



Workbook for



Los Altos United Methodist Church

www.laumc.org

Fall 2014

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Introduction

Here we go again. It seems an inevitable part of the church year – that season where we suspend regular programming for a pledge break: “The sooner we can meet our pledge goals for the year, the sooner we can get back to the regular church programming you know and love! If you pledge now, you’ll receive this 12-volume DVD set of Sermons of the Church Fathers! Pledge right away!”

Really?

Is that what Extravagant Generosity is really about? In a word, no. Sure, LAUMC has financial needs. It takes money to fund the ministry that we are passionate about. But that is not at all what this series is about. God’s plans are not thwarted because God doesn’t have enough cash – they are thwarted when we don’t join in and participate.

We’ve been talking a lot about the Five Practices of Fruitful Living over the past few years: Passionate Worship, Deepening Faith, Bold Service and Social Justice, Radical Hospitality... and Extravagant Generosity. Generosity is fully included as a *practice* of fruitful living.

We don’t have Four Practices of Fruitful Living, Plus A Really Effective Tool For Fundraising. We have all five practices. What Bishop Schnase is telling us here is that, above and beyond whatever ministries our dollars fund, the *practice* of Extravagant Generosity, in and of itself, transforms us into disciples of Jesus Christ.

In the next month or so, we’re going to be exploring this concept that Jesus gives us: “It is better to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35) We are going to focus on how giving changes us, renews us, and frees us from the chains and constraints of this world, and instead leads us into that “abundant Life” that Jesus promises. (John 10:10)

There will be time to talk about budgets and ministries and pledges, but we are not going to talk about that now. What we are going to talk about now is much more important: how it is that we can each grow to become more extravagant givers to everyone around us, and how that growth makes us more like Jesus.

-Brian Jones, Chair, Extravagant Generosity

Acknowledgements

Small group ministry, GroupLife, was initiated as the priority of Los Altos United Methodist Church by the Pastoral Staff, the Church Council, and the Vision Team in 2011.

We are deeply grateful to Pastors Mariellen Yoshino, Debbie Weatherspoon, Samuel Yun, and Dirk Damonte, and the ministry staff at Los Altos United Methodist Church for their tremendous support and vision. The Church Council, headed by Margie Gong, has also been instrumental.

We appreciate the wonderful assistance we have received from the church ministry and office staff – Cindy Golden, Lynda Monari, Annamaria Muniz, Meghan Kinoshita. Thank you for your cheerful help with all sorts of details.

Please contact us if you have comments or suggestions about GroupLife. We welcome your input and ideas!

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GroupLife Commitment

While exploring Extravagant Generosity through “It’s Better” and the related sermon series at Los Altos United Methodist Church, small groups will foster community with real people, real lives, and real faith. To facilitate this endeavor, small groups hold these values:

- R Take responsibility for what you say and feel without blaming others
- E Use empathetic listening
- S Be sensitive to differences in communication styles
- P Ponder what you hear and feel before you speak
- E Examine your own assumptions and perceptions
- C Keep confidentiality
- T Tolerate ambiguity and do not assume right and wrong

GroupLife is a safe place to express feelings and ideas without judgment, a place to receive encouragement and support. Out of respect for each other’s time, meetings will start and end at the specified times. Please be prompt. If unable to attend, notify the HOST.

Note that the HOST has agreed to open his or her home for the duration of this group. Others in the group are welcome to take on other group responsibilities during this time, such as helping facilitate discussion, bringing refreshments, assisting with communication among the group, and planning any social or service events the group wishes to pursue.

Some GroupLife groups may elect to continue meeting after this 4-week series. Resources are available to support any groups who wish to continue. We encourage everyone to maintain an active support system in some form, because that is how we do life best!

How to Use This Workbook

For each small group session there will a video and discussion questions. We also encourage everyone to attend Sunday worship to hear a message about the weekly topic. (Sunday worship times at Los Altos United Methodist Church are 8:00am, 9:30am, 11:15am, and 5:00pm. You may also view live streaming online at www.laumc.org). Below is a suggested schedule for groups to follow:

Week of Sept 21st	Session 1
Week of Sept 28th	Session 2
Week of October 5th	Session 3
Week of October 12th	Session 4

An easy-to-follow format for each session is provided in this workbook with suggested time allotments for a 90-minute meeting. Feel free to adjust the time segments as appropriate for your group.

