

# Small Group Study

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## Introduction

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At WLC we believe that life transformation happens better in circles than it does in rows, in fact one of our values is that ***Life is Better Together***. This is expressed best in our Small Groups where we encourage and challenge one another all while doing life together. Over the next couple of years we believe God is calling us to do some extraordinary stuff for His Kingdom as the power of Jesus is unleashed in our lives. In this short four-week study you will be challenged and encouraged by the call to be generous in your giving. As you work through it remember that when it comes to giving financially it's not about what God wants from you, it's what He wants for you: the gift of a deeper faith and trust in His promises to provide.

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# Week 1: Transformation

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## Icebreaker

- When have you made a difficult change in your life?
- When have you seen someone or something transform for the better?

## Video

## Discuss

### 1. God is the first and most generous giver.

- When you think about God's generosity, what comes to mind?
- Read James 1:17. What good and perfect gifts have you received from God?
- Which statement is more true for you? Why?
  - "I naturally think of all of my possessions as gifts from God."
  - "I have to remind myself that my possessions are gifts from God."
  - "I've never thought of my possessions as gifts from God."

### 2. God's generosity changes everything.

- Share an example of unconditional generosity that you have heard about, witnessed, or received.
- Read Romans 5:6. Notice that God stepped in "when we were utterly helpless." God's gift isn't transactional—a give-and-take between us and God—it's transformational—He changes us.

- In your world, what does living a life transformed by God look like?

### **3. When we give, the world notices.**

- Early church scholar Tertullian (AD 155-240) writes of the pagan observation of the Christians: “See how they love one another.” Where have you seen this kind of love in action in the Christian community?
- Read Acts 4:32-35. What caused such unity and generosity among the believers?
- What would the impact be if followers of Jesus at Woodbury Lutheran lived with similar generosity?

## **Wrap Up**

- Can one be a follower of Jesus and not live generously? Explain.

## **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, teach me what it means to live as one who has been transformed by your love and sacrifice. Unleash Your power in me, in my relationships, in our communities, and in Your world. Amen.

# Throughout your week...

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## Reflect

- Transformation requires letting go. Are you holding on too tightly to anything to experience God's transforming power?
- What do your current stewardship, generosity, and giving reflect about your understanding of God's transforming grace?
- What does it look like to be financially generous in a life transformed by God?"

## Act

- Pray that God will give you the opportunity to reflect His generous grace by blessing someone else.
- When He presents the opportunity, ACT!



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# Week 2: Freedom

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## Icebreaker

- When have you experienced a feeling of incredible freedom?
- What factors need to be involved for one to experience freedom?

## Video

## Discuss

### 1. **Your heart will follow what you value the most.**

- What things do you value the most? What things would your family and friends say you value most?
- Read Matthew 6:19-21. What are the heavenly treasures Jesus would have us store up?
- Why does He warn so strongly against storing up earthly treasure?

### 2. **Freedom isn't the complete lack of rules, freedom is choosing what you allow to rule you.**

- What dictates your choices, your decisions, and where you spend your money?
- Read Matthew 6:24-25 and 31-33. Jesus gives several examples of things that can rule us. What are they?

- What does Jesus call us to allow to rule in our hearts and minds? What promise does he attach to this call?

### **3. Generous giving is a powerful expression of freedom.**

- Reflect on the statement above. Agree or disagree?
- Read Luke 19:6-10. What motivated Zacchaeus (a wealthy tax collector) to give away and pay back so much of his money?
- What would stewardship, generosity, and giving that express the freedom we have in Jesus look like?
- Does your giving adequately express that freedom?

### **Wrap Up**

- Discuss this statement: “Generosity helps free us from the dangers of money.” (MacDonald, Johnson, Generosity © 2013, p. 46)

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, let my life be one of grateful response to the freedom You won for me through Your life, death, and resurrection. Unleash Your power in me, in my relationships, in our communities, and in Your world. Amen.

# Throughout your week...

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## Reflect

- Do some heart-diagnostic work. Do your life and choices line up with what you claim you value most?
- Keeping Matthew 6:33 in mind, make a list of those things that you value most.

## Act

- List the steps you will take to align your choices and actions with what you've listed.
- Look at pages 8 & 9 in this book. Woodbury Lutheran has listed four areas where our heart and treasure will be focused over these next two years.
- Give thoughtful consideration to how God is prompting you to expand your financial giving as we seek to accomplish these goals.





