



A SIX WEEK LENTEN STUDY

(Based on "Holy Habits: Gladness and Generosity")

When we think about Lent, our minds go to giving up things as a reminder of what Jesus was willing to give up for us. Sometimes, people think of it as a penance. This study shows how we can have a generosity of spirit and joy in giving.

WEEK FOUR: JOYFUL AND OVERFLOWING GENEROSITY

Readings: Matthew 19:21-24 and Luke 6:35-38

Reflection: Chuck Feeney is an Irish-American businessman who has made a fortune in duty free shopping. He lives in a rented apartment, travels economy class and to date has given away over \$8 billion. In a letter to fellow philanthropist Bill Gate, he explained, *"The process of – and most importantly, the results from – granting this wealth to good causes has been a rich source of joy and satisfaction to me and my family."*

What Jesus knew, and what Chuck Feeney knows, is that radical generosity is the key that buys our freedom. There is real, true, priceless treasure in heaven. It is worth more than anything our grubby mitts can grasp on to. And it is ours for the taking once we stop hoarding and start giving.

Generosity is the overflowing of God's heart. God's generosity is like a large waterfall. As the onrushing water reaches the waterfall's edge, it cascades and tumbles over. It falls and splashes anywhere and everywhere. It doesn't flow in an orderly straight line and through constructed channels. It's as though the water has been freed. Delighting in its freedom, it runs wild, bouncing and foaming as it hits rocks, splashing and spraying in every direction. Then, when the sun shines, a beautiful rainbow appears through the spray, celebrating its unfettered spirit. Such, says Jesus, is the generosity of God.

Think of times when you have been the recipient of other people's generosity. How did it make you feel towards them? How did it make you feel personally?
When can, or do, you put this habit into practice?

QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus did not tell everyone he met to sell their possessions, but he did say it in this instance. What might explain his approach with this young man?
2. Why is it hard for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of God? Is it easier if you are poor?
3. If you were the young man, what would you say to Jesus in response to his invitation to follow him?
4. On what basis do we enter the kingdom of God?
5. Experiences of overflowing generosity often come through people God uses. How do you recognise these as 'from God'?
6. How do such experiences make you feel towards God? How do you express your response? Do they lead you to greater freedom and generosity?
7. "*Do not judge... Do not condemn.*" Generosity is also about the habits of our heart. Do you judge rough sleepers, immigrants, refugees, or those who have let you down? Where might you need to let God change your attitudes to others?
8. "*Forgive, and you will be forgiven.*" What can make it hard for us to forgive others? How can we help one another to forgive?

IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, THINK ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:

1. What does it look like to embrace gladness as a discipline or holy habit?
2. Reflect on what your heart's treasures are. Is there anything that limits your ability to respond to Jesus' call to follow him?
3. Can you think of two factors which make it harder to continue to be generous and two which might help you grow in generosity?
4. How well does your church provide opportunities for those with less to make their contribution and to receive affirmation? Consider what could be done along these lines.