Getting to Know the Group	15 min	This activity is designed to help the group get better acquainted with each other as people arrive. Good time to serve a snack as well!
Opening prayer	5 min	A scripture, poem, or prayer is provided. Try different ways to pray: one person read aloud, everyone take turns reading a portion, do it silently, or any other method you wish.
Video Introduction	10 min	Watch the appropriate session on the DVD to stimulate our discussion time together.
Discussion Points	40 min	Some suggestions for group discussion are provided. They follow the Head, Heart, Hands format of our mission statement. You may break up into smaller groups for discussion as well. (Please note there are “money autobiography” general questions at the back, as well as issues related to parenting.)
Closing prayer	15 min	Spend some time allowing everyone to share praises or concerns. Close the group meeting with prayer – either one person praying, taking turns, praying silently, or even singing a prayer.

Options for Children and GroupLife

There are many ways to approach children and small groups. They are a valuable part of our community and benefit from experiencing genuine, Christian community in their lives. We can all learn from children, as well! Yet there are also situations where it is not appropriate to have children participate in order to allow deeper sharing among adults. Each group will decide how to handle this decision. Here are some suggestions:

- 1) Adult and children group – include children completely in the group the entire time, perhaps have potluck supper as part of the meeting.
- 2) Planned childcare group – anyone who has children works out their own childcare/babysitting needs
- 3) Share sitting group – more than one family can use the same babysitter for their children, either in another room at the HOST home, or at the home of someone else in the group. Or one adult can take turns rotating out of group meeting each week and watch the children.
- 4) Partial participation group – everyone, children and adults, starts together for a time of fellowship, food. There is a short time of spiritual interaction among the generations with music and/or an activity to engage everyone. Then the children go to a different room to play with supervision (babysitter or an adult rotating out of the group each week to supervise the kids.) The adults continue with deeper level of discussion.

Session One: GIVING > RECEIVING

Getting to Know the Group

If you were given \$100 and had to use it for a gift for someone else, who would be the recipient, what would the gift be, and why?

Opening Prayer

*Dear God,
Thank you for all that you give us: life, creation, community, opportunities. As we celebrate those gifts, open our hearts to the power of giving and the intention you have for us. May we grow in community as we explore what Extravagant Generosity means. Prepare us for a new challenge in our faith. Amen.*

Video Introduction, Father and Son (duration: 7 minutes)

Allow the group to discuss reactions to the video and/or the sermon from this week.

Scriptures

Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." - *Acts 20:32-35*

And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the

saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. But just as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us – see that you also excel in this grace of giving. – *II Corinthians 8:1-7*

Discussion Points

HEAD

1. Paul quotes Jesus as saying, “it is more blessed to give than to receive.” Discuss the meaning of the phrase. Do you agree or disagree?
2. Paul urges those at Corinth to “excel in this grace of giving”. How is giving related to grace?
3. There are many valid ways to give (tithe, time, talents). Jesus and Paul often focus on the financial kind of giving. What is different about giving our money than giving in other ways? How does financial giving affect the giver in unique ways?

HEART

1. How does our culture view giving and receiving? Think about typical messages in advertisements and media.
2. Have you experienced a blessing through giving? Share your story.
3. Describe what it might look like to “excel” at giving. Or share an example of someone you think does this better than you do.

4. Sometimes financial giving is harder than other kinds of giving. Why is that? Do we ever use “giving of time and talent” as an excuse to get out of financial giving? When is that okay, and when is it not okay?

HANDS

1. What obstacles stand in the way of your giving? Why do we sometimes hesitate to give when we have more than we need?
2. Have you tried following the TIPS suggestion to give more money when you tip?

T = thank God for what you have

I = imagine the impact of giving more

P = pray for the recipient

S = share your experience

3. Name one thing you can do to strive to become better at giving. Try it in the next week and come back prepared to share your experience.

Closing Prayer

Prayer concerns for this week:

Lord, help us understand that it is in giving that we have a richer life. Provide us with opportunities this week to do more giving. Thank you for the blessings that will follow. Amen.

