

EXPERIENCING THE LIFE THAT IS TRULY LIFE



LIVING GENEROUSLY

GUIDE



A CINEMATIC JOURNEY FROM **RE**IMAGINE



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GENEROUSLY

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WELCOME TO **LIVING GENEROUSLY**

Welcome to the Living Generously series! They say every journey begins with a single step. Fortunately for you, this journey begins with five great films!

SO WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

We live in a culture that has lost the true meaning of a generous life. Jesus spoke about generosity throughout his ministry in ways that now seem foreign even to those in the church. This series is designed to open our eyes to the biblical model of generous living and chart a course for our own journey of generosity.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

You may belong to a congregation that is watching the films during the Sunday morning sermons. Or you may belong to a small group that is watching the films together. We have designed the films, this study guide, and the other media we have produced so that they can be customized to your circumstances. If some or all of the members of your study group have not seen the films by the time you meet, then you will probably wish to watch the films together. If you are all watching the films during the sermons, however, and then gathering afterward in small groups or classes for discussions, then you may wish to watch the short vignettes we've designed to help you transition from the films into conversation. Or you may well wish to watch both the films and the vignettes when you meet and walk through these studies.

While the specifics are up to you, we have found this to be the best general approach:

- Open in Prayer
- Recap the previous lessons
- Watch the film, the vignette, or both
- Work through the study guide questions in group discussion
- Allow time for reflection and closing prayer

You can learn more about the films and the Living Generously series at TheReimagineGroup.com.

 LIVING
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SESSION 1

FIRST

SESSION 1

FIRST

OPENING QUESTION

1. How has someone else's generosity affected you? How did it encourage you to live more generously?

FOCUS

In the Old Testament, God had very specific rules regarding sacrifices and offerings made to Him. Leviticus addresses these offerings in detail: burnt offerings, meal offerings, sin offerings, peace offerings, the list goes on and on.

When Jesus became our perfect sacrifice on the cross, this system was forever changed. As we look in the New Testament for guidelines on giving, we no longer find rules about 2-year-old rams and grain cakes made with oil. Instead we see teaching that focuses on our hearts. Luke 10:27 says, "He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.'" 2 Corinthians tells us that God loves a cheerful giver and we are not to give under compulsion. What a difference! From a list of specific do's and don'ts to a call to live a life of generosity.

These next five sessions are not about rules for giving. They aren't going to give you a checklist or a dollar amount. This study is not about our wallets, but our hearts.

WATCH THE "FIRST" FILM/VIGNETTE



THOUGHTS

In the film we watched for this week, one of the main characters, Frank, gave sparingly out of his abundance. His wife Cassie gave her time and resources to serve a missionary family. The gardener "Re" (pronounced "Ray") gave sacrificially of his time and used his gifts to communicate truth. But Frank's son Evan – well, Evan gave his all. He gave his favorite toy, one that he couldn't just run down to the store and replace. He saw a need, an opportunity to bless someone, an opportunity to give the "best sheep," and he simply did it.

Frank missed this child-like faith. He was giving his first and his best – but where was it going?

At the beginning of the film, Frank had a conversation with his financial planner, Allan. At Frank's request, Allan had put together a plan to hit a "finish line" that would cover every expense for the rest of his life. What was Frank's response? "Double it."

Fiscal responsibility is important – in fact the Bible is filled with great wisdom on working hard, saving money – all the things that Frank was, at the core, trying to do. BUT, in his drive to provide and protect, Frank had lost that child-like faith. He had forgotten, or ignored, that God asks for our first and best... and promises that He'll bless the rest!

Frank had forgotten that it is God who gives to us so that we can bless others.



HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

1. In this week's film, Frank has his financial planner Allan take the net present value of everything he and his family will need and multiply it by 2. What do you think causes Frank to think this way? How has this mindset affected you when it comes to your resources?

2. Before we go any further let's examine something important. When you look at Frank, do you see someone with far more to give than you? What about Re who only had his service to offer? Or Evan?



AN ATTITUDE OF THE HEART.

1. Which of these is the hardest for you to give up?

- *Your time*
- *Your money*
- *Your stuff*
- *Your space*

2. When you face the opportunity to give or serve do you usually default to Re's way of thinking or Frank's? What causes that response?

THE BIBLE SAYS

He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

3. How, according to Luke 10:27, is true love defined? If you truly love in this way, how would that affect your heart in the area of giving?

