

BLESSED LIFE—1
A HEART OF GENEROSITY

I am curious, how many of you would say that God has blessed you? Would you raise your hands? You are living a pretty blessed life. How many of you and be honest about this, there is no shame in admitting to it; how many of you would say, "I would love to be even more blessed?"

It is more blessed to give than to receive. Acts 20:35

Story of Blessing.... GIVING –VS- RECEIVING Chicken & Olive Garden

If we as believers can internalize this truth, it can be unquestionably life- changing to realize it is more blessed; everyone say, "More blessed!" Say it again, "More blessed!" It is more blessed to do what? It is more blessed to give than it is to receive.

• **THE KEY TO THE BLESSED LIFE IS A HEART OF GENEROSITY.**

Proverbs 11:24 One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. 25 A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.

One man gives freely and gains more, another withholds and loses.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8, 11 *6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.*

Any farmer will know this; if you put a few seeds in the ground you can expect a small harvest. If you put a lot of seeds in the ground, you can expect a larger harvest.

7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

This word in the Greek, it actually means hilarious; this is the person who goes, "Wow! We get to give! We are so blessed that we get to give!" In fact, I love in the Old Testament, they would actually have feasts, entire parties around giving offerings. We are so blessed, we get together to party because God has blessed us and enabled us to give. God loves a cheerful giver.

The Feast Of Tabernacle! Explanation!

8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work...11 You will be made rich in every way

Notice, he is not just talking about finances. If you limit the blessings of God to finances, you are way underestimating the blessings of God. "You will be made rich in every way." What could 'every way' include? Certainly, you could be blessed financially or materially;

God is a generous God. But, even more so, you could be blessed with relational riches, with a fantastic, deep, and growing marriage, with friendships that last for years, and years, and years, and years. You could be blessed physically as well.

so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

Why are not more people more generous? Or another way of saying it is, why are not more people more blessed? The answer is because too many of us have what I call a 'bag mindset'.

THREE MINDSETS

1) **THE BAG: WE DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH.**

... You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes. Hag 1:6 NKJV

You've got a little bag and you fill it up with monthly income, and every month it seems like there are holes in it, no matter how hard you try it seems like there is not much left over. Whatever comes in seems to go out. You get upset, there is not enough in the bag and you feel like any time we start to get ahead something breaks. I mean, we are finally getting there and then boom! Transmission goes out, or boom! The heater breaks! You feel like you are living with a bag with holes in it, and as much as you'd like to be generous, you don't feel like you can because it seems like everything that goes in the bag goes out. There is not enough. I wish I could be generous; but, I just don't feel like I have enough.

What is interesting, is when you look at Scripture, there is a guy in the New Testament that was really getting into what was in the bag, and his name was Judas. He was the guy who carried around the money bag. And, if there was any guy who was really getting into what the stuff in the bag could buy, it was Judas. Even so, when an immoral woman was so moved by Jesus that she broke open a bottle of perfume that was valued at about a years' worth of wages just to worship Jesus; Judas screamed, "No! Don't do that! The money!" He was so consumed by what was in the bag. In fact, you know what he did? He did what many people do today. He betrayed Jesus because of his bag mindset. He betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver in a little bag. The same thing people do today. People don't give today and Scripture says the tithe belongs to God, returning the tithe of 10% and people don't do that today because they are more concerned about what's in the bag than they are with obeying and honoring God. "I would love to give but the bag has holes in it! We have got to buy our Christmas gifts! Things are tight, the economy is tight! I am worried about my job! I would love to give, but I don't feel like I can! We've got college coming up with the kids, we would love to give, but we can't because we have got the bag mindset. The first one is where so many people live today and that is the bag mindset.

