

“Defined By Generosity” Week 4 of “Enough” Series

Presented by Rev. Kristen Lowe on 01-28-2018

At Crossroads United Methodist Church, Waunakee WI

With gratitude for Adam Hamilton and his book *Enough*

Proverbs 11:24-25

Those who give generously receive more, but those who are stingy with what is appropriate will grow needy. Generous persons will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.

Proverbs 22:9

The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor.

Luke 6:38

Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.

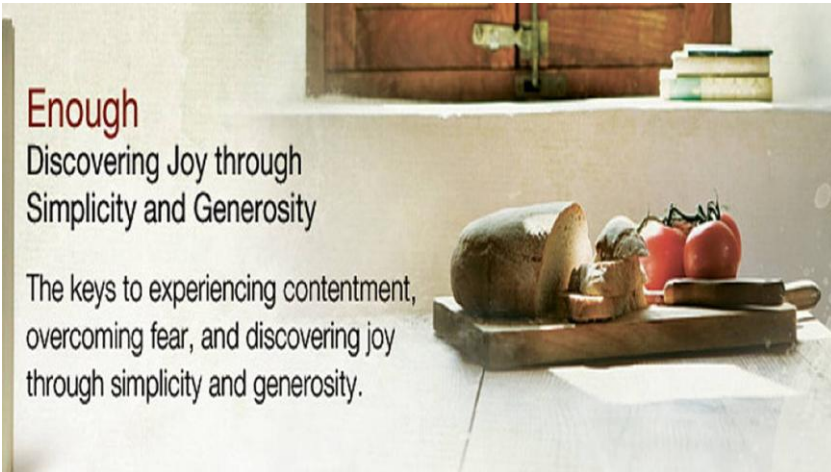


What's the most outrageous thing you would do for \$10,000 cash? That's the question posed recently by Chicago radio station WKQX, which attracted responses from more than 6,000 people who have way too much time on their hands.

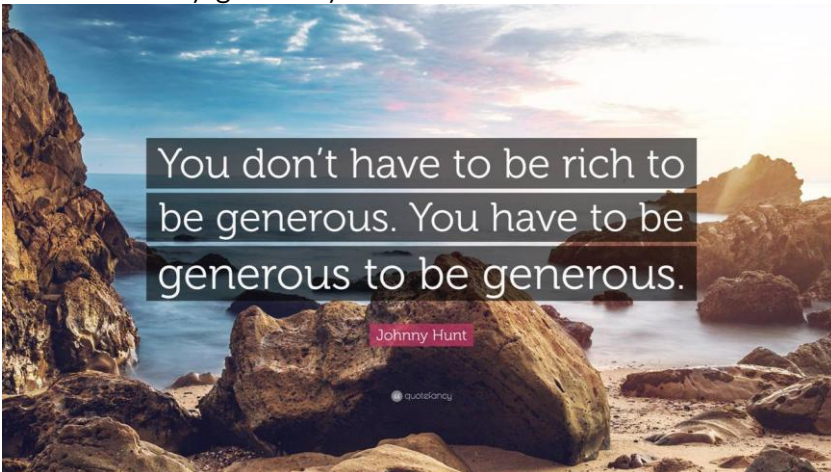


The eventual winner: Jay Gwaltney of Zionsville, Indiana, who consumed an 11-foot birch sapling -- leaves, roots, bark and all. For the event, he donned a tux and dined at a table set elegantly with china, sterling, candles and a rose vase. Armed with pruning shears, the Indiana State University sophomore began chomping from the top of the tree and worked his way, branch by branch, to the roots. His only condiment: French dressing for the massive birch-leaf salad. The culinary feat took 18 hours over a period of three days. When it was all over, Gwaltney complained of an upset stomach. Evidently the bark was worse than his bite.