THE BIBLE SAYS

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

4. Is our problem with giving all about the money?

5. What are your sheep? What's your "good sheep" and what's your "stinky sheep"?



FIRST AND BEST

1. Read 2 Samuel 24:18-25. How did David's attitude toward giving affect his sacrifice? How can you apply this to your own giving?

CLOSING THOUGHTS

"What are your sheep?"

Evan had an airplane, Frank had watches and Re had his service. We all have something to give: time, gifts, our resources, the list goes on. What they did with what they had didn't reflect their level of financial ability – it reflected their heart, their view of God.

Where is your heart today? Does your heart take joy in an opportunity to honor God through giving? Or does your heart search through dusty drawers to find what it will give to God?

Spend time talking to God this week about where you aren't giving your first and best. What is God asking you to give? Time? Money? Service? Let's give our first and best this week. What we offer Him reflects our heart!

DIG DEEPER

Questions to ponder this week as you pray about this lesson.

1. Which character would you say you are most like?

- *Frank – the man who has enough, but gives little*
- *Re – the man who has little, but serves/gives with his time*
- *Evan – the kid who is just learning to give his first and best*
- *Cassie – the woman who is willing to serve/host at the last second*

2. Are you willing to test God and give your first and your best?

DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT

Things to do this week as you apply this lesson to your life.

- Ask God to show you where you need to be more generous in your life, and ask Him to prepare you to give your best "sheep."
- Trust God's prompting to give this week. Whether it is your time, your attention, your resources or your talents. Step out in generosity and watch God work!
- Memorize Luke 10:27.

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SESSION 2

DEFENSE

SESSION 2

DEFENSE

OPENING QUESTION

1. What does the expression “money talks” mean? If your money were to talk, what do you think it might say about you and your relationship with money?

FOCUS

Guilty.

We hate that word. We spend our whole lives trying to avoid that word. Whether we work to do good to avoid being called guilty or we work hard to hide our true motivations so no one knows that we are guilty, we all want to be perceived as generous and giving.

But money talks.

And if our money talked about us, what would it say? Would it speak of our love for others, or our greed? Our money is our best character witness because it knows what we truly want and who we truly serve.

Throughout the Bible, especially the Old Testament, God battled against idols that constantly deceived and pulled the love of his people away. Money is just like that.

Money receives the trust and devotion of its followers, just like the Old Testament idols did. We put our hope in money – just look at the stock market where the key word there is “confidence.” What’s another word for confidence? Trust. When an idol becomes our chief security, we forget the grace and love of God.

We cannot serve two masters. Jesus called out his chief competitor – money. We are all guilty of shifting our trust to this idol. The evidence is very clear against us. God only needs to look at our spending, our giving, or our savings to know the condition of our hearts.



RECAP

Frank Donovan began his journey of generous living on a very different path. He was putting off a discussion of charitable giving with his financial planner and focusing instead on doubling his financial goals. Re, Frank's gardener, taught Frank's son Evan about the importance of giving God our first and best. Evan took this to heart, giving away his favorite toy to a little boy who didn't have any. Frank saw this act of sacrificial giving and experienced his first pang of conviction. This week we see just how apt that word is.

WATCH THE "DEFENSE" FILM/VIGNETTE

THOUGHTS

We've all heard the expression "Money Talks." Frank will never hear that expression the same way again – and neither should we. The Bible clearly teaches that money has a voice. Money can cry out and testify against us. Frank saw this clearly in his dream.

We are on this journey of living generously. We need a life change; a heart change. The point here is not to preach a poverty gospel or to villainize the wealthy. Remember what we talked about last week: It is not about how much you have, but it is about how we respond to God with what we do have.



MONEY

1. If your money took the stand, how would it answer the question as to whether you seek and heed advice from God in your relationship?

2. Do you think your life would be better if you had more money?

THE BIBLE SAYS

"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some have been led astray from the faith in their greed, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:10).

3. What, according to 1 Timothy 6:10, is the heart of the problem?

GIVING VS. THE REST

- 1.** Are you a generous person? How would we know?
- 2.** Frank's Giving was certainly a surprise to him. Was it because Frank gave little? Or was it about something more important than that?
- 3.** What is the percentage that God gives to us? A tenth? A quarter? Half?
- 4.** Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-7. What are the economic factors for the Macedonian churches? How did they give? Who did they give to first?

GUILTY

- 1.** Have you ever had a wake-up call when it came to your resources? Care to share?



THE BIBLE SAYS

"He who loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase: this also is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

2. When you're in love, how do you act?

3. Which commandment did Frank break?

THE BIBLE SAYS

"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You can't serve both God and money" (Matthew 6:24).



