

THE GREAT GIVE

"THE CURRENCY OF KINGDOM CITIZENSHIP"

LUKE 18:18-30

This Week's Core Competency

Giving Away My Money – I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes. 2 Corinthians 8:7 *But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.*

The University of Notre Dame is sponsoring studies on generosity. Current studies come from many different and often disconnected disciplines and focus on various terms, such as philanthropy, volunteerism and altruism. The Science of Generosity initiative aims to bring together diverse approaches in order to create a field for the study of generosity in all its forms. You can go to the Science of Generosity website for additional interesting, informative, and helpful information (<http://generosityresearch.nd.edu/>).

An article entitled "Want to Be Happy? Stop Being So Cheap!" by Jordan Michael Smith and Christian Smith published September 22, 2014 contains the authors' findings on the relationship of generosity to happiness. Issues of *The Scrolls* in this sermon series will contain excerpts from this intriguing article found on the website.

"Start giving your money and time away: New research shows you'll be happier for it. Americans who describe themselves as 'very happy' volunteer an average of 5.8 hours per month. Those who are 'unhappy'? Just 0.6 hours. This is just one of the findings in *The Paradox of Generosity*, a new book by sociologists Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson presenting the findings of the Science of Generosity Initiative at Notre Dame. Researchers for the initiative surveyed 2,000 individuals over a

five-year period. They interviewed and tracked the spending habits and lifestyles of 40 families from different classes and races in 12 states, even accompanying some to the grocery store.

The result is among the most comprehensive studies of Americans' giving habits ever conducted. Other findings include lower depression rates among Americans who donate more than 10 percent of their incomes (41 percent say they rarely or never experience depression versus 32 percent for everyone else). And giving away money isn't the only way to reap the psychological rewards of generosity: Americans who are very giving in relationships—being emotionally available and hospitable—are much more likely to be in excellent health (48 percent) than those who are not (31 percent).

The following interview with Christian Smith is lightly edited for clarity.

Jordan Michael Smith: How is this different from preceding studies?

Christian Smith: A lot of studies before don't conceive of themselves as studying generosity. They're either focused on just volunteering or just financial giving or just giving blood. Our project is trying to see what the connections are between all different forms of generosity and to develop new ideas and measures of generosity that other people haven't studied before, such as relational generosity. That's making oneself in one's relationships available to other people and being giving towards them. We're trying to understand where generosity comes from, but also what the consequences of generosity are. So this book *The Paradox of Generosity* is very much focused not

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just on who gives or why they give but what effect it has on the giver to be generous.

JMS: Your book finds not just a correlation between generosity and happiness but actually a causation. Being generous makes a person happier and healthier. How do you explain that?

CS: We have a chapter in the book looking at what social scientists call 'causal mechanisms.' We found nine different causal mechanisms. It involves everything from developing a sense of self as generous to being more socially networked to being more physically active. We argue that it involves neurochemical changes in the brain, that it gives people more pleasure chemistry in their brain, a sense of reward for having done something good.

We don't argue it's one-way. We argue it's circular. The more happy and healthy and directed one is in life, the more generous one is likely to be, although that's not guaranteed. It works as an upwards spiral where everything works together, or it works sometimes as a downward spiral if people aren't generous."

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Luke 18:18-30

18A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

19"Who do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. 20You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'"

21"All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said.

22When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

23When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. 24Jesus looked at him and

said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! 25Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

26Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?"

27Jesus replied, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."

28Peter said to him, "We have left all we had to follow you!"

29"I tell you the truth," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God 30will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life."

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Bracket "eternal life" in v. 18.
- * Highlight the question in v. 18.
- * Circle "good" in vv. 18, 19.
- * Underline v. 19b.
- * Bracket "you know the commandments" in v. 20.
- * Underline v. 21.
- * Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 23.
- * Highlight the question in v. 26.
- * Bracket "eternal life" in v. 30.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Talk about what the ruler thought of Jesus based on how he addressed him.
2. Jesus' question, "Why do you call me good?" went unanswered. Do you think he asked the question to indicate: a) you should call me "good," b) you shouldn't call me "good," c) you shouldn't use "good" in such a careless way, or d) other? Explain.
3. This isn't the first time Jesus was asked the question "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Compare the answer to it in 10:27, 28 with the answer to it here.
4. Any chance the ruler was telling the truth in verse 21? Explain.
5. Explain what you think the rich man lacked based on what Jesus told him to do—"sell everything you have and give to the poor."
6. What do you surmise about the ruler from his response to what Jesus told him to do?
7. Why is it so hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God?
8. What makes salvation impossible with men but possible with God?
9. Turn Peter's statement in v. 28 into a question and answer it.
10. **Discussion:** Why do you or don't you believe that wealth is an obstacle to salvation and hindrance to following Christ?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

