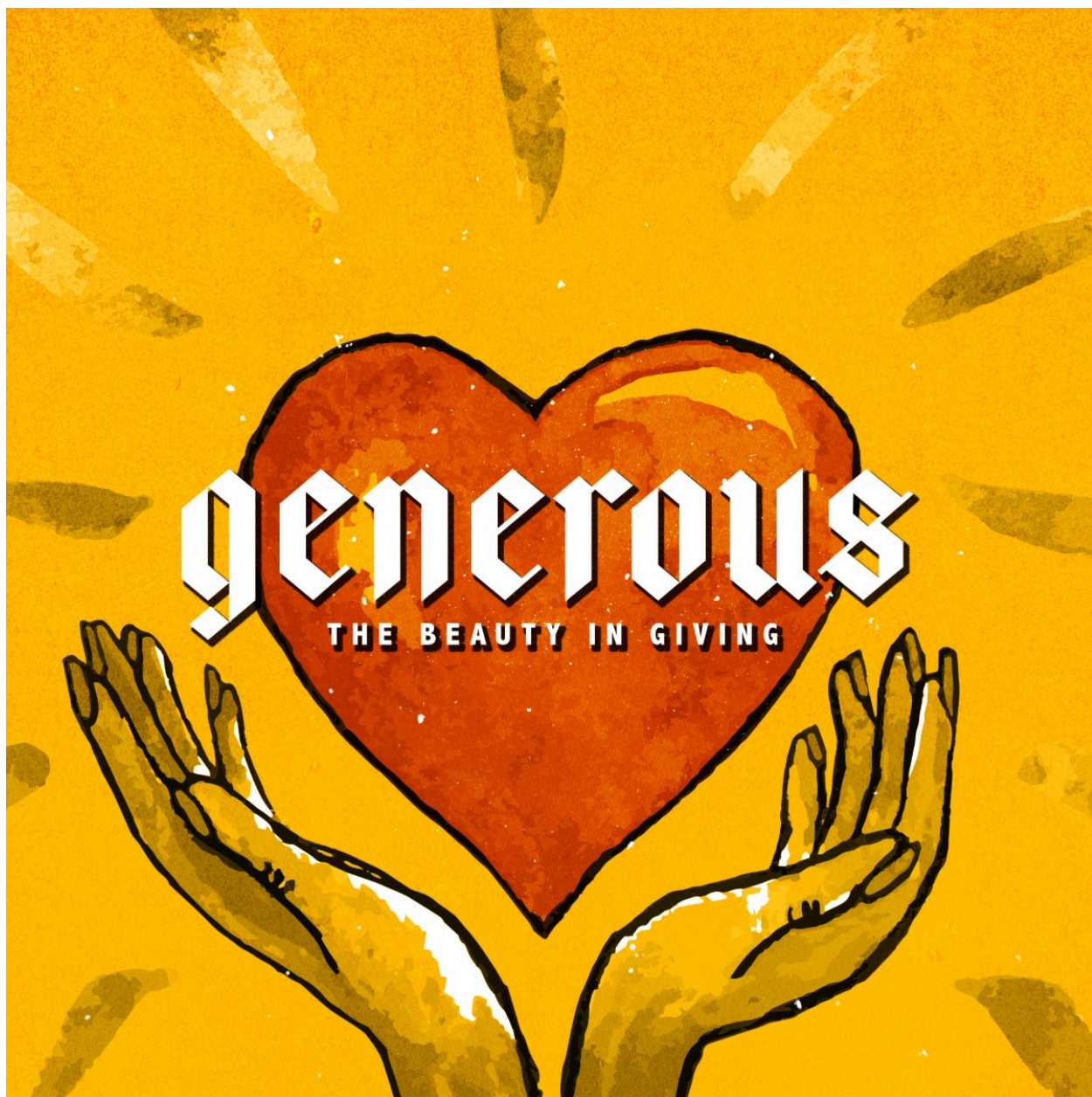




Sermon and Scripture Discussion Guide

generous

THE BEAUTY IN GIVING

small groups

WEEK 1 SMALL GROUP: LIVING WITH ABUNDANCE

OPENING PRAYER:

Loving God, thank you for the way that you provide for us. Open our eyes to see your kingdom all around us, and seek it above all else. Create in us a generosity of spirit, trusting that you give what we need, as we share your love with others. Be present among us in this space. Amen.

Quote: "You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you." – John Bunyan

BREAKING THE ICE:

Where have you experienced generosity in your life? Who is someone you define as super generous? What makes them so?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read Matthew 6:24-34

1. What does Jesus say we are not to worry about? Why are we not to worry about these things? Are they not important?
2. According to Jesus, how are the birds provided for? According to Jesus, how are we provided for? Do we have a role in that provision?
3. What does it mean to seek first God's kingdom? What is God's kingdom? (Look at Romans 14:17)
4. Who are the Gentiles/pagans (verse 32)? Should we consider ourselves to be Gentiles?

NEXT STEPS:

1. In what ways can you, personally, focus on today's concerns, leaving tomorrow's to care for themselves? What role does trust in God play in letting go of worry?
2. What would it look for us to seek first the kingdom of God this week?
3. In what ways can you pay attention differently? In what ways can you shift your priorities?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Generous God, thank you for revealing yourself among us today. Send us forth in grace and gratitude. Help us seek your kingdom first, and to trust you with our day-to-day needs. Work in our lives and shine through us this week. Amen.