4. Are you guilty of serving another master besides God? What's the best thing to do if you find yourself guilty?

ACCEPT. BELIEVE. COMMIT.

1. Read Romans 3:10-26. Who is held accountable before God?

2. How do we get right before God, according to the following verses?

Romans 5:1-2: Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom we also have our access by faith into this grace in which we stand. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:8: But God commends His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 10:13: For, "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."

PRAY and ask God to forgive you and save you.

ADMIT you're a sinner and that your sin has distanced you from God. Acknowledge that you have fallen short of God's standard of perfection. Confess that you have put other gods before Him. We will all stand before God at judgment day and be held accountable for our actions. Ask for forgiveness now before it's too late.

BELIEVE that Jesus Christ died for your sin and paid for the price for your sin on the cross. The price we pay for sin is death, but Jesus paid it for us. Believe that Jesus rose from the dead to prove He was God, showing you He has the power over death.

COMMIT your life to following Christ because of what He has done for you. You now have a relationship with Jesus and you look forward to continuing that relationship with Him forever in heaven after you die.





Generosity is not on a list of rules handed down from on high and it isn't just a financial principle. It is a response to the love of God. When our hearts are aligned with the Father's, we respond by loving others, and living generous lives. Our money is the most obvious indicator of our hearts in this area. It has been said time and time again – if you want to see someone's priorities, look at their checkbook.

What master do you serve? Money? Yourself? Food? Status? Power?

Or do you serve the one true Master? Next question: How does your life reflect that?

Could someone else tell whom you serve by looking at your life?

DIG DEEPER

Questions to ponder this week as you pray about this lesson.

1. What would your "financial" characters look like? Describe them in detail.

- *Your Money*
- *Your Giving*
- *The Other 90%*

2. How has money become an idol for you? List three ways you struggle with letting money control you.

READ JAMES 5:3: Your gold and your silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be for a testimony against you, and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up your treasure in the last days.

What would your silver and gold testify about you? Who is in control when it comes to your money?

LET'S DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT

Things to do this week as you apply this lesson to your life.

- This week, at some time, take your checkbook or wallet and pray over it. Ask God what to do with your money and listen this week for his response.
- Pray and ask God for forgiveness if you have ever put money ahead of God. Tell Him you're sorry for giving your heart to other things.
- Do you have a relationship with God through Christ Jesus? Did you pray the prayer of salvation? If so, tell your teacher or pastor what you did - they would love to help you take the next steps!
- Memorize Matthew 6:24.



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SESSION 3

POOR

SESSION 3

POOR

OPENING QUESTION

1. Tell the group of the time in your life when you've been exposed to the greatest need. What were the people like, and how did you interact with them?

FOCUS

When it comes to being a true biblical giver, becoming poor is harder than you think. Jesus set the standard.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Jesus models servanthood for us by becoming poor so others can become rich. Philippians 2 says Jesus became like nothing in terms of his social status, stepping down from the throne room, and took the role of a servant. If we are truly going to serve others, we must put aside our comfort and our agenda and step into the lives of others, and the role God would have for us. For Jesus, that was a step down from His heavenly home into our earthly dwelling. Why? *Because He first loved us.*

Becoming poor relationally is the key to loving your neighbor. It's a true test of our hearts and whether we've repented of our worldly idolatry and selfish desires.

John the Baptist found joy in this statement, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). He understood that true blessing comes not from just writing a check or smiling at a homeless person, but from becoming poor in spirit so that others can enjoy all the rewards of a relationship with Christ.



RECAP

After Frank Donovan saw his son, Evan, give his favorite toy to a boy who had none, wealthy Frank's eyes began to open to the fact that he had not been giving his "first and best." Frank soon had a dream that furthered this conviction – quite literally! Frank's money, giving, and other 90% testified against him in a very strange "night court" of sorts. He awoke to find Re, his joyful and generous gardener, in the yard and felt as if the dream may be pointing him in Re's direction.

In this week's film, Frank tries to assuage his guilty conscience by giving money to his gardener and writing a check for a soup kitchen. But instead of picking up a pen, he's invited to pick up a ladle. And as he comes to know the people who eat at the food kitchen, he finds that generosity requires a relational generosity that knows and loves the least of these.

WATCH THE "POOR" FILM/VIGNETTE

THOUGHTS

Frank awoke from his dream knowing he had to do something. He hoped to give Re some money and to find a benefit for a donation, at least in order to assuage his guilt. But what he found was a step that would take him outside of his comfort zone in a big way. And so it is with you and me. Poverty, sickness, pain – our natural reaction to these things is a mixture of pity and a desire to separate ourselves from it. Just like Frank, we decide that we will "give and get out." We want to write a check and then hurry back into our comfort zones.

