

Operation Cultivate Team

This is an invitation into leadership: Pillars Pray to Cultivate, Full of Grit
PRAYER- totally dependent on God to do the work.

1. We'll communicate weekly to this team on what we're planning and thinking about- You'll get a video from me via text every week- and the aim is to help you lead yourself or your family through preparation for Easter.

GRIT- doing the hard work

2. Get Gritty- Serve one and attend one
3. Hospitality is incredible (Easter Lunch/dinner) and we want you to do that: AND we'd love you HERE serving one and attending one

The team will receive:

1. Receive weekly communication from us
2. Vision for Easter
3. Things to pray with us

Moment of Silence

Luke Slide

3 things converging over the next 3 weeks.

First- all this year we're in the book of Luke- so per usual I'll be preaching from Luke's gospel today.

Pillars Slide

Additionally- We are emphasizing growing into leadership- as the Bible shows us and defines it- in what we call here at City Church Pillars.

Show 6 Pillars of a Pillar

Cultivate, don't consume, in the worship gathering.

Cultivate, don't consume, in a community group.

Share the gospel & make disciples.

Practice spiritual disciplines.

Be sacrificially & financially generous.

Don't quit when it gets difficult, that's when you'll grow.

Pillars (actions) relationship to being a Pillar (person)

If you are going to support others- you have to be supported by something.

Today and the next 2 Sundays-

We're going to draw out- **Be Sacrificially Generous**

Its more than just financial...and it is also not less than financial.

It has to do with our attitude toward God, toward money, and toward others, particularlry toward the poor.

Being sacrificially generous is going to cost you- in lots of ways. That's what SACRIFICIALLY means.

GRACE & GRIT Slide

Find this on the City Church APP

Point I want to make--> **Open hands both represent a spirit of poverty and need to RECEIVE grace- deep dependence- and it represents spiritual wealth- a willingness to use what God has put in your hands to give to others. Time, talents, and treasures.**

So that leads us to this sort of zoomed in 3 part series we're gonna do.

Open Handed Slide

I want you to know- if there is a the slightest doubt about my intentions or our church- don't give a dime to this church. Give it all to some other person or organization.

Im not here to make anyone give any money you don't want to.

I'm not here to raise money for a particular thing.

In fact, nothing happens to my salary based on what you give.

Also a reality- we set a vision for this church- we set a budget that is hopeful. And your generosity sets the pace with which we can accomplish that vision.

At the forefront of that vision right now is raising up disciple making disciples who will participate in planting churches around the world- including our hunt for a college minister that will help lead a movement not only at MTSU- but prepare students to graduate and take jobs as they go out with church plants around the

world. Its blessing our community from things like Portico who ministers to single moms in our building on Fridays to our partnership with Bradley Academy Elementary School- supporting teachers and families. and our G4 free group counseling ministry thats open to our community. Isaiah 117 Foster Care ministry holds their state-wide meetings here.

Of course- all of that takes money and if you, our church family doesn't give- we don't have a way to do that. You are a very generous people.

But I want us to think about generosity beyond "raising money".
I want us to think about it as a calling and a posture. As a way of life.

As something that God wants FOR us as much or more than he he needs it FROM us.

THE GRAY is the place of fear and pride and defensiveness and arguing and stress about money. A life of spiritual poverty and spiritual wealth that is full of Grace and Grit- > is a life where money doesn't control you, and where you don't use money to control your world.

Its a life of deep joy and dependence. Its a life of beautiful overflow. Its the life that God offers you and calls us into in him.

"It may be possible to have a good debate over whether or not Jesus believed in fairies. It is a tantalizing question. Alas, it is impossible to have any sort of debate over whether or not Jesus believed that rich people were in big trouble—there is too much evidence on the subject, and it is overwhelming."- GK Chesterton???

Whoever said it- it definitely needs some nuance- but instead of trying to brush off such a jarring quote like that- I'd like to identify why it rings true. Mainly, because Jesus said pretty un-nuanced quotes that are very similar.

Title Slide "Dear Theophilus: How the Poor in Spirit Treat Riches" - The Gospel of Luke

Today- we're going to do a look at the entire Book of Luke. From a Macro level.

Luke uses harshest language toward the rich of all 4 gospels and includes the most validations to the poor.

So let's make our way through the book of Luke and I'm going to show you.

Luke 1:3-4

So it also seemed good to me, since I have carefully investigated everything from the very first, to write to you in an orderly sequence, most honorable Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things about which you have been instructed.

Theophilus is rich enough to employ Luke (who is a doctor- which has the same sort of socioeconomic status then as they do now.)

SO this is Luke, who is likely rich, writing to Theophilus who also is rich/

Additionally, in the book of Acts- also written by Luke- both books addressed to they both address Theophilus as "most excellent" or "most honorable".

Which Luke only uses in the Book of Acts to talk about Roman Government officials- Felix (Acts 23:26) and Festus. (Acts 26:25)

It could be that Theophilus is a high ranking Roman official. His name in Greek means "Loved by God". Is that loved by the gods? Like was he considered smiled upon by the gods in his greek culture because of his wealth and status. Perhaps now- wanting to follow Jesus- he is beginning to realize that he is loved by THE One and Only God. And that's why he employs Luke to go get eyewitnesses and right this stuff down so he can more fully commit himself.

