

Studies in Generosity

Part 1: The Grace of God

2022.7.3



TALKING WALKING

Leaders' Guide

A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

- 1 We tend to think of Pharisees as "bad guys"—but they had a very different reputation in Jesus' day. Read Matthew 5:20. What estimation must Jesus' hearers have had of the Pharisees? How so? Read Luke 15:1-2. What reputation did tax-collectors have? (*Who likes tax-collectors?!*)
- 2 Now, read Luke 18:10-13. What would Jesus' hearers have thought of this story?
- 3 But Jesus was a master story-teller, always adding an unexpected twist! So **now** read Luke 18:14. What might the "tax-collectors and sinners" in Jesus' audience have thought of **this** ending? What might the Pharisees in Jesus' audience have thought of the ending?
- 4 Of course, most of Jesus' hearers would have landed more in the middle of the "righteousness scale". Does that describe you, too? If so, how do you think "average folks" responded to Jesus' story?
 - Luke 18:10-14 explains who receives "**saving grace**". The tax-collector—not the Pharisee—went home justified (saved). But God is gracious even to those who are **not** saved. Read Matthew 5:43–48. This is called "**common grace**"—God's generosity toward all, regardless of our response to him.
- 5 Consider our polarized, political world today—it's "us" vs. "them"! Agree with me, or I'll unfriend you. Think back to before **you'd** received God's saving grace. What were some of God's common graces?
- 6 Who do you know who, til now, rejects God's saving grace, yet is an abundant recipient of common grace? What could you say to him/her about **your** experience of God's common grace?
- 7 Read Romans 2:4. What should God's common grace produce in our lives? Does it for you?
- 8 What have you said to your yet-unsaved friend about responding to God's saving grace?
- 9 Now read this verse in its context: Romans 2:4-5. Do you talk to that friend about God's wrath? Should you? Why or why not?

Need help responding to God's grace?
For free, confidential help, write to:
BiblicalHopeAndHelp@gmail.com

Take One Step: What is one small, concrete step of obedience you will put into practice this week?



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- 1 This starter question looks at both ends of the “righteousness scale”.
 - When Jesus said that “unless your righteousness **exceeds** that of the Pharisees” you won’t even get into heaven, it is clear that Pharisees were viewed as the cleanest and best Jews (Matthew 5:20)
 - Folks grumbled when Jesus ate with “tax-collectors”, so it’s clear that they weren’t viewed as “pillars of the community” (Luke 15:1-2)!
- 2 Given the prevailing views, folks would have thought, “*Wow, now there’s an **extra righteous Pharisee!** God’s lucky to have such a dedicated follower.*” They probably thought this about the tax-collector: “*What gall! What does a creep like him even think he’s doing here in the temple! God ought to fry him!*”
- 3
 - **After** the tax-collectors and sinners got over the shock of thinking that they must have misunderstood Jesus, they no doubt felt a huge sense of relief and gratitude—“*Sinners such as us have a chance!*”
 - **After** the Pharisees got over the shock of thinking that **they** must have misunderstood Jesus, **they** were ready to kill Jesus. Eventually they did. (But he didn’t stay dead.)
- 4 Pay close attention to how group members answer this question—it’ll reveal their understanding of the holiness of God (and the plight of “average good people” such as ourselves). Fact is, God’s standard is perfection, so one sin makes us deserving of hell (Matthew 5:48; James 2:10)
- 5 You likely will need to “prime the pump”, so be prepared with your own answer to this question. (But wait for others to think and answer. Check your watch—20 seconds feels like an eternity!) Standard answers include:
 - God gave me life. Period. In addition, I was born in America, not North Korea.
 - God gave me a healthy body and mind. He didn’t owe me that. He gave me food and shelter.
 - God enabled me to get an education, a job, a family...
 - God didn’t judge me and send me to hell after my first rebellious act. That would have been just.
- 6 You likely will need to “prime the pump”, so be prepared with your own answer to this question. Notice that this is asking about **common** grace, **not** saving grace (that’ll come next). Beware of the fact that most people view the blessings of common grace as either simply elements of luck (ie, God didn’t really do it), or as what we all deserve (but we don’t; we deserve hell). In having this sort of convo, you’ll need to anticipate these sorts of unstated objections to the idea of giving thanks and glory to God for his kindness to us.
- 7 God’s kindness **should** lead us to repentance! **Does it?**
Folks will need to be honest about the fact that typically we don’t think we’ve done anything wrong.
- 8 There likely will be a guilty silence on this one, so be prepared with your own answer to this question. (But wait for others to think and answer. Check your watch—20 seconds feels like an eternity!)
- 9 There **almost certainly** will be a guilty silence on this one, so be prepared with your own answer. (But wait for others to think and answer. Check your watch—20 seconds feels like an eternity!)
- 10 Make sure you don’t skip applying this message. Instruct your folks to take a minute to write something.