Session Two: WORTHY > WORTH

Getting to Know the Group

Share with the group about your favorite gift you ever received. Perhaps as a child? Perhaps as an adult?

Opening Prayer

*Dear God,
Thank you for loving us unconditionally. Guide us as we seek to learn more about what it means to give a worthy gift to you. Amen.*

Video Introduction (duration: 3 minutes)

Allow the group to discuss reactions to the video and/or the sermon from this week.

Scriptures

My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first-fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine. – *Proverbs 3:1-10*

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowds putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others

They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.” -- *Mark 12:41-44*.

Discussion Points

HEAD

1. Giving to God begins very early in the Bible. Here is *Genesis 4:2b-5*:

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. ³ In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. ⁴ And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. (NIV)

This is all the information we get about the offerings from Cain and Abel. What was the difference between the offerings that made God approve of one and not of the other?

2. The most famous story of giving involves the poor widow. Here's the version from *Mark 12*; it is also told in *Luke 21*.

⁴¹ *Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. ⁴² But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.*

⁴³ *Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. ⁴⁴ They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”* (NIV)

Apparently, God is not interested in the total amount of our gift. What makes the widow's offering worthy in God's sight? That the amount represents all she has? Her attitude of humility

(“putting” it in quietly, rather than “throwing” it in noisily)? Or something else about her attitude and mindset?

3. We see offerings in unexpected places in Scripture. The Feeding of the Five Thousand starts with a small boy’s gift (John 6):

⁸ Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, ⁹ “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?” (NIV)

We don’t know if this gift was the boy’s idea, but it isn’t hard to imagine that it was. In a crowd full of people looking after their own needs, a child is willing to give to contribute – in spite of the fact that the gift seems completely inadequate. How do our experiences as responsible adults hinder our gift giving?

HEART:

1. Think about the gift you talked about in the icebreaker. What made it a worthy gift? What made you value it? Are those feelings that God might have when receiving a gift from us? What kind of gift might make God feel that way?
2. Think about a time when giving a gift to another person felt really good. What made that experience different than other times?
3. *Proverbs 3* says:
*⁹ Honor the LORD with your wealth,
with the firstfruits of all your crops;
¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing,
and your vats will brim over with new wine.*

This kind of giving requires a level of trust that God will not only provide for your needs, but exceed your expectations. Do you find this prospect terrifying, or exhilarating, or both? What would have to happen (inside you or outside) for you to be willing to put really try this in your life?

4. We have all had times when we've questioned whether our gifts matter. Have you ever felt your gift was truly worthy in God's sight? What was the story behind that? What was different about that experience than others when it didn't feel so worthy?

HANDS:

1. Everyone already gives in one way or another. What is the easiest way for you to give? Having thought about what makes a "worthy gift", what small changes can you make to your current giving to make your gift more worthy?
2. Sometimes our giving is meant to "check the box," or "meet the minimum requirement," or to do enough to not feel guilty. What giving is hard for you? What would you need to change, or what support would you need to receive, to make that area of giving more worthy?
3. For all of us, there are ways we are called to give, but we can't quite bring ourselves to give that way yet. For many of us, it is easier to give time and talents than it is to give money. When you think of the ways it is very hard for you to give, what is it that makes it hard? Fear? Past experience? Loss of control? Something else? How can your small group or community

support you as you get closer to relishing this kind of giving that is now so hard?

Closing Prayer

Prayer concerns for this week:

Dear Lord, you have given us life and everything in it. We want to give back a worthy gift, but we so often lose sight of what makes a gift worthy. Help us to appreciate all you have given us, and help us to worthiness of our gifts, and to joyfully experience how much better it is to give a worthy gift. Amen.

Session Three: WHOLENESS > SUM

Getting to know the group

What are you grateful for today, this week, this month?

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, allow us to be aware of the abundance in our lives and the care you have provide us through family, friends, and our community. Allow us to focus on your presence with us as we discuss wholeness and contentment in our lives. Amen.

Video Introduction (Duration: 3 minutes)

Allow the group to discuss reactions to the video and/or the sermon from this week.

