WHO IS TRULY LIFE

The Good Life: The Freedom & Joy of Generosity | 10.25.26

Libin Abraham

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Libin Abraham 0:00
When I was in college, I worked for a Verizon store at the mall. Now, this was a good job for me because it forced me to talk to people I didn't know, find out what they needed, and help bring a solution, which was good training for ministry. But the downside was that I was at the mall five or six days a week, and as a college kid, you don't have a whole lot of money, but you still want to dress to impress. So I'm walking by all these stores, thinking to myself, "Man, if I could just wear that, I know I would be a happier person. If I just owned that, I would have more confidence and more friends." Well, then one day I found it. It was amazing. I found the shirt that I believed was going to change my life. It was a dress shirt from Banana Republic, and I was convinced, man, if I could just own that shirt, I would have confidence. People would see beyond this Verizon polo. I would have great success in life. Only problem was that that shirt cost $72. Now I think that's a lot of money for shirts today, but 20 years ago for a freshman college kid, that's a whole lot of money. But the more I walked by it, I was more and more convinced that this was going to be an investment into my future, and therefore I had to have it. So I saved a little money here and there, and ended up buying this shirt for $72. I was pretty proud of it. Came home, brought it home, and hung it in my closet. Didn't really wear it for a while because that made it special. I need to keep it. And one day, my parents walked into my room and found the shirt with the price tag on it, they were so floored. I had never gotten in trouble like I did that day, and standing before them, I had no reasonable explanation for why I would spend $72 on a shirt when we could barely afford to eat out most days. You know what happened? I was surprised, but the shirt didn't change my life. It did not add more friends to my life. It didn't give me more confidence. All it gave me was a sermon introduction for 20 years later to use. That's all it gave me. I guess it was worth it. Isn't it amazing? All the things we put our hope in, imagining if I could just get that, wear that, buy that, live there, marry her or him. If I could just earn this much, then I'm going to have the good life. Then I'll be set. But Jesus made a pretty provocative and countercultural statement, both in the first century that applies to us, especially in the 21st century. He said, "It is more blessed to what to give than to receive." He's saying the blessed life, the good life, the life full of joy and favor, is not through the path of acquiring and protecting and competing. It is through the path of generosity, giving, and willingness to share. So that's what we're talking about for a few weeks. What does it look like to live this blessed and good life? Today we find ourselves in First Timothy chapter six, and here the apostle Paul is writing to a young man by the name of Timothy. Timothy, right now, we believe was pastoring a church in Ephesus. It was a diverse, beautiful young church, and in this church in Ephesus, there are two socio-economic groups represented at the same church. And here they are: there are those who desire wealth and those who possess wealth. Those who desire wealth and those who possess wealth. In fact, in chapter six, he begins to write to servants and slaves, people who don't have much to their name, people who didn't own much. They're sitting next to somebody in church who has a lot, people in positions of influence and and honor and power and authority. And Paul has something specific and distinct to say to both groups of people, I want you to imagine sitting there as this letter is being read out and everybody's getting called out. It's a good way to keep each other accountable because you're hearing the same thing from the apostle that's speaking to both groups of people.

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And by the way, how awesome that in a local church you can have that kind of diversity. Only in the church of Jesus can you have people with a lot and people with not much sitting together, sharing in life together, loving one another, being in koinonia, this beautiful spiritual bond of fellowship together. That's the beauty of the church. It was then, and it is now. Though Paul has something unique to say to both groups of people. Here is what he wants for everybody. In verse 19, he says, "So that I'm saying all of this to you, so that they may take hold of what is." Say this with me: "What is truly life?" It's a

