

Blessing, Wealth and Generosity

Bible studies 2020

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As it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.”
2 Corinthians 8:15

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A summary and introduction

Introduction

A lot of people talk about tithing when they talk about money in the Bible. The Old Testament idea of tithing, however, was not that they gave 10%. They did in fact, give:
10% per year for the temple
10% per year for feasts
10% every 3 years for the poor and the priests.

That's an average of 23.3% per year.

This was not money towards missions and ministry. It was money for the needs of their whole community. It was for the priests, but also for the poor, as there was no other government to care for the poor. It was for celebrations. It was their tax system as well as their system for generosity. It was a way of ensuring all the needs of the community of God's people were met.

Today, we live in New Testament times. But we also live in a society where we have a secular government. We pay taxes to assist the poor, pay for hospitals, schools and law and order. As Christians, we do also often give to the poor individually as well. We also pay for Church buildings and ministry teams and missions work and Christian festivals like Christmas events. There is in some way little comparison to the giving of the Israelites with their three tithes and our giving each week to ministry in a western democracy.

Therefore, the guidelines we need for considering our wealth and blessing and generosity are not percentages, but principles. In these three studies, we will seek to ask God's direction from his Word in understanding how to, essentially, use what he has given us for his glory.

Series overview:

Blessing

Deuteronomy 14:22 – 15:11

Malachi 3:6-12

Mark 12:41-44

Generosity

Philippians 2:5-13

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

Wealth

Luke 12:13-21

James 4:13-5:6

Study One - Blessing

Deuteronomy 14:22 – 15:11

Malachi 3:6-12

Mark 12:41-44

Introduction

There are two main words in the Bible for “blessed”.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word “baruk” is used of God with a sense of *praise*. It is used of people with a sense of *happiness*.

The other word in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word “asher” which is only used of people and means *happy*. In the New Testament it is the same as the Greek word “makarios” which also means *happy*. In the New Testament, this has a strong spiritual sense. The beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-11 are good example of this. Those who are pitied by the world may be considered blessed, or happy, in the Lord. For example; “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3)

(Notes taken from New Bible Dictionary, Douglas et al (ed), 2nd edition. 1993. Page 144)

Opening discussion:

In what ways do you consider yourself to be blessed? Why do you think God has blessed you in those ways?

1. Read Deuteronomy 14:22-29

a. What are the Israelites to do with their yearly tithe?

b. What is the purpose of the tithes in these verses?

2. Read Deuteronomy 15:1-11

a. Why are they to cancel debts every 7 years?

- b. How are they to look after the poor in their land?
- c. How does God talk about blessing in these verses?

3. Read Malachi 3:6-12

- a. How were the Israelites robbing God?
- b. When will God bless them?
- c. Is it possible that we are robbing God today? If so, how?
- d. Do you think other people see you as blessed? If so, in what ways?

4. Read Mark 12:41-44

- a. Do you think the poor widow was blessed by God?
- b. What do you think God requires of you?

Study Two - Generosity

Philippians 2:5-13

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

Opening discussion:

How do we see the generosity of people today?

How do we see the generosity of God today?

Introduction

Generosity is a word which means different things to different people. Generosity of wealth is different to a generosity of spirit, or a generosity of heart. Our God is a generous God:

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. (James 1:5)

God calls us to be generous:

Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. (1 Timothy 6:18)

Mostly the word generous is used in reference to the way we use our material possessions.

In this study, we consider what it means to be generous – to see how God’s generosity should flow out of our own lives in practical ways.

God the generous giver

1. Read Philippians 2:5-13

a. How do these verses show the generosity of God in what he has given up in order to give to us?

b. What is God’s “good purpose” in verse 13?

- c. How does humility relate to generosity?

The generous church

2. Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

- a. What was it that enabled the Macedonian church to be generous? (verses 1-4)

- b. In what way (process) did the Macedonian church give? (verse 5)

- c. How is giving an act of grace? (verses 6-7)

- d. Verse 9 refers us back to Philippians 2. How does Paul expect us to respond knowing what God has done for us in Jesus?

- e. Paul's desire for equality (verse 14) seems to be a major motivation for generosity. How could your generosity bring equality in our community? (both the church community and the wider community).

3. Read Matthew 20:1-16 - The parable of the workers in the vineyard

What does this parable teach us about the generosity of God?

Study Three - Wealth

Luke 12:13-21

James 4:13-5:6

Opening discussion:

How do you manage your wealth? What are your principals in life for good stewardship of all that God has given you?

Introduction

In our western society, wealth is often seen with relativity. We are wealthier than this person, but poorer than that person. We have a cheaper car than that person but a nicer house than those people. Yet in reality, the western world is very wealthy.

According to the OECD in 2012, the top 0.6% of world population (consisting of adults with more than US\$1 million in assets) or the 42 million richest people in the world held 39.3% of world wealth.

The next 4.4% (311 million people) held 32.3% of world wealth.

The bottom 95% held 28.4% of world wealth.

In 2019, the average wealth of an **Australian adult** was **\$386,058(USD)**. This ranks us 4th in the world for personal wealth, behind Switzerland(1), Hong Kong(2) and the United States(3).

By comparison, the wealth of the average **adult in Sudan** is **\$534(USD)**.

(Reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distribution_of_wealth)

Perhaps we need to consider the greater responsibility we have to understand what God says to us with regards to our wealth, and then ask ourselves how we use all that God has provided us with.

1. Read Luke 12:13-21

a. What is greed?

b. What is Jesus' warning to rich people here?

c. Is there anything wrong with planning ahead?

d. What does it mean to be rich towards God?

2. Read James 4:13-5:6

a. What is arrogance?

b. What is Jesus' warning to rich people here?

c. Is there anything wrong with planning ahead?

d. What does verse 17 mean?

e. What does verse 6 mean?

3. What actions can you take in response to these last 3 studies to be right with God when it comes to the way you use your worldly wealth? How have you been challenged?