

Stories: The Goal of Discipleship *Generosity*

9/16/2019

SermonTalk is an optional resource for Connect Group Leaders who desire to help their group underscore and apply key concepts from the sermon the previous week. The format and questions are just a menu from which you can choose or use as a foundation for further questions more specific to your group members.

Last Sunday, we were left with the challenge of investing in the life of another or pursuing “togetherness”. How did being intentional about “togetherness” go? Who has a story to share? The final verses of Acts 2 pack a punch with much that helps us grow closer to Christ. This week’s focus is on generosity. Often times in business classes, teachers try to help their students focus on generosity and commitment by telling the story of the pig and the chicken.

A chicken and a pig were sauntering down the main street of Fort Worth when they passed a restaurant that advertised “Delicious ham and eggs: 75 cents.” “Sounds like a bargain,” approved the chicken. “That owner obviously knows how to run his business. “It’s all very well for you to be so pleased about the dish in question,” observed the pig with some resentment. “For you it is all in the day’s work. Let me point out, however, that on my part it represents a genuine sacrifice.” There are many ways to do & measure generosity. Some people are considered generous because they give out of their wealth. Some choose to live simply giving the rest away. Some give everything that they have.

- **How would you differentiate giving from sharing?**
- **Is there a stage of life when you think giving generously might be easier? Why do you think that?**
- **Does your current stage of life lend itself to living generously? What supports that argument?**

In learning and applying truths about generosity, radical generosity is rooted in radical love. Let’s look together at Acts 2: 42-47. Let’s read through this passage together to see what radical generosity and radical love look like.

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ **They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.** ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Our focus verse is v 45. There are some parallels between the early church in Acts and the church that UBC desires to be.

We want to be a church where the gospel is sufficient. We don’t **need** extra “stuff.”
We want to be a church where the people give sacrificially, generously & cheerfully.
We want to be a church made of people who are content with what God gives us.
We want to be a church that understands giving to God as worship. This is how we surrender ourselves to God.
Finally, we want to be a church known for generosity, allowing us to point to Jesus.

This verse provides insight into the effect of the transforming power of Christ on people of all ages and stages. It gives us hope as individuals and as a church that this place where we currently are in our generosity isn’t the place we have to stay.

- **What are some of the things that stand out to you in verses 42-44?**

- **What stands out for you in verse 45?**
- **How did this early group solve the problem of people in need?**

One of the things that is unique about this verse is that it clearly and concisely identifies the transformation in the lives of both those who had great wealth and the lives of every person present. The reference to selling property points to those who had great wealth. The rich were willing to surrender their comfort and status. The reference to possessions allows us to infer that everyone gave, even those with little. The people in the early church looked to see what is needed. Then they gave all that they had.

- **When people give generously, what makes it easier for them to do so in a sacrificial manner?**
- **Are there times when you can point to people being radically generous because of an outpouring of care for others? What characterizes those moments in time?**

The challenge is before the church to celebrate our 90th anniversary by raising 90 thousand to go toward church needs and to raise an additional 90 thousand to go to the needs of the community. The organizations that UBC wants to bless are Traffik 911 which helps victims who are trying to get out of human trafficking, Gladney Center which focuses on orphan and adoptive care, and Seminary Hills Park Elementary a part of FWISD that has many refugee children.

- **Which of the three organizations are you drawn to? Why? (Traffick 911, Gladney Center or Seminary Hills Park Elementary)**
- **How might God renew our mind as we learn to give cheerfully, expecting nothing in return?**

Final Thoughts:

Too often our generosity is determined by what is left over NOT by what is needed. 1 John 3:17 reminds us *“If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?”*

God loves us so very much that He desires that a radical love of neighbor calls us to give generously to others. This generosity extends from our time and energy to our money as well. Just as God is radically generous with us, He desires that we be radically generous with others.

- **Do you have anything that can help bring people to life in Christ? What would generosity with that look like?**
- **How can we pray for each other this week for God to be glorified through our/ our group's generosity?**
- **What story do we want to be told of Christ because of how we accepted His call to love others radically?**