A wealthy man who was either the ruler of a synagogue or member of the Sanhedrin asked Jesus, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" What a great question! It comes as no surprise that Jesus had been asked it before. Luke tells us that an expert in the law asked the very same question in 10:25. There it led to the telling of a parable; here it leads to a dialogue (vv. 19-25)—followed by some incisive words to his disciples (26-30).

Jesus prefaced his initial answer to the question with a question of his own, "Why do you call me good?" The ruler had used a word that refers to what is intrinsically good rather than externally pleasing, and Jesus called his attention to it by noting, "No one is good—except God alone." This would have, in effect, caused the man to reflect on his estimation of Jesus, and it should have caused him to reflect on his estimation of himself. But hearing no comment regarding either, Jesus went on to say, "You know the commandments:" In other words, "Keep the commandments." If a person wants to inherit eternal life by *doing* something, then the thing to *do* is *obey* the commandments. That's what the expert in the law told Jesus in 10:27, to which the Lord replied, "You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live." Jesus went on to mention commandments on the second table of the law pertaining to loving one's neighbor because that was ruler's fatal flaw. He didn't love his neighbor as himself.

It didn't take Jesus long to point this out in a way the man could hardly deny. When the ruler said, "All these I have kept since I was a boy," Jesus didn't argue with him; he didn't need to. All he had to say was, "Sell everything you have and give

to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven." He didn't say this to suggest that eternal life can be bought by giving to charity. He said it to convict the man, and his words had an effect. When the ruler heard this, "he became very sad because he was a man of great wealth." His emotion betrayed the fact that he loved his money and himself more than his neighbor. Put differently, he wasn't as "good" as he thought he was. Had he acknowledged his sin and recognized who Jesus was like the woman at the well did, he would have been saved, but as far as we know, he didn't. But how could he? After all, he was rich; God must be pleased with him. How could he still lack anything?

Those who overheard the conversation were left wondering, "Who then can be saved?" This man was influential, pious, the recipient of God's blessing. If he didn't stand to inherit eternal life, who did? Jesus' reply says it all. "What is impossible with men"—it's impossible for men to obtain eternal life by keeping the law. No one can keep the commandments, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, love your neighbor as yourself." No one is good; no one is perfect. "Is possible with God"—it's possible for God to provide men with eternal life by grace apart from the law. Anyone can believe in his Son and have life through faith in him. And those who don't let wealth stand in the way of believing and following their Savior will be rewarded richly in this life and in the life to come.

The Message of the Passage

Don't let wealth keep you from God—trust in Christ and don't let money get in the way of following him.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

