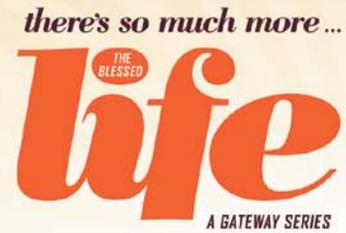


Am I Generous?



Focus A generous heart stems from a grateful and unselfish heart. God always rewards generosity.

Open What's the strangest gift you've ever given someone?

Read John 12:1–8 tells the story of Mary washing Jesus' feet with a bottle of oil worth one year's wages and Judas criticizing her for it. The passage displays two hearts: a generous heart and a selfish heart.

The enemy of generosity is not a person; it's selfishness. We're all born selfish as evidenced by having to learn not to say the word, "Mine!" When Judas said that Mary's oil should have been sold and the money used for the poor, he didn't really care about the poor! His comment was a cover-up for his wanting the money. We're like Judas when we have a selfish, self-seeking, envious, jealous heart that tries to justify itself by pointing fingers at others!

Generosity is extravagant. How much constitutes an extravagant gift to God? God owns everything! There is no amount of money that will impress the owner of the universe. The most extravagant gift you can give to God is yourself (2 Corinthians 8:5). There are three levels of giving in the Bible: tithes, offerings and extravagant offerings. There are many examples of extravagant giving in Scripture: David gave 21 billion dollars to build the temple, Solomon offered 1000 sacrifices, and the widow gave 2 mites—everything she had. An extravagant, generous heart stems from a grateful heart. Mary gave extravagantly because Jesus had raised her brother from the dead!

God rewards generosity. A generous heart doesn't give to be rewarded, but God always rewards generosity! In response to Mary's gift, Jesus promised that she would be remembered throughout history for her generosity. She didn't know that her gift would be Jesus' only anointing before His burial. She didn't know how her gift would be used or that it would be rewarded. She gave generously simply because she was grateful!

Talk

1. What does the word “extravagant” mean to you?
2. Read John 12:1–8 and Mark 14:3–9. Who do you relate to most in this story—Mary or Judas? Why?
3. Like Judas, many who criticize other people’s offerings are responding out of selfishness, jealousy, envy or greed. Why does selfishness criticize extravagance?
4. Jesus knew that Judas was wrestling with selfishness when he entrusted him with keeping the money box. God will often give us opportunities in the area of our weakness so that we will succeed and overcome.
 - a. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. What does God promise concerning temptation, including temptation related to money?
 - b. Have you sensed God testing your financial stewardship in some way? What have you sensed and how have you responded?
5. Extravagant giving is relative; even those with little or nothing can be generous. Describe someone who demonstrates a generous spirit. What impact has their example had on your life?
6. Read Hebrews 11:6. What does this verse tell us about God’s nature? What does God’s nature tell us about why He wants us, His disciples, to be generous?

Live

1. Mary gave extravagantly because she was so grateful—Jesus had raised her brother from the dead! What are you grateful for today?
2. Is there a specific area in your life in which you are wrestling to become generous? What underlying fear or selfish desire could this situation be revealing in your life?

Pray

Thank God that He is generous and gave us His only Son for our salvation. Thank Him for His unending goodness. Ask Him to birth a thankful, unselfish heart within you. Repent if you have criticized those who have demonstrated generosity toward Him. Ask for the courage to extravagantly give your life and resources to Him.