

Join the Discussion

Social Media

Share on our Facebook page what you are learning and the way you are noticing God's generous blessings to you!

Sermons

The sermons that tie into each week's material in this devotional can be downloaded or streamed for free at tlc.org/richerlife

Small Group Discussion Material

The questions on the following pages can be used for personal study, a couples' study, a family study with older children, or a small group study at work or church.

Each study includes these elements:

- **Discussion starter questions** designed to get people talking
- **Videos** you can watch on DVD or online at tlc.org/richerlife
- **Scripture reading and discussion questions** that follow
- **Homework** (suggestions on how to apply the principles we're learning)
- **Prayer** (I'll give you some suggestions for prayer; if this is a group study, you can also take prayer requests from group members, of course)

Please don't feel you need to cover all the questions. If you're leading a group, I suggest reading through the questions first and editing or adapting them as you see fit, just as I have edited and adapted them from a variety of sources.

Some questions in the weekly small group discussion guides are taken or adapted from:

- *Generosity: Responding to God's Radical Grace in Community* (New York: Redeemer Presbyterian, 2016)
- *Overflow: A Life Refreshed By Generosity* (GenerousChurch Inc, 2017)
- *Serendipity New Testament for Groups* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986)
- Andy Stanley, *How to Be Rich* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013)

WEEK 1

God's Lavish Grace

Big idea: God wants us to respond to his free gift of grace with the faith, gratitude, and generosity of a child.

Discussion starter

Begin with introductions. Share your name and where you grew up. What's one of the favorite gifts you've ever received, perhaps a memorable Christmas or birthday gift from your childhood? Why was it a favorite?

In this series, we hope to get a better understanding of God's lavish gifts toward us—and the ways we can bring gifts to others!

Watch the video for week 1 on DVD or online at tlc.org/richerlife

1. Why do you think so many people were inspired by this child's simple act of generosity?
2. Would an adult have been tempted to keep a baseball caught during a game rather than give it away? Why? Would you have kept it or shared it?

Now let's read Scripture about living in awareness of God's grace and having faith like a child!

Have someone in your group read Luke 18:9-17 out loud.

3. Jesus describes two men who went up to the temple to pray. To which of the two men in the story do you more readily relate? Or are there ways you can relate to both?
4. What is the Pharisee thankful for? What does this tell you about him?
5. Have you ever relied on good deeds to earn God's favor, like the Pharisee? How so?

6. Who are some of the “others” you’re sometimes tempted to think of yourself as “better than”, like the Pharisee did in this story?
7. How do you think Jesus wants us to be like little children? How does this relate to the parable of the two men?

Have someone read Luke 15:11-32 out loud.

8. This is a familiar story, but instead of focusing on the first son, look more closely at the second, in verses 30-32. Would you say the second son lived with a mindset of stinginess or of joyful generosity? What does the father say to him in verse 31? In what sense does God say the same thing to all believers?

God wants us to live in full awareness of his riches that he has lavished on us. The reason the second son was so stingy toward the first is that he never understood that his father wanted him to enjoy his riches! It is so vital to “frame” our own life story within God’s abundant generosity toward us!

9. How can an understanding of God’s lavish generosity toward you radically change your motivation to do good deeds for others? Have you experienced this change in your own life?

Closing Question

What in this week’s study has most challenged you, and why?

Closing Prayer

In your prayer time, confess any tendency to be self-reliant and proud instead of simply receiving God’s grace. Confess how easily you can look down on “others”. Ask God to help you grow in daily awareness of his blessings all around you!

WEEK 2

Cultivating Gratitude

Discussion Starter

What is something that happened to you this past week that you're thankful for?

Do you agree or disagree with this quote: "The problem with most of us is not that we're not rich; it's that we don't feel rich." -Andy Stanley

Now watch the video for week 2 on DVD or online at tlc.org/richerlife

1. What blessings does the narrator of the video describe that, in your opinion, many people don't even notice?
2. What are some things that, when you take a moment to think about, you're very grateful for—yet you rarely actually give thanks for...
3. How can practicing gratitude daily make you feel richer?

Have someone read Philippians 4:6-19 out loud.