But as we have been discussing, God wants our hearts, not just our money. For Frank, the "good sheep," as we talked about in the first film, is not a hastily written check. Before Frank knows it, he has gone from a distant comfortable giver, to a reluctant servant.

UNCOMFORTABLE GIVING

1. What's the poorest you've ever been? How did it feel in those tough times?

2. What's the difference between telling someone what you can do to help and asking someone what you can do to help?

3. Should giving always be comfortable?



A FACE IN THE CROWD

1. In the film we watched this week, Frank Donovan brought his daughter Megan to a soup kitchen. Their perspective on the people they served changed as they came to know them better. Read Luke 8:42b-46a. How many people had needs in the crowd around Jesus? Why was the one woman healed out of all of them?

2. Did Jesus see the needs of the whole crowd or just one face in the crowd at a time?

3. What does this story teach us about God and the needs of others?

BECOMING POOR

READ: 2 Corinthians 8:8-9 and Matthew 5:3

1. Does Jesus want us to be poor?

READ: Philippians 2:5-8

2. What did Jesus make himself?

3. Why did Jesus do this?

CLOSING THOUGHTS

When we are willing to humble ourselves and serve – just as Frank bent down to wipe off the man’s shoe – we take that next step on our journey of living generously. We remove our own pride from the equation and see with the eyes of God.

The outflowing of gospel living is in our service. Just as Christ emptied himself, we are called to become poor that others may become rich.

The question to ask ourselves this week: Where is God asking me to roll up my sleeves and grab a ladle?

DIG DEEPER

Questions to ponder this week as you pray about this lesson.

1. How can you become more poor in spirit and take on the mindset of a servant?

2. If you were to become more poor in spirit and began living a generous lifestyle, who would be affected by that decision?

- *My spouse*
- *My kids*
- *My parents*
- *My co-workers*
- *My church*
- *My neighbors*



DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

Things to do this week as you apply this lesson to your life.

- Pay attention to the homeless and poor as you travel. See them as people and imagine their stories. Start by giving them something, but look for ways to start giving them more than just money (time, encouragement, prayer).
- Investigate a community project that you, your family, your church could invest in. Schedule a time you can get involved and lend a hand.
- Three times this week say to someone, "What can I do to help?" Be willing to do whatever it takes. Monitor your "joy." Did you enjoy it or was it a burden? Ask God why you had those feelings.
- Memorize 2 Corinthians 8:8-9.

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SESSION 4

SEEDTIME

SESSION 4

TOWER

OPENING QUESTION

1. How does a view from the strong tower of God's name prepare us to live generously?

FOCUS

When a farmer plants a seed, he has a purpose. He wants to see it grow and he wants to reap some sort of fruit from his efforts. The planter may not be the one who waters and he may not be the one who reaps, but in the end, the system worked because someone sowed seed in the beginning.

God uses a system of sowing and reaping in our world. We are stewards of our time and money and God asks us to use those resources to plant seeds in this world through generosity.

If we sow little, we'll reap very little. If we sow a lot, we'll reap a lot.

Now let's say we sow the money and go on a mission trip. Our efforts there plant seeds. But maybe a local pastor leads someone to the Lord as a result of our efforts. That's good! The system works! We did what we were commanded.

It's all a risk and we are risk managers. We need to pray humbly yet wisely about where we plant seeds, yet it's God who determines the outcome. Because of our faith in Him, we're fine with whatever happens.

There is a harvest coming. It's called the Day of the Lord, the moment Christ sounds the trumpet and receives those who called upon His name. That means right now is Seedtime. The sooner the seeds are planted, the quicker the potential for growth.

How much fruit will your investment of time, talents and resources produce?

Or will you be left holding a handful of seeds?

RECAP

Frank Donovan and his family are on a journey of generosity with the help of their joyful gardener, Re. After being convicted of his selfishness, Frank and his family began serving at a local soup kitchen. Frank learned that generosity is much more about a change in your heart than a signature in your checkbook.

Last time Frank's wife, Cassie, was hospitalized after a mugging. Faced with a problem that his money couldn't solve, Frank turned to Re for wisdom and was reminded that the name of the Lord is a strong tower – a rich man's wealth is just an imaginary wall, easily crumbled.

Frank has learned a lot on his journey. Is he ready to take the next step?

In this week's film, Frank begins to take godly risks with his time, his talents and his treasures. He involves the entire family in a life of true generosity, and he trusts that God will grow the seeds he has sown.

