

The Rule of Generosity Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part altogether, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. What was your favorite subject in school?
2. What is one store or vendor for which you would love to receive a \$1,000 gift card (excluding something like Amazon that sells almost everything)?

Read the following passage: Luke 15:1-2, 11-32.

In this famous parable, the older brother's lack of generosity toward his younger brother is connected to his inability to see his father's generosity toward him. The same is often true in our lives. If we don't feel that God has been generous to us, it is difficult for us to be generous to others. The father's response to his older son can help us. God humbles himself and enters our world even when we are angry and distant. Jesus fully identifies with us, to the point of bearing our sin on the cross. God reminds us that his intention is to give to us everything he has. And God wants us to have this same mindset of generosity toward others.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Explain how the older son in Jesus' parable represents the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. Why were they so upset with the way Jesus was treating tax collectors and sinners?
2. Why do you think Jesus leaves the part of the story dealing with the older son unresolved?
3. Do you ever feel like God is not being generous with you? Explain. What should we do when we feel that way?
4. Do you struggle to be generous with others? What should we do if people have taken advantage of our acts of generosity in the past and we fear that this may happen again? Does generosity mean always giving people what they want? Explain.
5. The father tells his older son, "everything I have is yours." How can that statement give us hope in the present? How do we recognize what God wants for us right now? What are some things that God intends to give us in the next life? (See also 1 Corinthians 4:8-13.)
6. For most of us, it would be terribly irresponsible to give away tomorrow every single thing of material worth that we possess. What, then, might it look like for us to imitate in at least some measure the father's intention to give all that he owned to his sons? (Beyond, of course, actually leaving all of our possessions to our loved

ones when we die!)

7. The younger brother's return did not feel like a win to his older brother. He may have even feared that he was going to lose some of his inheritance if his brother was reinstated. We, too, can sometimes feel like we're playing a "zero sum" game (that is, a game in which, if you win, I lose). But describe some ways it might come about that "everybody wins" when we're generous.

Pray