

Thriving Through Giving

Lesson 02 of the series, "Thrive"

I. Jesus wants us to thrive.

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." John 10:10 (NIV)

"I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of."

John 10:10 (MSG)

Note: Jesus doesn't define "thriving" the same way our culture does.

"Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own." Then he told them a story: "A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. He said to himself, 'What should I do? I don't have room for all my crops.' Then he said, 'I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. And I'll sit back and say to myself, 'My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!'" "But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?' "Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God." Luke 12:15-21 (NLT)

II. We thrive through giving.

"You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Acts 20:35 (NLT)

a. We thrive when we give to God first.

"Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine." Proverbs 3:9-10 (NIV)

"Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me! "But you ask, 'What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?' "You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me. You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!" Malachi 3:8-10 (NLT)

b. We thrive when we give cheerfully.

"Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. 'For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.'"

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 (NLT)

"All whose hearts were stirred and whose spirits were moved came and brought their sacred offerings to the LORD. They brought all the materials needed for the Tabernacle, for the performance of its rituals, and for the sacred garments. Both men and women came; all whose hearts were willing. They brought to the LORD their offerings of gold—brooches, earrings, rings from their fingers, and necklaces. They presented gold objects of every kind as a special offering to the LORD." Exodus 35:21-22 (NLT)

"Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything. The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed." Proverbs 11:24-25 NLT

c. We thrive when we give trusting God.

"God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. As the Scriptures say, 'They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever.' For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God."

2 Corinthians 9:8-11 (NLT) (see also Psalm 112:9)

d. We thrive when we give to people in need.

"Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always

being ready to share with others. By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life.” 1 Timothy 6:17-19 (NLT)

- e. We thrive when we give what we can.

“Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don’t have. Of course, I don’t mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves. I only mean that there should be some equality. Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it.”

2 Corinthians 8:12-14 NLT

“Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins. Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on.” Mark 12:41-44 (NLT)

- f. We thrive when we give thankfully.

“O our God, we thank you and praise your glorious name! But who am I, and who are my people, that we could give anything to you? Everything we have has come from you, and we give you only what you first gave us!” 1 Chronicles 29:13-14 (NLT)

“When you have eaten your fill in this land, be careful not to forget the LORD...You may say to yourself, ‘My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.’ But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth...” Deuteronomy 8:17-18 (NIV)

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Connect Group Questions.

1. Describe the most generous person you know. What is his/her secret?
2. What did Jesus say about money in the following passages?
 - Matthew 6:19-21,33
 - Mark 10:17-31
 - Luke 16:10-14
 - Luke 21:1-4
3. Jesus talked about money a lot. Why are most of us uncomfortable discussing this topic?
4. What do the following passages teach us about generosity?
 - 1 Timothy 6:6-10,16-19
 - 2 Corinthians 9:6-12
5. While having lunch with a friend the subject of tithing comes up. When you share that you are glad to give to the church she remarks, “I don’t have any extra money. If I ever win the lottery I think I’ll start doing it, too.” How do you respond?
6. Read Proverbs 3:9-10 and Proverbs 11:24-25. Why do you think Solomon stressed the importance of generosity?
7. Spend some time as a Connect Group discussing how we can use the resources God has given us to help others.
8. Discuss the following quotations:

“No one has ever become poor by giving.” Anne Frank

“A man is sometimes more generous when he has but a little money than when he has plenty, perhaps through fear of being thought to have but little.” Benjamin Franklin

“The wicked borrow and never repay, but the godly are generous givers.” David in Psalm 37:21

“Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough and more...it can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend.” Melody Beattie