WATCH THE "SEEDTIME" FILM/VIGNETTE

THOUGHTS

In a previous film, Re told Frank that living generously was more than writing checks. This time we see a type of generosity that goes beyond simply throwing money at a problem. The construction company has not only been hired to fix up the soup kitchen, but is hiring workers from those that eat there.

This is what happens when we make the transition from viewing the poor as a group to viewing them as individuals. This act of generosity didn't just fix the roof, it employed individuals.

Simple Kingdom economics. What you sow you will reap. Re, being a gardener and spending his day quite literally sowing seed understands this well. While giving our "good sheep" to God reflects our love for Him, "sowing seed" reflects our understanding that we bring glory to Him when we are fruitful for His Kingdom. We sow by serving others and being led by the Lord to invest our time, gifts and resources as He sees fit.

Just as Jesus is the sower and the seed is the good seed of the Kingdom, as Christ followers, we sow our time, gifts and resources as well as sowing the gospel, scattering the seed, watering and harvesting in the hearts of our neighbors.



PLANTING SEEDS IN THE STORM

1. When you've faced economic setbacks, what have you learned from them?

2. Should we give when we are financially hurting?

THE BIBLE SAYS

"...how that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality" (2 Corinthians 8:2).

3. Let's be reminded about the Macedonian church. How were things economically for them when they gave to Paul's mission trips?

4. Less than 10% of people in churches tithe. Less than 50% of people serve/volunteer in their churches at all. What do you think needs to happen to change that?



PLANTING SEEDS AT THE NEED

1. The construction crew is hiring workers from among the patrons. How does this form of generosity go beyond the writing of a check?

2. Who had the real need – Frank or the people at the soup kitchen?

THE BIBLE SAYS

"But when you do merciful deeds, don't let your left hand know what your right hand does" (Matthew 6:3).

3. What does this verse mean? Does Frank Donovan demonstrate this kind of spirit in the film we saw for this week?



THE RISK OF PLANTING SEEDS

1. What kind of risks do we incur when we give our time, our talents and our treasure?

2. Why should we give in spite of the risk?

3. Read Matthew 25:14-30. What is the Parable of the Talents about?

4. Why was the one servant wicked and lazy?

5. How does this apply to us?

6. Is failure an option?

SOWING SEEDS

1. Why did Frank involve the whole family in the financial planning?

2. Read Galatians 6:1-10. What do these verses tell us about planting seeds properly?

THE BIBLE SAYS

"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him" (Romans 8:16-17).

3. Are you rich?

CLOSING THOUGHTS

It is now seedtime! The harvest is coming but we will not have a harvest unless we sow. John 15:8 says "In this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; and so you will be my disciples." In Galatians 6 we read "God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." Our sowing, or lack thereof, will either bring glory to God or mock Him.

Frank's journey isn't over. In fact we could say it has just begun. So it is with us. We have learned some keys to our journey of living generously. But we must apply them and walk together on this journey.

Ultimately, we not only make sacrifices in our generosity, but we ourselves are living sacrifices to God. Take a moment to consider: when you set yourself upon the altar, are you the "good sheep" or are you the "stinky sheep"? What would it take for you to be a good sheep offered up to God?

DIG DEEPER

Questions to ponder this week as you pray about this lesson.

1. It has been said that 2 questions will be asked of us in Heaven:

- *What did you do with Jesus?*
- *What did you do with what He gave you?*

How would you answer these questions as of right now?

2. Are you playing it safe in your life, or are you taking risks with what God has entrusted to you? What would it take for you to be ready to take more righteous risks?

3. Do you feel you are reaping sparingly or bountifully? What's the reason behind your answer?

4. Are you rich (i.e. Do you have more than your daily bread)? List all your blessings on the back of this sheet. Do you have enough?

LET'S DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT

Things to do this week as you apply this lesson to your life.

TODAY IS SEEDTIME! Here are some steps you can take to live the lessons you have learned during this study.

- Where has God planted you (church, work, school, neighborhood, city) so you can start planting seeds?
- Walk with Christ on a daily basis by drawing closer to Him through His word, prayer and time with other believers.
- Start volunteering and give of your time and energy. Involve the family so everyone can share in giving, and we can teach our families The Life that is Truly Life.
- Look back on the metaphors of the films. What stuck out to you? The sheep? The ladle? The tower?
- Find a group of people at church, work, home, or your neighborhood and go through this study with them. Multiply more generous living in the process!
- Memorize Galatians 6:7.
- Start living generously today!