



GENEROSITY & GRATITUDE

**LIFE GROUPS
LEADER GUIDE
OCTOBER 24-31, 2021**

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Generosity</i>
	October 24	21

GENEROUS AND WILLING TO SHARE

1 TIMOTHY 6:6-19

OCTOBER 24, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying 1 Timothy 6:6-19. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: IN THIS SECTION OF 1 TIMOTHY, PAUL PROFILED UNHEALTHY THINKING WHICH RESULTS IN FALSE TEACHINGS. BUT THOSE DISTRACTED BY THE PURSUIT OF MONEY WILL OPEN THEMSELVES UP TO HARM. TRUE PURPOSE AND PEACE ARE FOUND IN GODLINESS.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: WE DON'T OWN ANYTHING; RATHER, WE MANAGE THE RESOURCES GOD HAS ENTRUSTED TO US. THE MORE WE LEARN TO BE CONTENT IN GOD, THE LESS WE WILL FEEL THE PULL OF MATERIAL WEALTH.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS GAVE UP HIS ETERNAL RICHES AND BECAME POOR FOR OUR SAKE (2 CORINTHIANS 8:9).

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 What does it mean to be content? What is the difference between contentment and complacency?
- 2 Would you say you are content with where you are in life? Explain.
- 3 How does achieving contentment look different in the life of a follower of Jesus than in the life of someone who does not know Jesus?

Contentment is a state of happiness or satisfaction. Most often, we think of contentment as being tied to circumstances. For example, “If I just accomplished this...” or “if I just had that, then I’d be content.” But in reality, contentment exists outside our circumstances. While most people around us look for contentment and satisfaction in money and by securing a certain standard of living, followers of Jesus realize that true contentment can only be found in God. When we realize that God is the owner of all things and we are merely the managers of His resources, it frees us to abide in Him and receive our joy from His hands rather than the fleeting pleasures of this world.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 TIMOTHY 6:6-10.

Here Paul was speaking against false teachers who believed success was found in wellbeing and material wealth. As Christians, we believe God has called us to be generous with all that we have. Being content in God and generous toward others produces a gain that we will experience in this life, as well as the life to come.

- What gain is there to be found when you pursue contentment in God? How does the call to follow Christ reframe our goals and our desires?
- How did verses 7-8 support the claim that Paul made in verse 6?
- What did Paul teach about material wealth?

Paul was not making a blanket declaration against wealth, but a point that nothing can be taken with us when we die (v. 7). Paul didn't condemn wealth, but he condemned the pursuit of wealth as a way to find joy. Put another way, money is not evil, but the love of money is.

- What is the difference between being an owner and being a manager? How does seeing yourself as an owner produce greed that is hard to overcome? How is greed a trap for our souls?

- How does pursuing wealth as an ultimate end lead to other kinds of sins?

Notes:

Owners have the right to do what they please with all they own. A manager is charged with stewarding what does not belong to them. When we think about ourselves as owners, we see wealth as something we can acquire and store up. It drives us to pursue wealth at the expense of our relationship with Christ and commitment to gospel ministry. When we see ourselves as owners, we develop a love for money that leads to other sins because of the roots it lays in our hearts if unchecked. However, when we see ourselves as managers, we realize that we own nothing, and we will be judged on what we did with the resources that were not ultimately ours.

- At First Woodway, we want to become people who give of ourselves, our time, and our resources. How does loving money keep us from doing all of these things?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 TIMOTHY 6:11-16.

- Rather than pursuing the ownership of wealth, seeing ourselves as managers frees us to pursue what really matters. What are those things?
- What calling did Paul urge Timothy to follow?

The Bible repeatedly contrasts the temporary nature of material wealth with the eternal nature of spiritual wealth. Those who see themselves as managers live with freedom in this world; they are not anchored to it. Instead, they fight the fight of faith and pursue the only treasure that will never fade.

- The distinction between being an owner and a manager is ultimately rooted in realizing who we are in light of who God is. Who are we in Him?

Notes:

Those who follow King Jesus listen to His voice, which means our giving becomes indefinite. We do with our resources what the owner of those resources tells us to do with them. In this section, Paul broke out in a prayer of praise to God because truly seeing who God is always has implications for our lives. God's identity as owner drives us to steward the gifts He has given us in a way that honors Him.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19.

- What are God's expectations for people who "are rich in this present world," according to this passage?

- Why is generosity an effective way to combat the false pride and false security that money brings?

Paul mentioned four ways to use wealth wisely. To do good involves using wealth in a positive way instead of letting it feed a life of personal luxury. To be rich in good deeds pointed the wealthy in the direction in which they were to be truly rich—in service to others. To be generous demands a liberal sharing of wealth with others. One who is willing to share shows that the generous act of giving springs from internal generosity. When we understand how much God has entrusted to us, we desire to grow in our generous response to Him. Paul was suggesting that genuine wealth is found in what we give, not in what we have.