4. In verses 6-9, Paul talks about finding inner peace, serenity, and joy. How does he tell us to find these things? How do they relate to the video René showed?
5. In verses 10-19, Paul thanks the Philippians for their generosity toward him. How is generosity an outflow of gratitude?

Have someone read Luke 7:36-50 out loud.

6. What did the sinful woman understand about her sin and God's grace that Simon, the religious expert, did not understand?

7. Let's talk about some specific things you're grateful for:

What skills do you have that you are grateful for?

What relationships do you have that you are grateful for?

What opportunities have you had that you are grateful for?

What are you grateful for about your faith—about what God has done for you in Christ?

Homework

This week, keep a running inventory of specific ways God has been generous to you (You may have already begun the list in your daily devotions!). This could include spiritual, material, relational blessings—anything you think of. Plan to report back next week on some of the things you wrote.

Closing Prayer

Have a time of group prayer centered on gratitude: If you feel comfortable, go around the room thanking God specifically for his love, and for other specific blessings—maybe some of the things you discussed in today's lesson.

Generous Relationships

Discussion Starter

Have your group share 2 to 3 things from your “gratitude lists” you started last week:

Now watch the video for week 3 on DVD or online at tlc.org/richerlife

The short film in today’s small group discussion starter is not a specifically Christian video; it’s put out by a mental health organization. I point that out because it’s important to understand, from a Christian perspective, that relational generosity is most effective when we are transformed from the inside-out by our knowledge of God’s relational generosity toward us. We become more gracious to others when we see how God is gracious to us.

1. What is your reaction to the short film René shows?
2. What is the hardest thing for you when it comes to “relational generosity”?
 - Patience
 - Empathy
 - Giving others “space” when they’re moody or upset
 - Not taking things personally
 - Not keeping score of the times I get the silent treatment
 - Other:
3. In what ways do you think people are “relationally generous” with you? Do you tend to sulk, or get distracted, or forget chores, or get moody, or overwork, or put people down? (Or something else? Go ahead and confess it if you feel comfortable sharing!)
4. What is the difference between being “relationally generous” and spoiling people, becoming co-dependent?

Have someone in your group read Luke 17:3-6.

5. How does Jesus’ command to forgive differ from the way most people react to offenses? How is it different from the

ways we may have thought of forgiveness?

6. Can you relate to the disciples' response to this teaching? (See verse 5) Why do you think they said this?
7. In reply, Jesus talks about the power of faith. What do you think faith has to do with the command to forgive?
8. How does understanding God's grace to us radically transform the way we forgive others?
9. Have you ever forgiven someone who wronged you greatly? If you feel comfortable, share your story briefly with your group. What spiritual truths did you discover in your own journey toward forgiveness?
10. Is there someone you are struggling to forgive? You may not want to mention them by name if this is a sensitive situation, but share what you feel is appropriate with your group and ask for prayer—prayer for the faith to forgive as Christ commands.

Homework

Here's a fun homework assignment: This week, keep asking God to show you little ways you can be generous: in your relationships, with your resources, with your help, etc. Tell him that your eyes and ears are open to his direction. Then share with the group next week something you were able to do! Remember, you're not sharing to get the praise of others; you are sharing your stories to inspire others.

Also discuss ideas with your group for a "generosity project" you could all do together. Think of something you can do with your small group, family, or friends. One suggestion: You could all volunteer for a community service project!

Closing Prayer

Praise God for his endless forgiveness and radical kindness to us. Confess that our hearts can often be hard or uncaring toward one another. Ask that God would keep opening our eyes to his forgiveness and love, so that we would more readily forgive others.

WEEK 4

Holy Hospitality

The big idea: Jesus talked a lot about how hospitality with our homes and meals can be a blessing to others and reflects God's heart.

Discussion Starter

Last week our homework was to watch and listen for opportunities to be generous. Share about opportunities you had.

If you and your group did a generosity project together, debrief: How did it make you feel? Was there anything about it that made you uncomfortable? Did you feel closer to God afterwards? Were there any interesting experiences or insights you gained through your project?

Describe someone you know or have known who is exceptionally hospitable. What did they do habitually that makes you think of them as hospitable?

Now watch the video for week 4 on DVD or online at tlc.org/richerlife

1. How do you feel about this child's decision to distribute "blessing bags"?
2. Does anything about this idea make you uncomfortable?