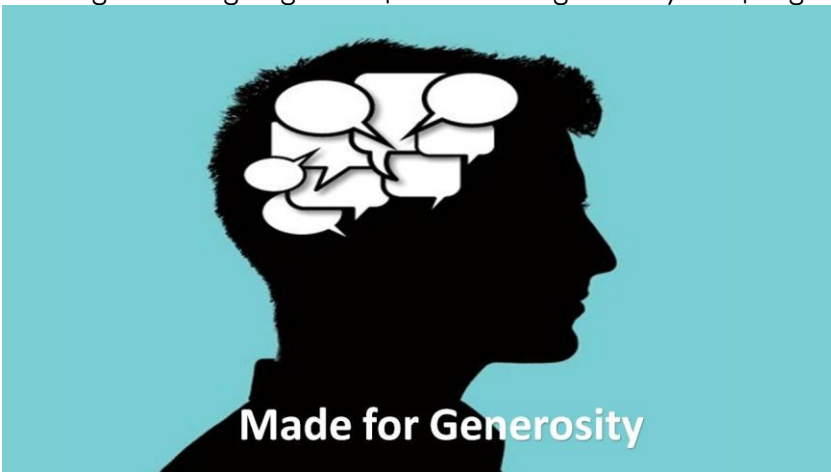
“Defined By Generosity” Week 4 of “Enough” Series



We've been talking about what it means to have a mindset of enough. To feel satisfied and at peace in your financial situation. We've talked about what it means when dreams become nightmares. We've discussed wisdom and finances. We talked about what it means to cultivate contentment and today I want to discuss what it means to be defined by generosity.



The bible says that god created us to be generous. God created us with the willingness to give—to god and to others. This design is part of our makeup; we actually have the *need* to be generous. Yet there are two voices that “war” against our god-given impulse toward generosity, tempting us to keep or hoard what we have.



1. The voice of fear.

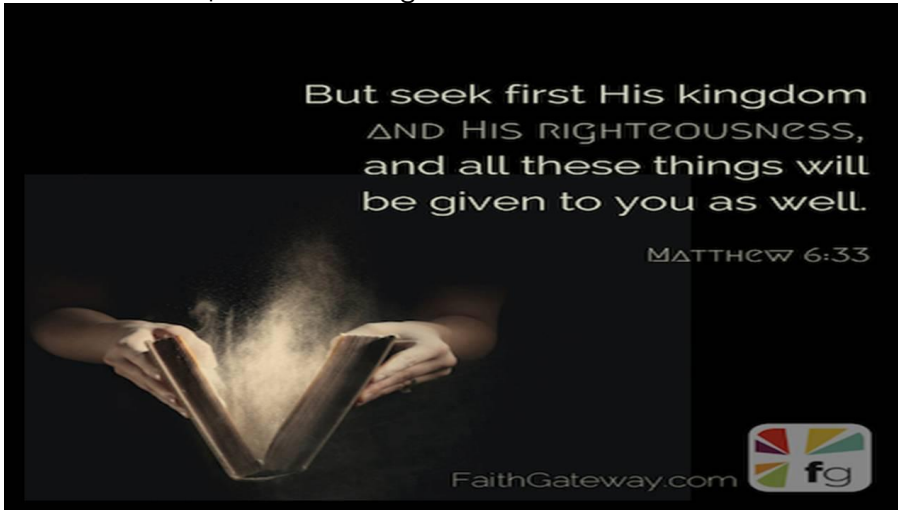
Fear, of what might happen to us, along with a misplaced idea about the true source of our security, keeps us from being generous and leads us to hoard what we have. The truth is that hoarding offers us no real security in this world.

“Defined By Generosity” Week 4 of “Enough” Series

2. The voice of self-gratification.

Our culture tells us that our lives consist in the abundance of our possessions and pleasurable experiences. So we find ourselves thinking, *if I give, there won't be enough left for me*. I admit, I'm guilty of this. I think about one armed parenting, saving for retirement, saving for college and saving for unforeseen circumstances.

But listen, god is not telling you not to save or plan. In the bible, god teaches us how to be good stewards of what we have and to put our trust in god.



So... how do we defeat these voices? When we give our lives to Christ, invite him to be first in our lives, and allow the holy spirit to begin changing us from the inside out, we find that our fears begin to dissipate and our aim in life shifts from seeking personal pleasure to pleasing god and caring for others. Although we still may wrestle with the voices from time to time, we are able to silence them more readily and effectively the more we grow in Christ. And the more we grow in Christ, realizing that our lives belong to him, the more generous we become. Generosity is a fruit of spiritual growth.