Scriptures

I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Yes it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus, the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. – Phil 4:10-20

Discussion Points

HEAD

1. Paul talked about the “secret of being content”. What does this mean and when have you experienced contentment?
2. How are generosity and contentment related? Or, consider how the opposite of generosity (greed, materialism, control) sabotages contentment.
3. Discuss how living out the practice of extravagant generosity makes us more dependent on God. What does it mean to “live in faith rather than finance”?
4. Paul writes, “and my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” (*Phil 4:19*). What does that imply about wholeness and contentment?

HEART

1. What do you consider to be “enough”? How do you know when you have enough?
2. What factors make it challenging to trust God to provide for everything we need?
3. How do you measure a “satisfying day” or a day of contentment, a day well lived?
4. Who or what do you want to provide for with your abundance? With regard to your finances or money, what are your hopes and goals?
5. What do you generally think or feel when the offering plate is passed? When a stewardship/giving campaign is announced? Why do you react that way? How can we remind ourselves that those acts are not about church budgets?

HANDS

1. Name one thing you could do this week that would bring you greater contentment.
2. What area of your life would benefit if you trusted God more? How could you trust God more in that area?
3. Seek an opportunity this week where you can give in a new way. Reflect on that experience in terms of living in faith rather than finance.

Closing Prayer

Prayer concerns for this week:

Dear Lord, allow me to recognize my abundance and the gifts you have showered on me. Help me to be aware of your presence in my life. Help me to see myself as an instrument of your vision for the world, a world of community and cooperation. Show me ways to support your vision through my being, my sharing of my abundance, and my caring for those I encounter. Teach me how to find true contentment and wholeness through giving. We ask all this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Session Four: OBEDIENCE > SACRIFICE

Getting to Know the Group

What is the best gift you think you have ever given someone? What do you think is the best give you have ever given to God?

Opening Prayer

O Gracious and Loving God, we believe that life in you and with you is a life of great abundance. Help us to live in that spirit. Help us to loosen our grip on the things of this world, and open our hands in obedience and worship to you. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Video Introduction (Duration: 2 minutes)

Allow the group to discuss reactions to the video and/or the sermon from this week.

Scriptures

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases. All a man's ways seem right to him, but the Lord weighs the heart. To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. –*Proverbs 21:1-3*

I the Lord do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. "Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?' "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse – the whole nation of you – because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. "Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the

Lord Almighty. “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the Lord Almighty. – *Malachi 3:6-12*

Discussion Points

HEAD

1. There are many examples in Scripture where individuals responded to God’s call in obedience despite its difficulty. Can you name some of those individuals and share what their obedience teaches us?
2. How do you resolve Malachi’s verses about “testing God” with some of the other texts of Scripture that commands us to “not put the Lord your God to the test”?
3. Why is obedience better than sacrifice? How did Jesus live out a life of obedience?
4. What is the proper definition of a “full tithe”?

HEART

1. In what areas of your life do you feel like God is “calling” you to a certain level of obedience?
2. Would you consider your giving to God: 1) sacrificial, 2) obedient, 3) obligatory, 4) non-existent? What do you need to work on personally in order to reflect the “call” of this week’s message?
3. Proverbs 21 talks about one’s heart being like a stream of water in the hands of God, meaning that God’s will turns it one way or another. Is your stream bending towards the will of God? What in your life helps you be more in accordance with God’s will? What in your life is a stumbling block to being more in tune with God’s will?

4. Obedient living to God's ways, God's will, and God's rules is difficult when done alone. Who in your life have been "partners of obedience"? Any distractors?

HANDS

1. Obedience is not measured by mere dollars and cents. Where can you offer your "full self" to serve according to God's call on your life?
2. In a couple weeks, LAUMC will be involved in Compassion Week where we go out into the world to "be the Church". How will you participate in this outreach and service? How can you discern more intently, where God is calling you?