fascinating phrase. Truly life. That suggests there is a kind. Of life that you think is life, but is not life. There's a kind of life you get by acquiring, competing, protecting, fighting over others about it, and you think, man, that's it. And it may look impressive on the outside, but it's emptying you on the inside. But then there is a kind of life, that's life to the fullest, this truly life that we experience in the kingdom of God, and this is the good life, the true life that Paul invites us into. Ultimately, the apostle Paul is asking us this question: Are we interested mostly in making a living, or in truly living, truly living. Do we want to be about spending our energy to just make a better living, or to truly be living? So he begins with the first group: those who desire wealth. And as you go through this, you'll see all of us are going to be in both of these camps at some point. But this is a major emphasis for each group to have because there's a certain freedom that they need, so the first group, those who desire wealth, Paul invites them to contentment. Contentment. Contentment is the freedom from craving wealth. Paul knows that there are some in this church who feel like, man, if I could just get my hands on more money, then I'll have. They're doing what I did with the $72 shirt. If I can just have that, then I'll have the good life. But what they're actually doing is being enslaved to a longing, a craving that is not good for them. It's full of false promises. So Paul invites them to deep contentment. So here's what he says to this group in verse six, but godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. So Paul speaks to those who crave wealth because they don't have it, and he invites them to freedom through contentment. Contentment was actually a major part of Greek Greco-Roman culture, but they believed contentment was all around self-sufficiency. They believed contentment was training yourself to not need anyone or anything. They believe that you should be so content that you don't even need God Himself. Paul uses the same word for contentment, but he changes the definition. He changes the center, and Paul says that Christian contentment, the gospel-focused contentment, is not self-sufficiency; it's God sufficiency. That's why he said it's godliness with contentment that is the great gain. We're all pursuing some great gain, but Paul says the true gain that you ought to be after is to love God, to have God in your life, to belong to God, and because you belong to God, you no longer define the success of your life, the success of your circumstances by what you have, but you define it by godliness. You define it by who you have. So to be content, to have God and to be content to be deeply trusting in the Lord. That is a gain. Now, hear me. Contentment is not laziness. Contentment is not a lack of goals or not desiring to grow or to earn more to provide for your family. Contentment is not complacency.

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There's a world of difference between contentment and complacency. Contentment is the freedom to grow and pursue things while not being enslaved by it. Contentment. You can pursue different things in life while being grateful and full of gratitude, not just for where you hope to go, but because of where you are. Contentment fills you with gratitude for what God has done. Yes, you have goals. Yes, pursue beautiful things in life. But be grateful and content with what you have. According to Paul, here's a few things contentment does. Contentment redefines gain. Contentment changes the definition of what is truly gain. Paul, a part of what he does in First Timothy six, he addresses false teacher teachers, and look at one of the ways he describes false teachers in his day. Look at verse five: people whose minds are depraved. And deprived of the truth, hear this: Who imagine that godliness is a way to material gain? This is just like a few decades after the resurrection. There are already people who are using godliness, using their religion as a strategy for material gain, they're using God instead of worshiping God, using God to gain wealth, to gain influence, to gain more power or status. And Paul is confronting that. He said, "No, look, that is a deprived, depraved way of thinking. You don't have the truth in you. Your soul is empty. Don't use God. Worship God. Don't use God for material gain, because there are some who are using godliness as a way to material gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain. So he's saying, "Don't use God, love God, and be content with God. Let your heart be so enraptured by the grace of God, and content with what you have. You don't use God to get stuff. You get God, and you realize that's the greatest gift I can ever have." So belonging to God frees you from this inexhaustible pursuit of the more. So today you might hear that in the sense of, "Hey, buy this $200 handkerchief, and you will be healed of all your sickness. Sow a seed of $100, and God will bless you with $1,000, and you're still waiting for that exponential growth." Or there are some who use their faith to gain power, or to gain votes, to gain influence, or some selfish gain. And Paul is correcting that. Now that's just not possible for somebody out there. That's a temptation that we can be in. And here's what that looks like, man. I'm going to go to church because at church I will meet somebody, and I'll meet the person that's going to be my connection to the the future that God has for me. Or God, I'll pray, I'll fast, I'll read the Bible as long as. And then there's this list of strings attached. As long as you give me better health, give me promotions, give me success, make my marriage happier. faith is never a transaction; it is a relationship, and it's dangerous when our walk with God

becomes transactional. To get more out of God is a means to material gain, and Paul redefines gain and says godliness with contentment. That's the great gain. You have what you could not have earned because God has been gracious. So be grateful what God has given you. Here's what contentment does. Contentment remembers that earthly gain is temporary. Earthly gain is fleeting. It is temporary. So Paul goes on in verse seven, for we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out. Some of you are realizing for the first time that phrase is actually in the Bible, not just on a mug at Hobby Lobby, straight from Scripture. Some of your mom told you, "Son, I brought you into the world, and I can take you out." So behave. Here's what Paul's saying: We brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing. How is every human being born with empty hands, and how does every human being die with empty hands? Born with empty hands, leave with empty hands, and between these two junctions, a lot of stuff will pass through our hands. We're not born with it, and we don't get to take it with us. That's why, as the saying goes, you don't ever see this. You don't ever see a hearse pulling a U-Haul, right?