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WEEK 2 SMALL GROUP: FINDING OUR CONTENTMENT IN GOD

OPENING PRAYER:

Oh God, the ultimate source of wisdom, we come before you with hearts full of wonder and anticipation. As we begin this time of pondering your word, we humbly seek spiritual growth and a deeper understanding of generosity. By relying on your Spirit, we ask for a transformation in our attitudes toward money and wealth. Help us to see them not as ends in themselves, but as tools for blessing and caring for your children. In the name of the one who exemplified a faithful stewardship for your sake, amen.

Quote: "Real contentment must come from within. You and I cannot change or control the world around us, but we can change and control the world within us." – Warren Wiersbe

BREAKING THE ICE:

What does contentment look like for you? Is there a time you remember in which you were content?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read 1 Timothy 6:6-12

1. From this passage how does Paul, as he's writing to Timothy, define contentment?
2. How might this passage resonate with people who are lacking the basics – food and clothing?
3. We all need money to live. Money is not evil but as verse 10 says, "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil...". What are some signs that a person is in danger of falling into the "love of money?"
4. What do you think the author means when he writes "some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains" (verse 10)? What do you imagine, have seen or experienced as the "many pains"?

NEXT STEPS:

1. Verse 12 reminds us that we are called to eternal life. How might the perspective of eternity change the way you spend, invest, and give your money in the here and now?
2. Why can living with contentment be so difficult in American society? What are the cultural challenges to finding contentment in God?
3. How might our ability to live with contentment provide a witness to the people around us and potentially have a ripple effect in the world?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord, our provider, thank you for the privilege of studying your word and the insight we have shared as a group. We are grateful that you give us a new perspective on materialism and a willing heart to pursue a righteous life. Oh God, continue to guide us to find satisfaction not in the abundance of earthly possessions but in the depth of our relationship with you. Fill our hearts with joy and thanksgiving, knowing that you are faithful to meet our every need. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, the life-giving God. Amen.



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WEEK 3 SMALL GROUP: THE FLOW OF GRACE

OPENING PRAYER:

God of grace, we thank you for the riches of the gospel that the Spirit reveals through the scriptures and our conversations with one another. As we speak together, open our hearts to your presence, power, and wisdom, that we might become bold and confident in the exercise of our faith. Amen.

Quote: "Grace is like a lake of drinkable water right outside your door. But you stay inside and die of thirst." Maya Angelou

BREAKING THE ICE:

In Ephesians, Paul is writing to an early church about the awe and wonder of God extending beyond Israel to a wider world. This is the surprising character of God's love, revealed in Jesus Christ! When have you experienced a sense of wonder regarding God's love for you?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read Ephesians 3:5-12

1. How do you see God's grace extending through the gospel of Jesus Christ – his teaching, life, death and resurrection?
2. What does it mean for you to be a "sharer in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel"?
3. Based on this passage and what you know of Paul's life, what does it mean that to be "a servant of the gospel"?

NEXT STEPS:

1. Paul's calling was to spread the message of God's love beyond Israel to the Gentiles. How can our giving help make the mystery of God's grace visible to more people?
2. How does the church, through generous living, show our community who we believe God is?
3. How does faith in Jesus Christ give us boldness and confidence in our giving?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Generous God, thank you for all that you have poured into our lives. Now send us forth to make known the boundless riches of Jesus Christ. May we become servants of his gospel through our living and our giving. Amen.

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WEEK 4 SMALL GROUP: ABUNDANCE IN COMMUNITY: SHARING WHAT YOU HAVE

OPENING PRAYER:

Gracious God, thank you for the gift of this group. Receive our presence, what we have, and bless it. Multiply within us your goodness, love, and grace. Amen.

Quote: "True generosity is an offering; given freely and out of pure love. No strings attached. No expectations." – Suze Orman

BREAKING THE ICE:

Where have you seen someone (or God) turn nothing into something? Where have you seen someone create something great from very little? Or, in what ways have you seen God take a little and bless it to do more?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read John 6:1-14

1. Why was the crowd following Jesus? What were they looking for? What did they receive?
2. What do Philip's and Andrew's questions reveal about their mindset and priorities? How can you relate to their concerns?
3. Why would Jesus knowingly bless insufficient resources to feed the crowd?
4. What is the significance of the food for the crowd coming from a child?
5. The word "satisfied" in verse 12 can either be translated as "content," or "satiated." How does the difference in translation change the meaning of the verse?

NEXT STEPS:

1. In what ways do we sometimes approach problems with the perspective of Phillip, and Andrew, that what is available is "not enough"?
2. In what ways can we gather and bless what is available, even if it seems inadequate?
3. In what ways has God surpassed your expectation and provided with abundance?
4. What does it look like to give your best, as the little boy did versus giving your leftovers? What is your understanding of "leftovers" in terms of your personal resources? How can even our leftovers, not to mention our best, be used to build the kingdom?

CLOSING PRAYER:

God of abundance, you give to us more than we need. Your blessings overflow, and yet we often take them for granted. Open our hearts to see your blessings and share them with others. Amen.