



## **Men's Bible Study**

### **BLOCK 5: LESSON 1**

Wednesday, May 4, 2022 6:30 pm

## BLOCK 5 LESSON 1 – GENEROSITY: THE POOR WIDOW

Who's the most generous person you know?

How are you currently using your resources to further God's kingdom?

Why do you think loyalty is important in leaving behind a godly legacy?

How do you express your loyalty to Jesus?

How do loyalty and generosity call for sacrifice?

In 1965, Carol Donald took in her first foster child. She and her family lived in northern California. Her own children were in high school and her husband had recently retired from the Air Force. While attending a church class with her daughter, Carol noticed two pregnant girls who were only fourteen and wondered what would happen to the babies when they were born. She prayed about her concerns, and the next day she answered a newspaper ad for foster parent training.

In the years that followed, Carol and her husband were foster parents to one hundred children with medical needs. Some of the babies were born addicted to methadone or suffered from fetal alcohol syndrome, and the Donalds lovingly cared for these babies through terrible seizures.

When her husband died in 1985, Carol didn't stop. Determined to go on caring for foster children, she continued foster parenting for another twenty-three years. Carol finally "retired" as a foster parent when she fell and broke her femur at age eighty-five. "I've put my heart and soul into those children," Carol said.<sup>85</sup> Her foster children call her "Grandma" and they call each other "cousins." Once a year, they gather for a reunion. Carol says, "It's a wonderful life I live, and if I had to live my life over I wouldn't do it one bit differently."<sup>86</sup>

Freely opening her heart, her home, and her life, Carol Donald demonstrated generosity in reaching out to provide and care for some of the most vulnerable children in her community. She modeled generosity in her actions by making a safe home for these children in the foster care system. Truly she has built a legacy of generosity.

Sometimes what comes to mind when we think of leaving a legacy of generosity are those great philanthropists who acquired a lot of wealth and give lots of money to numerous causes. However, we'll see through our study this week that a legacy of generosity is not measured by the amount given but by the attitude of the heart.

When you think of a generous person, who comes to mind? Why that person?

## UNPROTECTED AND VULNERABLE

In **Mark 12:41-44**, we find the story of Jesus sitting and watching the people as they brought their offerings to the temple treasury. The Court of the Women area of the temple—the space that was as close as the women could get to the sanctuary—was where the treasury was located. Consisting of trumpet-shaped chests where worshipers placed their offerings, the sound of the dropping coins was amplified. A large offering amount could make a lot of noise when the worshiper dropped it into the chest.

The Bible also tells us that plenty of wealthy people put in big offerings. At first glance, it might make sense for Jesus to call attention to one of those big, loud offerings if He wanted to talk about generosity. But Jesus often did the unexpected. This time, He called attention to a woman who dropped in just two coins.

As we've mentioned previously in this study, in the ancient world widows were among the weakest, most vulnerable members of society. Men in that culture provided the economic, legal, and physical protection for women and children. A woman whose husband died stood unprotected.

Yet when Jesus wanted to describe generosity and show what it looked like, He looked to the example of a widow.

**Read Mark 12:41-44.** What do you think Jesus is teaching us in this story about the widow's offering?

Think about the way God views generosity and compare it to the way many people in our culture today view it. How is it similar? How is it different?

## SHE GAVE "ALL"

Most of us are fortunate that we have never needed to worry about having enough money to buy food. But the widow Jesus observed lived much closer to the edge of going hungry. The phrase "all she had to live on" (v. 44) meant that she would not have enough for her next meal.

What kinds of honest excuses might the widow have had for not giving an offering at the temple that day?

Which of the following reasons have you used for not giving?

- “I’ll give when I have more.”
- “I’ll give when I get a raise.”
- “I’ll give when I’m older.”
- “I’ll give when my bills are paid down.”
- Other reasons:

The Bible does not tell us that the woman spoke during this brief time when Jesus watched her. Yet her actions shout to us from the pages of Scripture. Through her example, Jesus teaches us that generosity is not tied to the amount of our financial resources.

Why is your net worth irrelevant when it comes to being a generous person?

It’s important to remember that we can give in a variety of ways. Giving doesn’t necessarily mean digging deep into your wallet or checkbook. Consider your many different kinds of resources—all of these are gifts from God. Yes, giving our money is one way we should give. But we can also be generous with our time, energy, talents, resources, and words.

#### THE FAITH CONNECTION

What was the woman demonstrating when she gave everything she had?

Maybe it feels like it’s easy to be generous if we have a lot. In our heads, we connect our ability to give with the balance in our bank accounts. But the Bible teaches that generosity isn’t connected to our bank balances—it’s connected to our faith.

How is generosity connected to faith in God?

What kind of faith did the woman demonstrate when she gave “all she had to live on”?

How did Jesus redefine greatness with this story of the widow's giving?

In our culture, people are often impressed with "big." Big money gifts are more impressive than tiny money gifts. When Jesus saw the widow give all she had, though, He turned the idea of big upside down and showed us that in God's economy, all gifts, large or small, are important.

#### CHURCHES THAT OVERFLOWED GENEROSITY

We find another beautiful example of generosity in 2 Corinthians 8. This story showcases the bold generosity displayed by churches in the region of Macedonia.

#### **Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-9.**

These churches were not wealthy. In fact, they were just the opposite—churches where the members lived in poverty. Paul described how these churches were experiencing "a severe trial brought about by affliction" and "extreme poverty" (v. 2). So perhaps it was an unexpected turn when Paul wrote to the more affluent church in Corinth and named the Macedonian churches as a role model of generosity.

Despite their own poverty, when the believers in the Macedonian churches heard that there was a famine and the believers in Jerusalem were suffering, they dug deep and gave generously (8:10).

Paul said the Macedonian believers gave "beyond their ability" (v. 3) and "begged us earnestly for the privilege of sharing" (v. 4).

Think about times when you had an opportunity to give—did it feel more like a burden, obligation, or privilege? Explain.

How does it impact our attitude and our generosity when we view giving to God's work as a privilege?

## THE SECRET SAUCE RECIPE FOR GENEROUS GIVING

How is it that these impoverished Macedonians “overflowed in a wealth of generosity” (v. 2)? How could they be willing to give over and above? The answer seems to lie in a priority action and a prime example.

**Reread verse 5.** What was the priority action? How does that action affect our generosity?

**Reread verse 9.** Who was the prime example? How does that example affect our generosity?

When our lives are dedicated to Christ and we understand the depth of His generosity toward us in His sacrificial death, how can we not be generous in return? He showed us the way and we follow with joyful, obedient, legacy-leaving generosity.

**IN YOUR OWN WORDS:** Reflecting on the passages we studied today, how would you define generosity?

**IN YOUR OWN LIFE:** What next steps do you need to take toward building a legacy of generosity?