WE FIND MORE JOY IN DOING THINGS FOR OTHER PEOPLE AND FOR GOD THAN
WE EVER DID IN DOING THINGS FOR OURSELVES. (ACTS 20:35)

IN THE VERY ACT OF LOSING OUR LIVES, WE FIND LIFE. (MATTHEW 16:25)

LIFE IS A GIFT, AND EVERYTHING BELONGS TO GOD. (PSALM 24:1;
LEVITICUS 25:23)

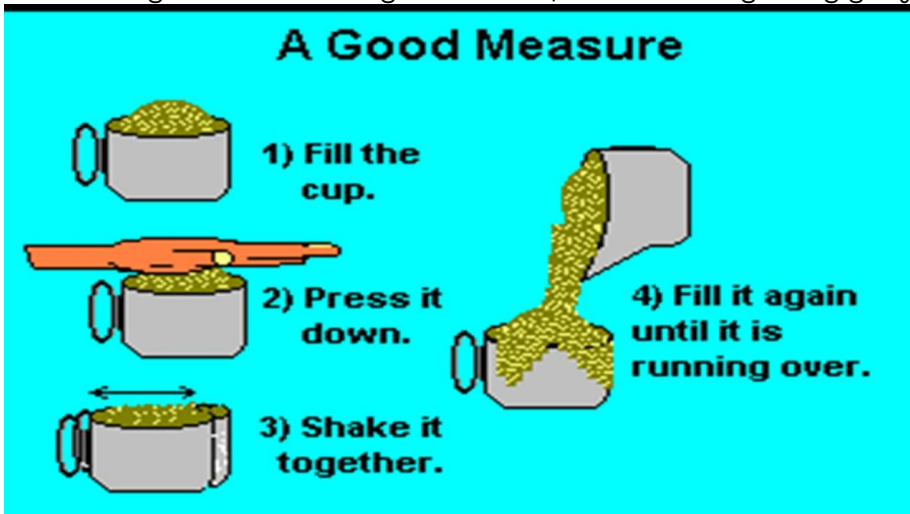
So, what does the bible say about giving? We find more joy in doing things for other people and for god than we ever did in doing things for ourselves. (Acts 20:35). In the very act of losing our lives, we find life. (Matthew 16:25) Life is a gift, and everything belongs to god. (Psalm 24:1; Leviticus 25:23)

“Defined By Generosity” Week 4 of “Enough” Series



From the early days of the Old Testament, god’s people observed the practice of giving some portion of the first and best of what they had to god. A gift offered to god was called the *first fruits* or the *tithe*, and it equaled one-tenth of one’s flocks or crops or income. Abraham was the first to give a tithe or tenth.

We aren’t bound by the old law anymore, but Christians still do use the tithe as a measuring stick when it comes to discipleship. Maybe you can’t give 10 percent right now. Maybe you can give 2% or 5%. A tithe is something you can work up to. So, does our giving affect god? If we go back to the earliest biblical times, the primary way people worshipped god was by building an altar and offering the fruit of their labors on it as a gesture of thanksgiving to god. Old Testament literature tells us that the scent of the offering was pleasing to god. It wasn’t that god loved the smell of burnt meat and grain. Rather, god saw that people were giving a gift that expressed love, faith in god; and this moved god’s heart. When given in this spirit, our offerings bring god joy.



And... make no mistake, god responds to our giving. Jesus is clear about this in Luke 6:38 Give and it will be given to you. A good portion—packed down, firmly shaken, and overflowing—will fall into your lap. The portion you give will determine the portion you receive in return.”

“Defined By Generosity” Week 4 of “Enough” Series

"HOW MUCH OF MY MONEY SHALL I USE FOR GOD?" OR

"HOW MUCH OF GOD'S MONEY SHALL I USE FOR MYSELF?"



Our giving also affects us. Through it our hearts are changed. When we are generous—to god and to our families, friends, neighbors, and others who are in need—our hearts are filled with joy. They are enlarged by the very act of giving. When we give generously, we become more generous. When we give with loving hearts without expecting anything in return, we receive god’s blessings. Now, there are Christians who have it wrong. They say that if you give, then god will give more back to you. They are looking for the ROI. But that is not how it works. We do not give to god so that we can get something in return. The amazing thing is that when we give to god and to others, the blessings just seem to come back to us. Of course, there is no guarantee that if you tithe you will never lose your job or never have other bad things happen to you. Nevertheless, when we give generously, the unmistakable blessings of god flow into our lives. There are two ways in which a Christian may view his money: "How much of my money shall I use for god?" or "How much of god's money shall I use for myself?"