“The Currency of Kingdom Citizenship”
(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 18 **ruler** Commentators generally agree that the man was either the leader of a synagogue or a member of the Sanhedrin (I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT, 684; cf. Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC, 456).
- v. 18 **eternal life** See also 10:25. "In Jewish idiom to enter eternal life and to enter the kingdom were synonymous ideas. [See also "be saved" in v. 26.] The man knew that Jesus was offering Himself as a King and was offering a kingdom to Israel. He must have known from the Scriptures that righteousness was a prerequisite for entrance into the kingdom. He wanted to know what kind of righteousness Jesus required to enter His kingdom and if the righteousness he possessed was sufficient to admit him" (J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, 359, 60). In other words, since righteousness is required to enter the kingdom, righteousness is required to inherit eternal life.
- v. 19 **Why . . . good** "Only One is good in an absolute sense [as suggested by the adjective *agathos*], namely, God. By this He [Jesus] wishes to teach the young man that only if he regards Him as the Son of God, who is one with God, may he call Him 'good'" (Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, NICNT, 458). "He asked His question to see if the man would say that he addressed Him as the intrinsically good Teacher because he believed that He was the Son of God. If such had been his confession, Christ would have declared that he by faith possessed a righteousness which would admit him into His kingdom. But no such answer came" (Pentecost, 360). If God alone is good, what are the chances anyone will be able to keep his commandments?
- v. 20 **commandments** "'You know the commandments' [*entole*, 1:6] is tantamount to an injunction to obey them" (Marshall, 684, 85). The person who wants to obtain righteousness by doing something must do the law. "Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: 'The man who does these things will live by them'" (Ro 10:5; cf. Lev 18:5). "To answer his question as to what kind of righteousness was required to enter His kingdom, Christ directed him to the law. The law was a revelation of the holiness of God and the demands of God's holiness made on those who would be accepted by Him. Christ quoted the second table of the law, which governed one person's responsibility to another. If the man would be righteous to enter the kingdom, then he must demonstrate that righteousness by what he did to other people" (Pentecost, 360). See also 10:26-28 where Jesus approved the answer "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself."
- v. 20 **a boy** "Probably when he assumed adult responsibility around age thirteen" (Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 467). "The ruler's reply was sincere but superficial as the next verses indicate" (Stein, 457).
- v. 21 **sell everything** Jesus told him to "sell everything" not because he had to take a vow of poverty to be saved, but to convince him that he did not love his neighbor as himself and so had not kept the commandments. "He must not really have 'kept' the Commandments; for the result of keeping the Commandments is eternal life (10:25-28). It seems best therefore to see this statement as a clarifying 'commandment' intended to show the ruler that he had not really kept the Commandments" (457).
- v. 23 **very sad** "The man's response demonstrated that he was not righteous, for he was unwilling to fulfill the second table of the law and love his neighbor as himself. His response also revealed that he did not fulfill the first table of the law that forbade one to have gods above the true God. One's god is what he serves, and this man loved and served his wealth" (Pentecost, 360, 61).
- v. 24 **hard** What Jesus said was hard to receive. On one hand, the ruler was rich, surely a sign of God's pleasure; on the other hand, his wealth stood in the way of him entering the kingdom. How could that be?
- v. 24 **eye of a needle** Jesus uses hyperbole to make his point. "Jesus' exaggerated comparison makes sense only if his reference to camel and needle is taken literally. The suggestion that camel should be translated 'rope' (with great difficulty a rope threads a needle) is farfetched. Moreover, the popular view that Jesus made reference to a 'Needle Gate' in the wall of Jerusalem through which a camel passes with difficulty (on its knees and only after unloading its burdens!) is utterly unfounded (but popular with tourists and locals in Jerusalem)" (Craig A. Evans, *Luke*, NIBC, 276).
- v. 26 **Who then** "This question must be understood against the popular view that rich people are those people who have been favored and blessed of God. If rich people do not qualify for entry into the kingdom, then what hope is there for the rest of us? Jesus' answer in verse 27 makes it clear that whereas salvation is impossible for humans to achieve, it is possible with God. All people, whether rich or poor, are saved by God who is merciful, and not by themselves" (274).
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Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Throughout *The Great Give* series, we will be looking at excerpts from *Smart Money Smart Kids* by Dave Ramsey and Rachel Cruz. This book is available for purchase in our KidPix store. Ramsey discusses several safeguards to prevent your children from being harmed by the power of money. He defines the root of the problem with money this way: "The Bible does not say that money is the root of all evil; it says the love of money is the root of all evil. Money is amoral; it does not have morals. Money is not good, and money is not bad. Money is like a brick: A brick can be used by good people to build hospitals, or it can be used by bad people to smash windows. The brick is not bad or good; the person holding it is" (232). The rich young ruler had one fatal flaw; he loved his money. This love of money kept him from having a relationship with Jesus. It wasn't enough that he was a good person, he needed to be a sold-out person. Following Jesus means being willing to lay EVERYTHING down. Our kids will learn this when they see it modeled in our lives. Praise the Lord! We can trust Him with our families, futures and finances!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Luke 18:18-30

1. What did the young ruler ask?
2. Had the man been a good person?
3. What was he not willing to give up for Jesus?

What Do You Think

The man valued his money over everything even his relationship with Jesus. Is there something you value over everything else? Talk about it with your family and pray for each other that Jesus would be first in your home.

What R U Going To Do

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Mt 6:19). Draw a big heart and put "Jesus" in the middle. Around the outside of your heart draw pictures of other things you love. Put this somewhere to remind you that Jesus is first!

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Giving Away my Money - I share my money to help with God's work.

Memory Verse

Matthew 6:19 - *Do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-six years and have one son, Zach.

Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.