

Spiritual Disciplines

Generosity

It has been said that a person's priorities can be discovered by looking at two things - his diary and his cheque book. What we spend our time and our money on will lead us to where our heart really is. This is what Jesus meant when he said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21) As Jesus teaches on practices of righteousness he assumes that we will practice generosity. Lets read what he says about it in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 6:2-4

² "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

1 John 3:16-18

¹⁶ By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth

James 2:14-17

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Read Matthew 6:2-4 and mark "give" with a 

How do we know Jesus assumed we would be giving? Who to?

V2-3 Who are the two different audiences we could wish to impress?

V4 Again, who is the audience that matters?

Read 1 John 3:16-18 and mark "love" with a 

V16 How do we know what real love looks like?

How should knowing this impact on us?

V17 In what ways can we lay down our lives for others? What will such acts confirm?

V18 How are we called to love others?

John says giving is evidence of God's love abiding in us. James helps us to understand it in another way.

Read James 2:14-17 and mark "faith" with a 

V14, 17 What is the relationship between faith and works?

How does v14 reflect the same idea as in 1 John 3:19?

V15-16 How does faith demonstrate itself in works?

What is the core lesson being taught by both John and James?

Matthew 6:19-21,24

¹⁹ “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Mark 12:41-44

⁴¹ And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴² And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. ⁴³ And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. ⁴⁴ For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

Generosity is an issue of the heart. Lets look at more of Jesus teaching on this subject.

READ Matthew 6:19-21,24. Mark “treasure” with a



V19-20 What is Jesus teaching about laying up treasures? Where? Why?

V21 What is the deeper issue that Jesus is addressing?

V24 How can money become a master?

In what ways does it conflict with God’s reign in our lives?

How would our lives demonstrate the teaching of Jesus when he declares, “You can not serve God and money”?

READ Mark 12:41-44 and mark the widow with a



V41 What is Jesus doing? What does this tell you about his interest in this issue?

List the differences between the rich people and the widow?

In God’s kingdom, who gave the most? Why?

What does this teach you about the discipline of giving?

In what way is giving an act of faith?

In 2 Corinthians ch.8 & 9 Paul teaches a lot about giving. Lets focus on just three verses.

READ 2 Corinthians 9:6-8. Mark “sow / give” with a



V6 What is the relationship between sowing and reaping?

V7 Where are the decisions about giving made? How does this relate to Jesus teaching in Matthew 6?

How are we to give? What sort of giving does God love?

Underline the word “all” in v8 - list each one.

V8 How does God meet us in our giving?