



**Educate
+ Engage**



THE
GENEROUS
LIFE:



Living
Generously

OVERVIEW

What does the Bible say a generous life looks like? This lesson encourages us to live generously toward others because God has been generous to us.

Scripture Passage

Acts 10:1–2, NLT

In Caesarea there lived a Roman army officer named Cornelius, who was a captain of the Italian Regiment. He was a devout, God-fearing man, as was everyone in his household. He gave generously to the poor and prayed regularly to God.

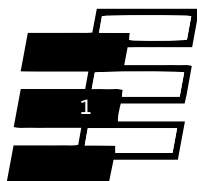
EDUCATE

If you know the history of the Book of Acts, you know just how important Cornelius was. Up until God sent Peter to share the gospel with Cornelius, Gentiles were thought to be beyond saving (Ephesians 2:12). Yet Cornelius lived generously, and his lifestyle was enough to get the attention of God and open the door to fulfill His promise to offer salvation to everyone.

Cornelius was devout (a man of faith), feared God, gave generously to the poor, and always prayed to God. Not only was Cornelius not Jewish, he was a Roman centurion. His buddies supervised Jesus' crucifixion just weeks earlier. Cornelius didn't grow up learning about tithing and the Old Testament laws that would have been ingrained into those of Jewish descent.

Cornelius wouldn't have even been allowed in the synagogue to hear the principles taught about giving to the poor, but he feared God so much, that he willingly chose to give out of his abundance to those in need. If a man with no Jewish monotheistic upbringing understood that we are called to help those in need, and we are to live and give generously, how much more should we who have been taught generosity understand our calling to live generously? We are blessed and understand the teaching in the Word of God, so how much more should we be willing to live and give generously to the kingdom of God?

Discussion Questions: What obstacles stand in the way of us being like Cornelius (devout, giving, faithful to prayer)? How do we move beyond those obstacles?



Lesson 4

The Old Testament and New Testament agree that we are to walk in a generous lifestyle. Verses 7, 8, and 10 of Deuteronomy 15 speak of opening your hand wide, giving freely, and not being grieved by it. *Ouch!* There is no mention of seeking payment in return or expecting an award or recognition for our giving. Yet, living generously holds a promise found at the end of verse 10: "because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand."

This is exactly what we've been saying this whole series. We aren't giving to get, but God is faithful, keeps very good records, and will always supply all our needs.

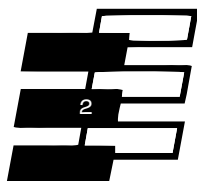
Jesus taught us to live generously as recorded in Matthew 6:2-4: "Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly."

Again, the reminder is not to do things for awards, recognition, or gain. We are to give to others without expectation of anything in return because God has blessed us and is allowing us to bless others. The New Testament church taught this principle and encouraged it in others. Acts 20:35 records Paul reminding his fellow Jesus followers of Jesus' words: "It is more blessed to give than receive." You thought that was just something your mom told you on Christmas when you didn't like your presents; little did you know she was dropping a truth on you straight from the King of kings Himself, Jesus Christ!

Living generously unlocks the door to blessings from God that far outweigh anything we could receive from a person. Beyond just financial blessings, God provides spiritual blessings, blessings of health and favor, blessings that can be seen, and more often not, blessings which are not visible to the human eye.

Discussion Question: Have you experienced a "more blessed to give than receive" moment? Describe this experience.

So, what's the point? Why go through all this effort? Paul provided insight in II Corinthians 9:6-8 (ESV): "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 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."

Recognize what he said: God can make *all* grace abound to you so that you'll have sufficiency in *all* things, at *all* times. Your giving doesn't cause you to go hungry or not have money to pay your bills; instead, it allows the entirety of God's grace and sufficiency to work on your behalf.

When people don't live generously, they aren't protecting their money and keeping their family's well-being in mind. That kind of behavior cuts your knees out from under you and keeps God from being all sufficient in your life. Wouldn't you rather rely on God instead of your own earning ability? Allowing Him to move and work on your behalf is much better than trying to take care of everything by yourself, cutting corners here and there, in an attempt to be self-sufficient. God can do so much more than we can.

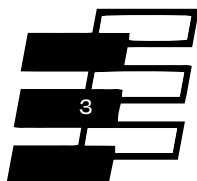
Uriah Levy was a believer from Philadelphia, and someone asked him how he could give so much to God and still have so much. And he replied, "Oh, as I shovel it out, He shovels it in, and the Lord has a bigger shovel."

Second Corinthians 9:10–15 affirms that when we bless others, we ourselves are also blessed! Demonstrating generosity in every way causes us to be enriched in every way, produces thanksgiving to God, and blesses others. Ultimately the bottom line is that by you living generously, others glorify God. When you behave generously, God gets the glory. Others realize that God has blessed you abundantly, which causes them to give Him glory. What a blessed way to live!

Discussion Question: Recall a time when someone did something for you that you thanked God for. What generosity can you show to a friend/family member this week where you wouldn't get any credit but they would give God glory?

Closing

Cornelius was an ordinary man, yet he lived generously. If he never met Jesus, he never got to hear His preaching or be healed by His touch. But no doubt he heard stories about the messages Jesus preached, and just maybe an enduring message stuck with him: "It's more blessed to give than to receive." And Cornelius's generosity and faithfulness to God as well as His hunger for God opened the door for the Holy Ghost to be poured out upon all flesh and for God to fill every hunger heart with His Holy Spirit.



Discussion Question: What impact could you have on your family, school, and church if you would make up your mind to live generously?

ENGAGE

Ask the Lord one more time how you can fulfill His calling to live generously. What does living this way mean for you now? At school tomorrow, at your job, with your parents, allow God to show you how and help you to live generously.