Sermon Summary

When we hear the word “generosity,” most of us immediately think about money, but it’s much broader than that. Money is only a small part. In fact, we can be financially generous, but not **radically generous** in other areas of our lives. Radical generosity should flow out of our hearts and inform every decision and every plan. From the Gospel of Luke 18:9-17, we’ll answer three questions: What is the source of radical generosity? What is the mark of radical generosity? and, What is the key to becoming radically generous?

1. What is the source of radical generosity? Jesus tells a story (parable) about two men—a tax collector and a Pharisee. People in Jesus’ day hated tax collectors. They were Jews, hired by the conquering Roman Empire to take money from their countrymen. They could charge as much as they wanted, as long as they gave the Romans a certain amount, and pocket the rest. It was very lucrative, but they were looked upon as traitors. They were **greedy** and wanted money more than friends. The audience would have looked more favorably on the other man in Jesus’ story—the Pharisee. Pharisees were devout. They studied the Bible, and obeyed it to the letter, which meant donating an incredible 10% of their income! Pharisees were admired and perceived as very generous. So here we have two men—one **incredibly greedy**, and the other **incredibly charitable**. But Jesus knew their hearts. The Pharisee was selfish and proud. He prayed to himself (v. 11-12) and looked down on others. He may have had an open wallet, but his heart was closed. He was technically generous, but not radically generous. The tax collector, on the other hand, prayed differently (v. 13). Knowing how unworthy he was, he beat his chest and asked God for mercy. What he really was asking for was God’s generosity! Things aren’t always as they appear. Inwardly, the Pharisee was greedy, but the tax collector’s heart was trending toward generosity. **The source of radical generosity is not the wallet; it’s the heart.** You can’t always tell how generous a person is by the way he handles his money. How, then, can you tell?

2. What is the mark of radical generosity? We see in verses 15-17 parents bringing their children to Jesus so he could bless them, but the disciples turned them away. Jesus told them to let the children come. How does this teach **radical generosity**? The disciples lacked a spirit of generosity in the way they treated the children. They thought Jesus was much too important to waste his time on kids. The point is, **there are many kinds of generosity “currency”**. A radically generous person is generous in all currencies of life: emotional currency—willing to get personally involved with people; hospitality currency—willing to open one’s home to people (even if that means it might get messed up); relational equity—willing to do good for people, even though they may not return the favor; time currency—willing to spend time serving others, even when it interrupts one’s schedule. **Radical generosity means a life of giving instead of a life of taking.** But we cannot give ourselves to others in love if we’re empty on the inside. We struggle to be radically generous, because we lack inner contentment. So what can we do?

3. What is the key to becoming radically generous? The answer is in verses 13-14. After praying, the tax collector went away justified (approved by God), but the Pharisee did not. Jesus contrasted the two men—the bad person was saved, but the seemingly good person was lost. Why was that? Both men needed a Savior, but the good person thought he was righteous in himself. He was trying to be his own savior. Like a sick person, who refuses to go to the doctor, he was in denial. There are plenty of self-righteous people today, who think all is well with their souls. They don’t need a Savior. It’s other people who have problems. They’re justified in their own eyes—but guilty in God’s. The bad person (tax collector), on the other hand, cried out to God for “mercy.” He was not just asking for God’s sympathy; he was humbly saying, “God, I need atonement for my sin!” This man clearly saw who he was—he knew he deserved to be cut off from God and punished for his sins. He was crying out for the **radical generosity** of God.