Have someone in your group read Luke 14:12-24

3. If you extended hospitality to the "poor, crippled, lame, and blind" in your community, who would they be? How could you show hospitality to them?
4. What do you think is Jesus' point in the parable?

One of Mother Teresa's favorite texts in the Bible, which she often quoted to support her ministry to the poor, is Matthew 25:31-46. Have someone in your group read it aloud.

5. List the six actions the King commends in verses 35-36:
6. Besides those mentioned here, who else might be “the least of these”?
7. Have you ever been in one of these six categories and had someone reach out to you? What happened?
8. In these six areas, where do you find yourself serving most naturally? In which areas do you have the most difficulty?
9. Have you ever found it rewarding to be involved in ministry to people in these categories? What did you do? How did it impact you? (Share with the group so that they might be inspired to join you!)

Homework

If you have not had a chance to do a “generosity project” yet with your group, discuss some ideas. Perhaps you can contribute to the “Project Pajamas” goal, or to another project. Maybe you have an elderly neighbor who could use help. Maybe you could all volunteer at the food bank or People’s Pantry. Our regular ministries could also use help, like our children’s ministry and the ushers and communion servers.

Closing Prayer

Praise God for inviting us to his lavish kingdom feast! Thank him that we do not have to earn our way in, but that Jesus already did that for us all! Confess that sometimes we are not free with our hospitality or generosity. Ask for a deeper understanding of the gospel message, of God’s hospitality to us. Ask that this would cause us to show no-strings-attached grace to others, especially those on the margins of society.

WEEK 5

My Source of Security

The big idea: There is a link between generous living and knowing where my true security really lies: The grace of God!

Discussion Starter

If you had to give up one “luxury” in your home, what would be the first to go? What would be the last to go? Coffee maker? TV? Computer? Wifi? DVR? Washer/dryer? Indoor toilet? Comfortable bed? Other?

How is this study affecting you so far? Did you take a step of faith in generosity this past week? If you feel comfortable, share your story with the group. Shared stories inspire and encourage!

Now open your Bibles to Acts 20:32-35 and watch the video for week 5 on DVD or online at tlc.org/richerlife

(Thanks to Redeemer Presbyterian Church NYC for the video resource)

As you watch, listen for:

- The link between grace and generosity
- The rich meaning of the word “blessed”
- The best motivation for generosity

1. What stood out to you most from Keller’s message?
2. What link does he draw between the gospel and our generosity?
3. How did this video impact your thinking about living generously?
4. In what ways have you experienced that it really is “more blessed to give than to receive”?

Have someone read Luke 18:18-30 out loud.

5. The rich young ruler claimed he had faithfully kept all

the commandments since his youth. Why then was it so difficult for him to follow Jesus' command in verse 22?

6. Is Jesus' command to sell everything and give it all to the poor required of everyone? Why or why not? (This might spark some lively discussion! Debate respectfully!)

Verses About the Truly Rich Life

The Bible talks a lot about what a truly rich life is, and how important it is to keep wealth and success in perspective. From the list below, choose a verse that is especially meaningful to you. Then take turns sharing which verse you chose and why.

Do not wear yourself out to get rich; do not trust your own cleverness. Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle. Proverbs 23:4-5

Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? James 2:5

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 1 Timothy 6:17

Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God. Ecclesiastes 5:19

(Jesus said) "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." Luke 16:13

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through him who gives

me strength. Philippians 4:12-13

Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, anyone who gives a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward.” Mark 9:41

“The Lord Jesus himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” Acts 20:35b

Homework

If you have not done a generosity project together with your group yet, decide tonight what you will do.

Closing Prayer

Pray that you will each experience God’s generosity to you—and have a chance to treat others generously—in exciting ways this week. Pray for open eyes to blessings and opportunities to bless others!

WEEK 6

My Resources & God's Power

The big idea: When I risk involvement, Jesus multiplies my resources into generous ministry to others!

Discussion starter

How is this study affecting you so far?

Would you say you frame your life story as one of abundance or scarcity? How does this impact your “giving identity”?