- Part of the reason we foolishly hold on to wealth is that we think it brings us security in this life. How does generosity actually pave a path to a wealth that we will never lose?

- What dividends do we receive on our eternal wealth in the present world?

Notes:

Eternal life is both a present and a future possession. Jesus defined it as knowing Him and knowing God the Father as well. But why this directive? Timothy had been a Christian for several years. So in what sense did Paul want Timothy to lay hold of what he already possessed? The Greek word translated “take hold” means to make something one’s own. Paul’s thought likely was that Timothy—and we by extension—should live the Christian life to the max. This included giving generously as Christ modeled for us.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- What change needs to take place in your life to show spiritual growth in the way you view money and possessions?
- How can we continue to remind one another of the temporary nature of material wealth and the eternal nature of spiritual wealth?
- What has God made you a manager of? How can you use those resources for the work of His kingdom in our city and around the world?

PRAY

Praise God for the good gifts that He gives. Thank Him for the unfading and everlasting nature of eternal gifts. Pray that you would be a faithful manager of the resources that He has given you as you pursue the wealth that will be fully revealed in eternity.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - How can you refocus your money and resources toward storing up heavenly treasure?

 - Who do you know who models a focus on lasting treasures? What about that person stands out? What trait would you most like to imitate?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize 1 Timothy 6:18-19.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: Matthew 6:19-34.

1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19

6:17. Christianity does not require a vow of poverty or the forsaking of wealth, for Paul wrote, command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant. Some followers of Christ will be wealthy by society's standards. Just as Paul told slaves to stay and serve their masters (1 Tim. 6:1-2), so also he left the rich person in his surroundings. Circumstance makes little difference in the value system of God. It is how a person behaves in their circumstances that makes the difference—either glorifying or discrediting the name of Christ. However, there are inherent dangers in having wealth.

Notes:

Those who are rich can easily fall into arrogance. This is an ancient problem, and Israel provides a classic example. They possessed and settled the Promised Land after years of wanderings. God, foreseeing what would ultimately occur, warned the people that wealth could be their undoing. "When you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Deut. 8:12-14).

Abundance breeds pride—toward God and others. The person who has much begins to credit himself with his wealth. Creeping into his heart is the notion that he has done well on his own, that he can get by without God. Wealth also creates an economy of false values. Beneath the class wars and the tensions between rich and poor simmers the deception that worth is determined by possessions.

Another danger which confronts the wealthy is that they easily place confidence in what they see—their stuff. Paul told them not to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain. Jesus cautioned us about the uncertainty of money (Matt. 6:19). Each day we see the evidences of his warning—bankruptcy cases increase, the stock market fluctuates, governments fall and their monetary systems

fail, prices escalate, and money drains away. There is no predictability when it comes to money; trusting it is risky.

Instead, wealthy believers are to hold their money with an open hand; they are to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Putting hope in money is no different from the primitive man or woman who bows to an idol of wood or stone, expecting it to protect or provide. This is worshiping the creation instead of the Creator (Rom. 1:25). The Christian must never invest trust in things but in relationship—particularly with God, maker of all that exists (John 1:3).

Notes:

A stronger, clearer statement about worthy trust could not be made than that given by Jeremiah: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: ‘that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,’ declares the Lord” (Jer. 9:23–24). Riches are unworthy to be the center of our hearts.

6:18. Paul almost always countered the negative with the positive. If we are to refrain from something, then he tells us to engage in something else. If the rich are not to devote themselves to things, then they are to invest themselves in doing good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

How we invest ourselves and our time is more valuable than money. God desires that we spend ourselves in doing good, helping others, benefiting those around us. It is a tendency of the wealthy to think that others exist or their benefit, to do their bidding. In God’s eyes it is just the opposite. Those who have been richly blessed must give abundantly. Once again, God desires that we imitate him. Just as he richly provides us everything for our enjoyment, just as his mercy and love are without limit, so his people are to live with the same extravagance.

6:19. By imitating the generous nature of our Lord, they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age. The treasure which accumulates in the life to come is not money, stock portfolios, or real estate. The treasure of which Paul spoke is spiritual, and it lasts for eternity.

Notes:

This eternal wealth—the generous and giving life expressed in the world—is evidence of true faith in God. In this way it is a firm foundation for entry into eternity. How we use our time and our resources indicates where our heart truly belongs. If it is directed by the values and compassion of God, we take hold of the life that is truly life.