The thing is- Luke weaves in a lesson for Theophilus.

As he puts together interviews and pieces together the story- He arranges this story to address something he wants Theophilus to get about following Jesus. Its possible to follow Jesus and be rich- but it doesn't look ANYTHING like having a lot of money without Jesus.

In other words- Luke- who knows how to follow Jesus with Money- is LEADING Theophilus to be a Sacrificially and Financially generous. He's leading him to become a Pillar.

He's saying the rich often get it wrong- but can also get it really really right.

SURVEY OF LUKE

Luke 1:53

53 He has satisfied the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.

Mary's Magnificat- The Great Reversal
humble, hungry, and poor are in a position of future blessing, while the proud, exalted, and rich are in danger- they have their good things NOW- and they aren't looking forward to God's coming Kingdom- so they won't take part in it.

they don't see the brokenness around them.

Luke 2:8-11

8 In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: 11 Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

Chapter 2- Luke is the only gospel to include the shepherds in the Christmas story. He is emphasizing the story of Jesus' was proclaimed to the poor outsider before it came to a rich king. Of course- we also get the lengthy nativity story that includes things like Jesus being born in a manger- and on the run as refugee to Egypt. And Mary and Joseph offering Two Turtledoves as their temple offering- which would have been the offering of the poor.

Luke 3:10-14

10 "What then should we do? " the crowds were asking him.

11 He replied to them, "The one who has two shirts must share with someone who has none, and the one who has food must do the same."

12 Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do? "

13 He told them, "Don't collect any more than what you have been authorized."

14 Some soldiers also questioned him, “What should we do? ”

He said to them, “Don’t take money from anyone by force or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

Chapter 3- JtB- Repentance is directly tied to what you do with your money

Luke 4:18

**18 The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.**

Chapter 4- Isaiah 61- identifies himself as preaching good news to the poor.

Luke 4:26-27

Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them except a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. 27 And in the prophet Elisha’s time, there were many in Israel who had leprosy, and yet not one of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”

Widow of Zarephath materially poor. and Naaman materially rich.

First example of a rich man who “got it”

In gratitude to God humbling him and cleansing him he opened his hands up to his money- and used everything he had to dedicate to the Lords use. — OPEN HANDS WORSHIP

Luke 5:27-29

Chapter 5- Calling tax collector- left his wage making machine behind and then threw a party not to GET but to GIVE.

Another Rich man who GETS IT.

Luke 6:20-21

In Luke’s version of the Beatitudes- he doesn’t say “Poor in Spirit and Hungry for righteousness” like Matthew does- He just says Poor and Hungry.

Luke 6:24-25

And unlike Matthew, Luke directly pronounces curses on the rich
Satisfied- but your money is a thin comfort that will quickly fade
Full- but it won’t last

There is always this look to the future. Can you see the Kingdom of God? Can you look beyond your circumstances?-

If you are relying on your riches for satisfaction and a full life- they will fail you.

This doesn't mean the poor are automatically righteous. After all, if anyone looks to material wealth as the thing that will bring rest for their soul- they will only find frustration. Whether they have it now, or hope to have it soon.

Luke 6:34-35

Luke records Jesus' teaching on loving enemies- specifically by saying not to lend money to enemies trying to trap them in debt to you, but lend knowing they could stiff you. Be available to be cheated...be that generous!

Luke 8:2-3

and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary, called Magdalene (seven demons had come out of her); 3 Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward; Susanna; and many others who were supporting them from their possessions.

Chapter 8- Rich women serving as patrons for Jesus and his disciples-

Good rich people (note the subversive way that even King Herod- who does not want to give- is giving to Jesus' ministry. He's Herod's Steward!!! Its like his accountant!

Chapter 10- he sends out his disciples in pairs,

10:4-7

His Instruction emphasizes financial dependance "Don't carry a money bag, rely on the people you minister to to support you" How would this have sounded to a cosmopolitan Roman business man like Theophilus? WHY should I do that when I can take care of myself? Why put myself in a position of reliance and risk when I can put myself in a position of safety?

10:33-35

Good Samaritan who helps the needy man.

Societal elite ignoring urgent need in front of them, while the Good Samaritan is eager to help a man who considers him an enemy- not only help him he uses his money to help him and ensure he is properly cared for.

11:39-40

But the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and evil. 40 Fools! Didn’t he who made the outside make the inside too? 41 But give from what is within to the poor, and then everything is clean for you.

Jesus address the Pharisees and says they are full of GREED and evil. They give a tenth of what they have, but they ignore the poor right in front of their faces. In other words- they only give they think it benefits them. Curries favor with God.

Luke 12:15

He then told them, “Watch out and be on guard against all greed, because one’s life is not in the abundance of his possessions.”

Parable of Rich fool- Build bigger barns.

12:19

Then I’ll say to myself, “You have many goods stored up for many years. Take it easy; eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.”

Hard to find a verse that more directly addresses the American ideal of retirement.