Closing Prayer

Prayer concerns for this week:

O God who call us to greater commitment, greater giving, and greater living, help us to discern what is righteous and just. Help us to see your world and people that are in need, and help us to obediently share of our resources and our very selves in the same way that many saints have faithfully done so in the past. May our giving not be driven just by emotions and self-congratulating acts, but may our giving be inspired by our love for you and our desire to live according to your ways. For we pray this in the name of the One who was obedient even to the point of death on the cross, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Resources

SCRIPTURES

But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth. *Deuteronomy 8:18*

For everything comes from God and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. *Romans 11:36*

But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. *Philippians 4:19*

He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like foliage. *Proverbs 11:28.*

Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless. As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owners except to feast their eyes on them? *Ecclesiastes 5:10-11*

Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be. . . .No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. *Matthew 6:19-21, 24*

For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? *Matthew 16:26*

Don't wear yourself out trying to get rich. Be wise enough to know when to quit. *Proverbs 23:4*

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” *Hebrews 13:5*

Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. *Matthew 5:42*

Some people are always greedy for more, but the godly love to give! *Proverbs 21:26*

If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the town of the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need. . . . Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. *Deuteronomy 15:7,8,10*

All the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and share the money with those in need. *Acts 2:44-45*

All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. *Acts 4:32*

You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” *Acts 20:35*

Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine. *Proverbs 3:9-10*

Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. *1 Timothy 6:17-18*

BOOKS

Alcorn, Randy. *The Treasure Principle: Unlocking the Secret of Joyful Giving*. Multnomah Books, Colorado Springs, CO, 2005. Study Jesus' teaching about giving and discover greater joy.

Amaradio, Tony and Carin. *Faithful with Much: Breaking Down the Barriers to Generous Giving*. David C. Cook, Colorado Springs, CO, 2009. Are you ready to trust God with your wealth for the good of His kingdom?

Anderson, Jeff. *Plastic Donuts: Giving that Delights the Heart of the Father*. Multnomah Books, Colorado Springs, CO, 2013. See your giving from God's perspective.

Hamilton, Adam. *Enough: Discovering Joy through Simplicity and Generosity*. Abington Press, Nashville, TN, 2009. The keys to experiencing contentment, overcoming fear, and discovering joy through simplicity and generosity.

Schnase, Robert. *Practicing Extravagant Generosity*. Abington Press, Nashville, TN, 2011. Experience the joy of serving God through generosity. Four weeks of Bible readings and meditations.

Shinabarger, Jeff. *More or Less: Choosing a Lifestyle of Excessive Generosity*. David C. Cook, Colorado Springs, CO, 2013. Ask yourself the question "what is enough?" in regards to clothing, food, time, travel, money.

Stanley, Andy. *Fields of Gold*. Tyndale, 2006. What will you do with your seeds? Overcoming fear and trusting God to sow generously. And those who do that will reap generously.

Stanley, Andy. *How to Be Rich: It's not what you have, it's what you do with what you have*. Zondervan, Grand Rapid, MI, 2013. Most of us are richer than we think. We just aren't very good at it.

WEBSITES

www.generousgiving.org

www.faihandmoneynetwork.org

www.goodnet.org

www.ted.com (TED talk: search for Sasha Dichter: The Generosity Experiment)

Writing Your Money Autobiography

The purpose of this exercise is for you to have the opportunity to reflect on your habits and attitudes regarding money, as well as the connection between money and faith in your life. Many folks choose to write down answers to these questions, reflecting on only a few questions each day. (Source: The Alban Institute)

1. What is your earliest memory of money? Of earning money? Of purchasing something with money you earned yourself? Of losing money?
2. What is your happiest memory in connection with money?
3. What is your unhappiest money memory? Did you worry about money as a child? As a teenager?
4. Growing up, who controlled the money in your household? What was their attitude toward money? Did the adults in your home view money matters in the same way?
5. As a child, what were you intentionally taught about money? Who taught you? What did you learn about money indirectly in your household?
6. Were there money rituals or traditions in your household? Are there rituals in your household today?
7. Were there rich people in your community? Poor people? How did you know? Did you feel poor, rich or neither growing up?
8. What is your earliest recollection of money in the church? As a child, what rituals surrounded money in the church?
9. How is your view of money similar to or different from that of family members – parents, siblings, spouse, children?
10. Has money ever hindered a family relationship? If so, why? Has money ever hindered a friendship? If so, why?
11. If you ever lacked funds, how did you feel when someone helped you financially? How did you feel when you helped someone else financially?
12. How is your present financial health? What do you expect it to be in ten years? Twenty five years? Do you have a will?
13. What does “enough” mean to you?
14. Do you have any fears about money? What are they?