When compared to the rest of the world's peoples, most Americans would be placed in the “wealthy” category. This should lead each of us to examine our values:

- Which concerns me more: how much money I have or how much of me God has?
- Do I pray more about God supplying material items than I do about developing my character?
- Do I spend more time and money caring for my house and lawn than I do helping others?
- Am I confident about the future because my bank account is healthy or because my spirit is secure in Christ?

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	OCTOBER 31	21

YOUR TREASURE SHOWS YOUR HEART

MATTHEW 6:19-21

OCTOBER 31, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying Matthew 6:19-21. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE BEHIND BEING GENEROUS IN THE BIBLE IS THAT WE CHOOSE WHAT IS ETERNAL OVER WHAT IS TEMPORAL.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: LIVING WITH AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE HELPS US THINK ABOUT OUR RESOURCES, TIME, AND GIFTS DIFFERENTLY.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: WE HAVE ETERNAL HOPE BECAUSE JESUS HAS GIVEN UP EVERYTHING FOR US.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 What comes to mind when you hear the word stewardship?
- 2 What are some talents you have? How do you use these talents in your daily life?
- 3 What would you say you spend the most time doing in a given week?

In his well-known book, *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell proposed what has become popularly known as the 10,000 hour rule. Through his research, Gladwell found that a person has to spend approximately 10,000 hours practicing to become an expert at something. To demonstrate this, Gladwell dipped into the lives of professional symphony musicians, Bill Gates, and the Beatles.¹ Beyond the time commitment, imagine the investment in talent and resources these individuals must have made to become experts. How we use our time, our talents, and our resources can determine the course of our lives.

Typically we think about stewardship only as it relates to our finances. But as these experts from *Outliers* show us, we have been given much more than simply financial resources. God has given each one of us time and talents. Giving, then, is about more than giving financially. God has called all followers of Jesus to give of their resources, time, and talent to the work of God in the world.

1. Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2008).

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 6:19-21.

- In your own words describe Jesus's warning to His people in this passage.
- What effect do moth, rust, and thieves have on valuable objects? What was Jesus's intention with this illustration?
- What are earthly treasures, and what is wrong with focusing on accumulating them? What is the spiritual danger of making these things the focus of our lives?

Jesus warned that the treasures we accumulate on earth are temporary and will not last. Today much of our wealth is stored in banks or in intangible commodities like stocks or bonds. But in the first century, wealth was much more material. It was in gold, fine objects, and clothing. Moths literally ate away wealth; rust corroded it from the inside out. Thieves ran away with it. What Jesus wants us to see is that things we enjoy right now (including our time and talents) will not last because they were not meant to last. At some time, they will go away and we will no longer enjoy them, either by material loss or in our death. When these temporary things become the focus of our lives, we have lost an eternal perspective. Giving matters because it changes our perspective.

- We can apply what Jesus has said here beyond just our material possessions to other things He has given us, like our gifts and our time. Why do giving and generosity always involve more than material wealth?

- What is the difference between being an owner and a steward, and what does that distinction say about our relationship with God?

Notes:

Every Christian man and woman is a steward, and being a steward is quite different than being an owner. God is the owner of our resources, our time, and our gifts. Because God is the owner, we are merely managers of God's resources. Our resources, time, and gifts are all temporary; they will run out. Being a good steward means we use our limited, God-given access to our things to make the most of them while we can. The treasures we enjoy in this life are fleeting. When we realize this, it frees us to use the temporary gifts to make much of Jesus in the time that we have.

- The statements Jesus made in verses 19-20 are very similar, but what is the key difference? What separates earthly treasures from spiritual treasures?
- Why are we so tempted to pursue earthly treasures when the heavenly ones have such greater value?

Jesus challenged His followers to invest in the things of eternity. Unlike earthly treasures, spiritual treasures aren't material possessions that bring us temporary satisfaction. Rather, they're the benefits of our faithful service to God while on earth—such as salvation from sin, eternity in His presence, an inherited place in the kingdom of God (1 Peter 1:3-5), and perfect, glorified bodies (1 Corinthians 15). These are the rewards we look forward to when we give.

- Jesus said your heart will follow where you invest your resources, time, and gifts. Share about a way you have seen this proven true in your own life, either for good or for bad.

- Think about where you are currently spending your time, money, and abilities. What does this reveal about what you treasure most at this time in your life?
- Read 1 Timothy 6:17-18. Rather than hoard our resources to ourselves, to what should we give our resources?

Notes:

With verse 21, Jesus pointed out that when you get invested in something with your time, money, or energy, then your heart will follow. If you want to live for God and be a part of what He wants to do in and through you, then you have to get invested in what the Lord is doing today. That is the investment, the treasure, that can never be taken away; it is the treasure that you will never lose. What we do with our gifts, time, and resources is of eternal consequence.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:9.