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# Week 3: Trust

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## Icebreaker

- When have you placed your trust in someone or something and had it rewarded?
- When have you experienced someone placing their trust in you? What did that action evoke in you?

## Video

## Discuss

### 1. **God blesses and refreshes those who trust in Him.**

- When have you experienced God's blessing and/or refreshing?
- Read Romans 15:13. Notice what Paul says God will do for those who trust in Him. What will the result in the believer's life be?
- Notice the progression... First, God fills. Then, through the Spirit's power, the believer's life overflows.
- What does a life "overflowing with confident hope" (NLT) look like? How does such a life behave?

### 2. **Your generosity points reveal the object of your trust.**

- When have you been disappointed by something or someone you have put your trust in?
- Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19. Why is God a better object of our trust than money?

- Notice Paul doesn't say money is bad, but it is to be used. How does he say to use it?
- How does Paul describe the resulting life of a generous follower of Jesus?

### **3. Generosity focuses on faith, not on fear.**

- What obstacles stand in the way of you increasing your generosity?
- Read 1 Kings 17:7-16. Putting yourself in the widow's place, how eager would you have been to accommodate Elijah's request?
- Notice Elijah's words to her in vs. 13. What role does fear play in your willingness to give generously?
- Considering your resources, do you believe it's possible for you to imitate the generosity of God?

## **Wrap Up**

- Discuss this statement: "Generous people often discover all kinds of new wealth (spiritual and material) that permit them to expand the parameters of their generosity." (MacDonald, Johnson, Generosity © 2013, p. 58)

## **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, give me eyes to see the abundant blessings you have poured out on me and the abundant opportunities You give me to bless others. Give me courage to act on these opportunities. Unleash Your power in me, in my relationships, in our communities, and in Your world. Amen.

# Throughout your week...

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## Reflect

- Take an inventory: what material gifts has God blessed you with?
- Do you find yourself thinking more about – the giver or the gifts?

## Act

- This week, take action on the call to “be rich in good works and generous to those in need.”
- Take a look at the Generosity Journey on page 20 in this book. Where are you today on your journey?
- Think about your life and situation. What would moving to the next step on the journey mean for your life?



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# Week 4: Life

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## Icebreaker

- Describe a time (perhaps on a mission experience) when you've come to the realization of just how "rich" you are.
- What effect did that realization have on you and how you view your life?

## Video

## Discuss

- 1. Living a "true life" (from last week's discussion of 1 Timothy 6:19) means living as citizens of the Kingdom of God here and now.**
  - In our time of instant gratification, how difficult is it to "store up treasures in heaven" rather than just receive an immediate return on our actions?
  - Read Matthew 25:34-40. What acts does the King list as markers of citizens of His Kingdom?
  - Why were the righteous so surprised to hear His words?
  - Describe the life of one who lives today as a citizen of God's coming Kingdom.
- 2. "God prospers me not to raise my standard of living, but to raise my standard of giving." Randy Alcorn**
  - Respond to the statement above.

- Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-11. Notice the “this, then that” statements in these verses.
  - What are God’s actions in these verses and what responses are expected of the recipient?
  - Do these expectations sound like difficult challenges or opportunities to respond in joy to God’s generosity?
- 3. God’s desire is that each person would excel in the grace of financial giving.**
- What spiritual fruit is most evident in your life or comes most naturally to you?
  - Read 2 Corinthians 8:6-9. In verse 7, Paul acknowledges their other areas of excellence. Why does he add his desire that they also excel in giving?
  - In verse 9, Paul lays down a strong challenge. Why does he connect Jesus’ sacrificial act of giving His life to our act of giving?

## Wrap Up

- How has the Lord been working in your heart as you contemplate what stewardship, generosity, and giving look like for you?

## Prayer

Lord Jesus, speak Your call to live and give generously to me daily. Give me faith to see past myself and my fears and to see only You. Let me live as a citizen of Your Kingdom now. Unleash Your power in me, in my relationships, in our communities, and in Your world. Amen.

# Throughout your week...

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## Reflect

- What are my biggest challenges in living a life of unleashed generous giving?
- What do these challenges tell me about the state of my heart and trust in Jesus?

## Act

- Look again at pages 8 & 9 in this book and Woodbury Lutheran's four focus areas for the next two years.
- How will you join in answering the call God has extended to our congregation? Complete the response card and bring it to worship on October 28/29 as we celebrate how God has answered our prayers.