15. In what ways are you generous, conservative or stingy? Do you treat? Tip? Do you tend to be on the giving or receiving end?
16. Do you feel guilty about your prosperity?
17. Would you say that you are a good manager of money? In what ways are you a poor manager of money?
18. What does the Bible teach about money?
19. How does your Christian faith influence your attitudes toward money? Your daily practices with money?
20. In what ways does your relationship with money affect your faith?
21. What money issues do you think are unique to the church? How has being a member of the church impacted your attitudes toward money?
22. What do you value most? How is your use of money influenced by what you value?
23. How do you determine how much money you will give to your church? To charitable organizations? What percentage of your income do you give? (If you're not sure, do the math now.) How do you feel about your giving?
24. Do you have any compulsive behaviors with money? Saving? Spending? Gambling? Accumulating? Giving?
25. What kind of legacy would you like to leave when you die? Of your worldly possessions, what would you leave to whom and why?
26. When has giving brought you joy? When did your giving bring obvious joy to another?
27. How do you feel about indebtedness? Welfare? Begging? Do you keep close track of how much money you have? Do you judge other people based on the way they manage their money?
28. What is the most difficult decision you have had to make regarding money? Where is there secrecy regarding money in your life?
29. What was your attitude toward giving five years ago? What questions did you have then? How have things changed in the past five years?
30. In what ways do you feel your relationship with money is a spiritual issue? What does it mean to you to be a good steward?

Parenting Faith and Money

A parent's supplement to the money autobiography

(Source: faithandmoneynetwork.org)

Our attitudes and assumptions about money often remain unexamined, yet they are reflected in our economic choices. They are there for our children of all ages to see and absorb and repeat. Some of these attitudes and behaviors are helpful to our children; others are not. Either way, if we are aware of our own feelings and actions around money, we can more intentionally communicate with our children, giving them tools to deal with their own feelings about money-related issues and to make choices consistent with their faith and values.

Writing a money autobiography is a challenging and crucial step in understanding our behavior and powerful feelings evoked by money. If you haven't yet written your money autobiography, we strongly recommend it. Some questions to guide your reflection can be found at www.faithandmoneynetwork.org.

As a special focus for parents, or other people with children in your life, we offer the following questions—a parent's supplement to the money autobiography—to encourage explicit thinking about children and money within your household.

Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers that apply to every situation. Like all other aspects of parenting, appropriate and faithful financial education and decision-making depends on the circumstances and personalities within your family.

1. What household financial decisions are made in the presence of your children? Do they see you pay bills? Do they hear you discuss finances or make choices about the money you give away, save or spend? Do your children have any input in these decisions?
2. How does each of your children seem to make financial decisions? Do they show signs of being a saver or spender? To what degree are they generous or selfish with their money and

possessions? Do they set their own limits of what's too much? How are they influenced by advertising and their peers?

3. What emotions have you observed in your children about money issues? For example, are they anxious, carefree, thoughtful, or envious?
4. Do you enforce limits of what's too much—too many toys or other possessions, too much to spend on a gift or clothes or other items? How do you set those limits? How do you enforce them? Is setting such limits difficult or easy for you?
5. Do your children know what the family income is? Do they know how much your house or car cost? Are they aware of other aspects of your income or expenses?
6. What are your feelings about privacy around money issues? Does anyone outside your immediate household know how much you make? How does it make you feel to talk about your financial situation outside your household?
7. Are you aware of any religious education your children have received around the many money issues raised in the Bible? What are they learning in your church? What spiritual values around money have you taught your children? Do you talk with them about biblical lessons on money?
8. Consider your children's own money-related insights. What are your children teaching you about money and faith?
9. How do you feel about the way money issues are handled in your home? Do you feel you're generally doing a good job teaching your children?
10. In two-parent households, are both parents on the same page about money issues? If not, how do you handle the differences?
11. To what extent do you put money issues and financial decisions in a faith framework for yourself and within the family? How

does that faith framework shape your financial decisions and what you teach your children about money?

12. How do you feel about the money you spend on gifts for your children? Are you generally content with the amount and type of presents they receive from you and others? Do you feel pressure to give in certain ways or at certain financial levels during holidays or for birthdays?
13. What are two of the things you handle well about money that you want to pass on to your children? What are two of the things you handle poorly that you do not want to pass on to your children?