- Look through the first verses of 2 Corinthians 8 to get a fuller understanding of the context of these verses. What situation prompted Paul to include this in his letter to the church?
- What does it mean to give proportionally? What does it look like from person to person?

The church at Corinth was relatively well off, yet when the chance came to give to support the church at Jerusalem during a famine, they lagged behind. However, the Macedonian churches gave as much as they possibly could. When we give, the focus should not be on the amount, but on the proportion

of our income. To people with little worldly wealth, any giving strains them. To people who are better off, they haven't been blessed to build a bigger barn but to make much of God. When we give, we give in proportion to our wealth.

Notes:

- What did the Macedonians realize about Jesus Christ that eluded the Corinthians?

- Paul ultimately rooted his call to give in the gospel of Jesus Christ. How have we experienced the generosity of Jesus?

- How was Jesus rich? How did Jesus give in proportion to His wealth? What does it look like for Jesus's example to become the standard for all Christian giving?

Jesus is the richest and most exalted king the world has ever known. Jesus is the Creator, Owner, and Ruler of all things. Yet, Jesus became poor so that we may become rich. When we speak about proportional giving, we are modeling the practice of Jesus because Jesus is the richest king, but He gave the most to His people. Day after day, year after year, sin after sin, God's people had incurred a debt that they would never repay. But instead of coming to claim the debt, Jesus came to pay the debt and forgive the debtor. In the gospel, Jesus has put on full display the unmerited and unlimited grace of God. For our sake, Jesus became poor so that we could become richer than we could ever imagine.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- Of the three areas we talked about today—resources, time, and gifts—which do you have the hardest time giving back to the kingdom of God?
- How can we help one another be generous with more than just our finances? How could we pool our resources, time, and gifts to make a bigger difference for the kingdom of God in our community and beyond?
- Studies show that many church attenders do not give financially. Many more likely do not give of their time or gifts either. What are we denying the mission of God if we do not give ourselves fully over to it?

PRAY

Praise God for all He has given you. Ask that you would use His resources for His glory.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - How has this week's study challenged you toward specific giving?
 - Give of yourself from one of the three areas you are weaker in over the next week—money, time, or talents.

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize Matthew 6:21.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: Psalm 30.

MATTHEW 6:19-20

Verses 19 and 20 are almost exact parallels, designed for easy understanding and easy memorization. This is a critical passage. Here the king drew an ultimate contrast between on earth and in heaven. He urged his followers to forget earth and think of heaven. We must not waste our time trying to get ahead in this world. It is the same idea he expounded in 16:24-27. What does it profit a person “if he gains the whole world”? Jesus was demanding that his disciples look up and ahead—”for the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory. . . and then he will reward each person according to what he has done” (Matt. 16:27).

Notes:

Jesus was summarizing why the kingdom servant is motivated to practice righteous acts. It is not for temporary honor among men on earth, but for eternal reward before the Father in heaven. The point of this life is preparation for the world to come. The present tense verb here can best be translated, “Stop storing up treasures on earth!” But Jesus does specifically command us to store up for yourself in heaven. Moths were universally known as a destructive force (Job 4:19; Isa. 50:9; 51:8). Burglary was especially common in the day of mud-brick homes. Break is the Greek term meaning “break through.” It literally means “dig through.” There is no permanence in this world. You cannot take your treasure with you into the next world, but you can send it on ahead through kingdom-oriented stewardship.

Jesus not only saw nothing wrong with his followers working for reward; he went so far as to command it. The New Testament clearly encourages it (e.g., 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 9:24-27). Jesus’ words in the last few verses of the Bible emphasize it: “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done” (Rev. 22:12).

This concept of storing up heavenly treasure by doing good works was common in rabbinic tradition, and so it would have been easily understood by Jesus’ audience and Matthew’s readers. (New Testament passages that

expand on this concept, including specific examples of behaviors that have eternal significance, include Matt. 5:12,30,46; 6:6,15; 10:42; 16:24-27; 19:21,27-29; 25:40; Luke 12:16-21; 2 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 6:13-19.)

Notes:

2 CORINTHIANS 8:9

Paul also appealed to the example of Christ to motivate the Corinthians (v. 9). Jesus is the supreme example of generous giving. Verse 9 may remind us of Philippians 2:5-11. Christ became poor in the sense of humbling Himself, taking the role of a servant, and experiencing suffering and death. He freely gave up the glory of heaven in order to make all who trust Him spiritually rich. Furthermore, Christ's emptying of Himself is to be understood in a personal way. He gave up everything for you and me. We may conclude that if Christ's supreme example of giving did not inspire the Corinthians to give, nothing else would.