

GRACE OF GIVING

The Grace of Giving | Shawn Johnson | 11.18.18

LG Weekly

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer the following question:

What was your first job? How long did you have it? Was it a good experience, a terrible one, or somewhere in-between? Explain.

SHARE

As we approach the end of the year and anticipate 2019, it is a great time to get back to the basics. As Shawn reminded us this week, "We have to learn the basics, before we can excel!" In this short series, we are going to get back to the basic principle of giving. Being generous is one of the greatest things we can do for our spiritual journey! It is close to the heart of Jesus as well as one of our core values here at Red Rocks Church.

How was your week? What were a few of the highs and a few of the lows? Take some time to check in with your group.

When you hear that we are jumping into a series on giving, what emotions come up? Excitement, anger, suspicion, curiosity? Explain to your group.

GROW

Read Mark 10:17-22

There are several things we can gather about this man from context clues in the passage. How would you describe him? What is he like? How do you picture him in your mind?

This is a rare example of someone grieving as he leaves a conversation with Jesus. Why do you think he walks away sad?

On paper, this young man has it seemingly all together. With zeal, he runs up to Jesus, kneels before him, honors him, and asks a great question.

But Jesus is wise enough to see a massive blind spot in his life. The Rich Young Ruler isn't kneeling before Jesus and calling him "good teacher" out of reverence and respect. He has an agenda. He's looking to get some information from Jesus, some tips on how he can add to his already impressive resume. This man isn't interested in building the Kingdom of Heaven; he is interested in building his own kingdom.

Jesus sees right through it. Knowing his heart, he makes a radical statement. "Go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Mark 10:21). The problem is, this man's possessions are everything to him. Without them, he would feel exposed, and feared no one would accept him. So instead, he declines the invitation and walks away sad.

We don't need to read this and feel like we need to sell all our possessions, that's not the point. But reading this story is to encourage us to ask ourselves this difficult question: what am I hiding behind?

What is your go-to thing to hide behind? Share it with your group and be as specific as you feel comfortable being.

What is one way you can practice not hiding behind that thing this week?

MOVE

Read Mark 10:23-31

When the man walks away, Jesus turns to his disciples to encourage them. What do you make of these words, “many who are first will be last, and the last first” (Mark 10:31)?

The good news of the Gospel is that we are accepted exactly as we are. Jesus took care of everything when he died on the cross, so we don't need to add our good behavior, or good deeds on top to sweeten the deal. But let's be honest, it can be difficult to believe that wholeheartedly. It's completely understandable that we all tend to reach for things like accomplishments, morality, and good deeds to hide behind. Ever since Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together to hide in the Garden, humans have been putting on a performance in front of God, adding to our resumes, hoping God will finally love us.

But there is no need! God loves us just the way we are!

Paul says it this way, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).

Jesus talks (and warns) about money more than any other subject in the Gospels. Not because money is bad, but because giving it away is one of the best ways to practice trusting God!

When we give, we are waging war against our tendency to hide. The invitation of Jesus is to be fully known and fully loved. To let go of control, releasing the tight grip we may have on the things we hold most dear, and be who we truly are in front of the world. So, as stretching as giving can be, it is also one of the most effective spiritual practices.

Giving is an exercise in experiencing God's love!

Let's practice that as a group this week by trying this simple exercise.

Give something away this week! It may be a book, clothes, jewelry, buying someone a cup of coffee or a meal. Whatever God places on your heart, follow through with it this week. You may decide to give it to someone meaningful and explain why you are giving it to

them! While you give it away, pay attention to the emotions you are experiencing as you give. Give yourself permission to feel all the feels. It may bring a sense of sadness, stir up anxiety, joy, or whatever emotions follow. Being generous is the way Jesus. He knows this to a much greater depth than we ever will.

P R A Y

As a group, spend some time praying with and for each other. If you are in a coed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to share more freely.

T O G O

2 Corinthians 12:10

“For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