2) **THE BASKET: MORE THAN ENOUGH. God is an abundant God and we can give freely.**

4 The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock...5 Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. 6 You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out. Deut 28:4-6

Jesus, in the New Testament, he gave a real interesting teaching about the basket one time. I think it is Luke Chapter 6, he said this, "Give and it will be given to you, one man gives freely yet gains even more. Give and it will be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will it be given unto you." What was he doing? He was really talking about a basket. When Jesus was teaching, he was teaching to a group that certainly would have understood what the farmers or the land owners would do with those who harvested grain. Once they had a lot of grain, there would be 2 kinds of people that would fill the baskets. There were the day laborers, those who would work for money, and when they would fill the baskets, they would not fill the baskets real high, they wouldn't press it down, because they had to carry it across the field. So they might fill the basket three quarters of the way full and carry it across because they didn't want to work too hard. There was another type though, that was the beneficiary of the master's benevolence. These were the poor people who didn't have much and the master who would be so generous that the land owner would say at the end of the day, "You are welcome to come and bring your baskets and fill them up with whatever is leftover." So, these people who were very hungry, they would come and they would fill their baskets up, how do you think? With a good measure, pressed down, shake that baby, get the air out, so we can get all of it in there and it would be running over as they carried it home. And because of the master's generosity, there baskets would run over. That is the kind of God that God really is, he is the God of abundance, that when we are faithful with a little, and we are faithful with what is in the bag, he can trust us with more, and as we are faithful with a little, God may provide more materially. Or, maybe more in other ways, but he will provide more of the real kind of blessings, so that our basket is overflowing.

in the New Testament, there was a little boy one day who was listening to Jesus teach, along with maybe ten or fifteen thousand other people.

Then miraculously, Jesus and his disciples fed 5,000 men and who knows how many men and children off of what was given and blessed. Here is the key, and you may have never seen this before, when it was all said and done, and you can read this for yourself; the disciples went and they gathered the leftovers. Guess what was leftover? Twelve baskets full of leftovers, the abundant God, the abundance of a good God. When we give, it will be given unto us. When one man gives freely, he will receive even more. When one withholds unduly, he comes to poverty. You want to be more blessed? It is more blessed to give than it is to receive.

Here is what I pray for every single one of you; I pray that God will stretch your faith out of the 'bag mindset' into the 'basket mindset'. When your faithful with a little, he will give you more.

3) **THE BARN: GOD IS INFINITELY MORE THAN ENOUGH.**

8 The Lord will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to... Deut 8:8

imagine you are faithful with what is in the bag, and then you are what is in the basket, and then one day God gives you barns that are overflowing. God gives you barns that are overflowing. Joseph experienced this in the Old Testament. When he was faithful, God elevated him from the pit, and he was faithful in prison, and God put him in a palace one day, and as he was faithful, there a great famine came and he said, "You know what, I've got barns overflowing!" He was able to feed everyone in Egypt because his barns were overflowing. When you are faithful in a similar way, guess what God will do? God will use you to bless many, because your barns will be overflowing.

Here is the deal though. God wants to know, how much can he bless you with? Are you going to be a 'bag person', a person who never has enough? Or, are you going to be a basket, a funnel, that lets the overflow be a blessing to others? Or, will you have such great faith, that you are going to say, "You know, this stuff isn't for me, I would give generously." You are going to have a 'barn mindset'. God wants to know how much he can bless you with.

HOW MUCH CAN GOD BLESS YOU WITH?

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. 11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? Luke 16:10-11

9 Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; 10 then your barns will be filled to overflowing... Proverbs 3:9-10

16 And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. 17 He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' 18 "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." ' Luke 12:16-19

"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' 21 "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." Luke 12:20-21

God was not angry at this man because he was blessed. God is the one who blessed him. God was angry at him because he didn't know how to be blessed. He thought that all of the blessings were for him. This was a guy that had 'barn blessings' with a 'bag mindset'. I will say it again, this is a guy that had 'barn blessings' with a 'bag mindset'. And may I say very respectfully, that is most of us. That is most of us. You are going to say, "Well, I don't have a barn, I don't have a barn." No actually, you've got a barn most of you for your cars. When you look at your life compared to the people around the rest of the world, you have 'barn blessings' with a 'bag mindset', and the reason you are not more blessed is because you still actually believe it is more blessed to receive than it is to give.

The key to a blessed life is a heart of generosity. It is more blessed to give than it is to receive.