Now watch the video for week 6 on DVD or online at tlc.org/richerlife

(Thanks to GenerousChurch for the video resource)

1. What stood out to you most from Evelyn's story?
2. What words would you use to describe Evelyn's facial expressions?
3. She's a great example of what's been called “whole-life generosity”: Rooted in God's grace, and thus giving to others joyfully. Quickly list 2-3 ways, besides giving money, that we can be generous:

When you think about generosity, you might think you have little to give. I love Peter's statement to the beggar in Acts 3:6, “Silver and gold have I none, but what I *have* I give to you...” Let's look at a story that illustrates this. Have someone read the famous story in Luke 9:10-17 out loud.

4. What tones of voice do you hear in verse 11 and verse 12? How would you describe the differences in how Jesus looks at the crowd and how the disciples see the crowd? How do you account for this difference?
5. How would you feel as a disciple after you had seen the

crowd fed and you'd gathered all the leftovers? What do you think Jesus is trying to teach his disciples here? (Remember, he is training them for the worldwide ministry we see them having in the Book of Acts, where they have very little in the way of resources but are able to have global impact)

6. How have you seen Jesus stretch your resources far beyond what you'd imagined? If you feel comfortable, share a story that demonstrates this from your own life.
7. As you think back over what we've covered in the last 6 weeks about a richer life, what is one message God seems to be continually bringing back to you?

Closing Prayer

We have learned that God is your provider. He can meet your needs abundantly, no matter how scarce your resources. Trusting in his care defeats fear. So today ask God to help you put your ultimate trust in him and not in any worldly resources. Ask him to help you take more "generosity risks", both to draw you closer to him and to spread the kingdom of God.

WEEK 7

Inside-Out Generosity

The big idea: When I have been transformed by God's generosity toward me, I will be generous toward others. And when I am generous, I will be blessed.

Discussion Starters

Do you tend to be a risk-taker or a more safety-minded person? Give examples.

Did you have opportunities to show generosity in some way (in relationships, in service to others, in hospitality, in giving resources) this past week? If you feel comfortable, share an experience with the group (remember, shared stories inspire others!). How did you grow or learn through this experience?

Now watch the video for week 7 on DVD or online at tlc.org/richerlife

(Thanks to GenerousChurch for today's video of Francis Chan)

1. What stood out to you most from Francis Chan's comments? Do you agree or disagree?
2. Have you seen anyone drawn to faith because of a church's generosity?
3. Do you agree with the statement: "You can give without loving, but you can't love without giving"?

Have someone in your group read Luke 19:1-23 out loud.

4. In Luke 18, Jesus tells the rich young ruler to sell everything he owns and give it to the poor, and that man goes away sad. Here, a few verses later, Zacchaeus offers to give away half of what he owns, and Jesus is delighted. Why does he ask for 100% from one and 50% from another? What's the lesson you can draw from this? (Hint: It's not about the amount, it's about the _____)

5. In the devotions, René writes about a study on “luck”. To summarize: The research shows that, over time, people who thought of themselves as “lucky” risked more, took more chances, and said “yes” to more opportunities. Those who labeled themselves “unlucky” were very conservative, never took risks, and stayed within their comfort zones. Thus, the “lucky” were there to seize great opportunities when they came along. How does this remind you of the parable of the talents in Luke 19?
6. In this and other parables, does Jesus seem to advocate for more adventurous investment for the kingdom or for more safety?
7. How have you seen God bless your efforts when you have put your “talents” into circulation, even when you have been a little afraid to do so? If you feel comfortable, share a story that might inspire others in your group.

Wrapping Up Our Series

As you look back over the seven weeks of this study, what big idea does God seem to be teaching you?

Generosity Verses

Here are some verses about the concepts we’ve covered in this study. From the list below, choose a verse that is especially meaningful to you. Then take turns sharing which verse you chose and why.

Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, anyone who gives a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward.” Mark 9:41

The Lord Jesus himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Acts 20:35b

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Hebrews 13:2

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:32

And let us consider how we may spur one another on to love and good deeds. Hebrews 10:24

Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? James 2:15-16

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:12b-13

And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:8

You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. 2 Corinthians 9:11

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 1 Timothy 6:17

Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God. Ecclesiastes 5:19

Closing Prayer

As this study comes to a close, pray together that God will help you each continue to grow in a “generosity mindset” as we see the abundance of blessings God pours on us. Please pray that our church will continue to wisely “invest our talents”. Ask God to help you continue to trust in him as your perfect provider.