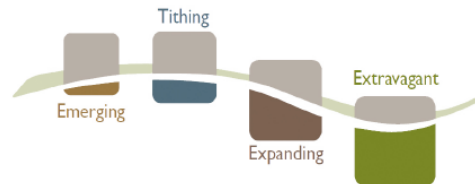




# In God We Trust

Building our theology of money and generosity

## Extravagant Generosity



### OPENING DISCUSSION:

Vern told the story of John Wesley who lived on \$7,200 a year and gave away \$112,000. That means that his income was nearly \$119,200. He could have been a wealthy man (well, he *was* a wealthy man), but lived very frugally. He responded to the investigation into his expenses: “I have two silver spoons in London and two in Bristol. “This is all...I have at present, and I shall not buy any more while so many around me want bread.”

**Discuss two questions from John Wesley’s story.**

**1) What would motivate a person to live that simply to give away that much?** *Group Leader – make sure the discussion goes beyond Wesley’s concern for the poor, all of us feel compassion for the poor, but few adjust their lives so radically to give extravagantly. What is the motivation behind Wesley’s generosity to the point of self-sacrificial giving?*

**2) How would you have to re-align your lifestyle and expenses to do that?**

**READ: 2 Cor. 8:9-11** What is our biblical motivation for extravagant giving? Why do some respond sacrificially while most do not?

Last week we talked about becoming generous vs. hoarding. This series has been about moving us from pursuing a better life for ourselves to expanding our hearts to using our resources to build God’s Kingdom, living beyond ourselves. While there is nothing wrong with enjoying things, they make poor masters. How we worship God and enjoy things is part of the benefits of generosity.

**READ Luke 19:1-4** Notice what his fellow Jews thought of him in 19:7

Discuss Zacchaeus’ assets and liabilities: What did he have that we would consider advantages for a great life, and what did he have that would cause pain?

Both the Romans and local authorities imposed various taxes, tolls, and customs in Palestine. The Romans often leased the right to collect taxes to individuals, who then hired underlings to collect the taxes. Although the term “chief tax collector” (*architelōnēs*) is unique to this passage, it probably indicates that

Zacchaeus is responsible for a broader region—perhaps the custom on goods passing between Perea and Judea—with subordinates working for him.<sup>1</sup>

*The Jews considered Tax Collectors traitors to their own people and were hated. Since Zacchaeus was not only a Tax collector, he was a chief Tax collector, which means that he “sub-contracted” several districts out so he was hated in many areas.*

### **What were the pros and cons of Zacchaeus’ wealth?**

#### **READ Luke 19:5-10**

Why was Zacchaeus so startled that Jesus chose to be a guest at his house? (5-6)

While his neighbors hated him for what he had done to them, why did Jesus love him?

When Zacchaeus chose to make restitution so extravagantly, was he trying to repay his debt or expressing some deeper feelings? What were they? (see 19:8-10)

#### **READ Mark 14:3-9**

This story contrasts those who loved wealth or at best thought that the best use of wealth was to relieve the suffering of the poor and a woman who used wealth to express gratitude and worship.

What did the disciples scold her for? (Mark 14:4-5). Vern mentioned some examples of extravagant use of resources in worship (e.g. building a pool for the community), what are other examples of extravagant worship (service) in the Church? (*building large Cathedrals, Adoption of orphans, moving to another city to plant a Church*).

How could this kind of extravagance be better than relieving the suffering of the poor?

How is the better use of resources not in doing good, but in expressing gratitude to God with an extravagant gift? *Sometimes we do good to feel good about ourselves rather than as an expression of gratitude. When the motive shifts, we have lost touch with helping people and are really helping ourselves.*

When a person experiences the extravagant grace of God, they will express gratitude with extravagance. There is no substitute for a personal experience of God on a regular basis. The kind of generosity that comes out of that relationship will produce a greater trust and more extravagant expressions of worship that others will criticize.

How has this series on giving stretched your concept of giving and worship? Has it exposed some doubts, fears, self-protection?

Has your giving preceded your experience of God?

Close this session by **reading 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:3-5**

How can you grow in your experience of God that results in extravagant acts of worship?