Luke 12:20-54

But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is demanded of you. And the things you have prepared – whose will they be? ’

21 “That’s how it is with the one who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

That story is directly followed by Jesus addressing financial anxiety. The other side of the coin.

Luke 12:31-34

31 “But seek his kingdom, and these things will be provided for you. 32 Don’t be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Make money-bags for yourselves that won’t grow old, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven,

where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Open hands to receive from the LORD-
Open hands to give generously to others. Particularly the poor.

14:13-14

On the contrary, when you host a banquet, invite those who are poor, maimed, lame, or blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

Overflow to others. particularly the poor.

14:33

In the same way, therefore, every one of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.

Luke 15:13-14 & 17-18

Prodigal means wasteful.

A story where Jesus is showing what the Kingdom of God is like

When the son has all his inheritance to buy whatever he wants- he ends up miserable and without friends.

But his life is changed through his Father's generosity.

His Father- is forgiving and kind hearted rich man who meets his son in his poverty and shame and that's when the real party- and the real relationship with his Father starts.

15:29

But Who ends up left out in the cold? The older brother who just complains about never getting any parties thrown for him by his Dad. He feels entitled to his

Chapter 16-

Jesus tells 2 stories- one about a rich man (who uses his wealth wisely to make friends that will last)

The other, a rich man who ignores the poor man at his gate, and simply lives a life of luxury and consumption.

Luke 16:13-14

No servant can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

14 The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and scoffing at him

Once again- he's posing to Theophilus- who do you want to be? A rich consumer- or a generous cultivator?

Then in Chapter 18- Luke highlights a story Jesus tells about 2 rich men.

One a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.
One respected- the other despised.

18:11-12

The Pharisee brags about how he's not like this unrighteous Tax Collector. Even brings up the point that he gives a 10th of everything he gets. (GRAY)

18:13

But the Tax Collector is shown ins spiritual poverty. asking for God's grace.

Once again- posing to Theophilus- what kind of rich man will you be? What will you do with your money?

18:22-23

Rich Young Ruler- Jesus tells him to give what he has to the poor.
Its the one thing he just can't do.

Luke 18:24-25

Jesus said,“How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! 25 For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”

Then he follows that up with “But nothing is impossible for God!”

IOW, to Theophilus- you are in a precarious position with all of your wealth- but you can be one of the good guys.

Then he shows him one of those guys in Zaccheus (another tax collector)

Luke 19:2

There was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich.

19:8-9

8 But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, I'll give half of my possessions to the poor, Lord. And if I have extorted anything from anyone, I'll pay back four times as much."

9 "Today salvation has come to this house," Jesus told him, "because he too is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost."

19:45-46

Following this- Jesus throws out the predatory sellers overcharging for animal sacrifices in the Temple- says that his house will not be a den of thieves... instead will be a house of prayer. DEPENDENCE on God. Spiritually poor. Not materially rich. is the end game.

20:47

Then he gives a warning to beware the Scribes and Pharisees. And note that he says they say long prayers NOT because they are Poor in Spirit and dependent on GOD- but for show- ate accrue more honor and position. MEANWHILE- they are taking widow's homes from them and leaving the poor destitute.

21:1-4

That's when get the story of one of these widows- who has been financially abused by the Pharisees- and she gives all she has to the temple treasury. Which serves as both a judgment on the Pharisees (That she only had 2 coins to her name- they were not caring for her) AND an example of overflowing generosity- somehow in her poverty- she still gave. Not from her extra- but she gave all she had.

Luke 22:3-5

Judas- who BTW was the group treasurer- he watched over the money- and regularly stole from it. Even while he acted like he cared about the poor...

... sells Jesus out for...you guessed it...money.

23:50-52

Joseph of Arimathea. represents the anti-Judas.

He is a righteous rich man- who was among the Sanhedrin- the religious rulers- but resisted and said no to their plan. In his action- he becomes the fulfillment of the prophecy of the suffering Servant in Isaiah 53- that the Messiah will be buried in the grave of a rich man.

Why do we close our hands around money?

It gives us safety. It is a gateway idol- promising almost anything. Beauty, status, leisure.

**For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: Though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich --
2 Corinthians 8:9**

The Gospel- beauty and security come FROM Jesus.

1. We believe. Christ is our everything, our all in all. We cannot serve two masters.
2. We repent. We turn from any cheating, swindling, or lying, and we make amends with those we have mistreated.
3. We put Jesus before profit.
4. We are generous. We give freely to help the poor and to further the cause of the gospel.
5. We are good stewards. We don't try to manipulate our way to God by lying, putting on a show, or trying to accrue power with our wealth. We are always shrewd but never power-hungry.
6. We do not trust in our money. There is no real security in dollars and cents. The righteous rich do not expect their earthly riches to last. They live for the heavenly riches that do.
7. We demonstrate humility. We consider everything we have to be a gift from God. We are meek before others and meek before God.

From <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/luke-evangelist-rich/>

In other words, Luke—that great evangelist to the rich—says exactly what Paul tells Timothy: When Paul is teaching Timothy how to be a leader...a Pillar.

1 Tim 6:17-19

17 Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy. 18 Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share, 19 storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of what is truly life.