Radical generosity is costly. Have you ever been radically generous—generous until it hurts? It deprives you of something you value. It wounds you. Just like it wounded Jesus Christ. Because of our sin and lack of gratitude for all God has done for us, we deserve to be cut off from Him. God is holy, and He hates evil and sin, but He came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ, lived a blameless life, and then offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice to atone for our sins. Radical generosity cost Jesus everything! We need to ask God for His radical generosity, poured out on the cross for us. But we’ll never ask for it until we see our need for it. When we do see our need and cry out to God for His atoning mercy, He will change our hearts and fuel our generosity toward others. The challenge is to recognize our spiritual need, and ask for the radical, costly generosity of God, which Jesus demonstrated at the cross.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

How gracious is God, and what does it take to "find favor" in his sight? Let's see...

Monday—Read Exodus 19 aloud to yourself. Notice these key features:

- Three months earlier the Jews were slaves in Egypt. God split the Red Sea and freed them, destroying the Egyptian army (after having destroyed the Egyptian economy through months of plagues, culminating in the death of every firstborn son in Egypt).
- Note the special relationship God offered them in v. 4-6, and their promise in v. 8.
- Notice the preparations they had to make and the terrifying appearance of God at Sinai.

Tuesday—Read Exodus 20 aloud to yourself. Notice these key features:

- In v. 2, God declares himself **already** their God (**not**, "Do these things and I **will be** your God").
- Mark the Ten Commandments in the margin of your Bible (v. 3; 4-6; 7; 8-11; 12; 13; 14; 15; 16; 17).
- Notice the people's response to God (v. 18) and his reassurance and purposes (v. 20).
- God has already given them the Ten Commandments, but notice what he emphasizes (v. 22-26).

Wednesday—Today, leaf through the pages of Exodus chapters 21-31, noting the topics.

- Describe the content of these ten chapters. What are they full of? How detailed are they?
- Now, take a moment to think about how all this **minutiae** relates to the grand themes studied on Monday (rescue from Egypt and their privileged relationship with Yahweh) and Tuesday (the significant things covered in the Ten Commandments and God's concern for his holiness).
- Consider this: just as the "handling instructions" on a crate of nitroglycerin would be very precise and detailed, so are God's "handling instructions" for our relationship with him. What does this tell you about our God? about us?

Thursday—Read Exodus 19:3-8; 20:1-7; 24:18 and 32:1-11.

- In your own words, what is Exodus 19:3-6 about? What did they promise in v. 8?
- In your own words, what is Exodus 20:1-7 all about?
- Have you ever had to wait forty days for something important? (eg. your wedding date)
- Reflect on God's response in 32:7-11. Did he overreact? Why do you think that?
- **Whose** people did God call the Israelites in 32:7? Answer: **M** _ _ _ _
Forty times in Exodus the Israelites are called "**God's** people". **Once** they're called "Moses' people". Have you ever been so angry at one of your children that you said to your spouse, "**Look what your son/daughter just did!**" ? Reflect on this event.

Friday—Read Exodus 32:7-10 & 15-20. Describe this turn of events in your own words.

- Notice that **both** God's anger (v. 10) and Moses' anger (v. 19) "burned"—but what did God **tell Moses to do** in v. 10? What did God say that he would do in response (v. 10)?
- But notice that Moses **didn't** leave God alone so that his anger could burn against Israel. Read v. 11-14. What did **Moses** do (v. 11-13)? What did **God** do (v. 14)?
Reflect on the humility and loyalty of Moses—note that God had just offered to start over with Moses, to reject Israel, and make **Moses** "a great nation" (v. 10; cf. Genesis 12:1-3)!

Saturday—Moses "found favor" in God's sight! Read Exodus 33:12—34:9.

- Mark the six occurrences of "found favor" in this passage (33:12, 13 [2x], 16, 17 & 34:9).
- Describe all the blessings which accompany "finding favor" in God's sight.
- How important is it to you to "find favor" in God's sight? More important than being great?



Lined writing area for notes.



Pastor Doug said that "*There are many kinds of generosity "currency".*

A radically generous person is generous in *all* currencies of life:

emotional currency—willing to get personally involved with people...

relational equity—willing to do good for people, even though they may not return the favor; **time** currency—willing to spend time serving others, even when it interrupts one's schedule. **Radical generosity** means *a life of giving* instead of *a life of taking*."

Conduct an "audit" of your generosity toward your children. Mark your...

• emotional generosity



Progress bar for emotional generosity.



• relational generosity



Progress bar for relational generosity.



• time generosity



Progress bar for time generosity.



In which area are you stingiest? What will you do about it this week?