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If you do, you need to stop that person and ask him, "What's in the U-Haul?" It's worth the discovery. Why? Because you can't take anything with you. We spend so much of our lives acquiring things, and then insuring things, and protecting things, and fighting with your spouse about where to store things. And when you're gone, your kids are going to sell it all on Facebook Marketplace anyway. I'm not saying stuff is meaningless. They're not. What I am saying, what Paul is saying, is stuff is temporary. It's not meaningless. Our wealth, our possessions, they're not meaningless, but they are temporary. And that's a place of contentment to recognize, man. Whatever passes through my hands, I won't get to take it. Therefore, I can grow in contentment. Here's a warning Paul gives us about this craving for more. Contentment rescues us from a destructive plunge. It doesn't just. Help you realize things are temporary, but it rescues you. It protects you from something far worse. Notice why he writes in verse nine. But those who want to be rich. Now notice he doesn't say those who are rich, but those who want to be rich. What he's saying is, for that person, this is their all-consuming passion. They wake up and the only thing their mind is on: how do I get more rich? How do I get more stuff? How do I gain more? This becomes the the primary direction of their life. It's gaining material things. So he's got something to say about those who want, who are driven by this craving for more. Those who want to be rich fall into temptation, and notice this downward spiral. This is the plunge. They fall into temptation, and that temptation becomes a trap, and many foolish, harmful desires. So temptation becomes a trap, awakening harmful desires which plunge people into ruin and destruction. So begins the temptation leading to ruin and destruction. I bet you know some people. They begin with desires, wanting more, but the end result was ruin and destruction. Then he goes on for the love of money, not money. The love of money. Money is amoral. Money can be used to do good and used to do harm. The love of money, though the craving, this insatiable desire for more of it. The love of money is a root, not the only root, but is a root, one of the many ways of all kinds of evil. And by craving it, running after it, making it the mission of your life, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. This is a journey for person who makes wealth their God, running after it, craving it, loving it. What Paul is saying is this: when our craving for wealth becomes all-consuming, our upward mobility becomes a destructive downward plunge. If we're convinced that having more is the way to life, then your upward mobility becomes a downward plunge. I think one of the recent examples of this is Sam Beckman Freed. He was considered one of the most brilliant, financially successful young minds in the world. Before the age of 30, he had acquired more than $26.5 billion. Fortune magazine called him the next Warren Buffett. He had so much accolades, finances, connections, and then. he was not satisfied. He wanted more. He already had a lot of gains, but he didn't feel that was enough, so he wanted more. So he began to use the billions of dollars that people had invested into his cryptocurrency exchange, and he risked it all to buy luxury real estate, to make risky gains, to pay off personal debts. Then he had to conceal it and lie about it, and he had to keep making up lies to explain what was happening. And before long, it all collapsed. He lost everything. 1000s of people were harmed in the process, and he was sentenced to 25 years in prison. Why, the craving for more and the craving for money, and accolades and influence, led him literally what Paul described: temptation leading to traps, awakening harmful desires, leading to ruin and destruction. I think a question worth asking is, what am I willing to sacrifice for more money? I just say it's not worth sacrificing integrity for more money. It's not worth sacrificing your inner peace, your health, your family, those you love.

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It may not be immediately, but eventually it will lead to destruction and harm. Now I will tell you there are some problems money can solve. If you need a house, money can help you buy a house. Some problems money can solve, but the love of money also creates new problems money can't solve. You hear me? Some problems money can solve, but the love of money creates new problems money can't solve. When that harmful desire becomes awakened in you, and you don't check it, you don't put a boundary around man. That creates a whole line of pursuit that money cannot get you out of money cannot

bring back the people you lost, the relationships that were hardened or broken because of your pursuit for wealth and stuff. Some things money can't solve, but the love of money, the craving for it, creates new problems money cannot solve. So, if the love of money is a warning because it leads to destruction, there is this other thing we can pursue that contentment redirects what we crave and what we pursue. So, if a person who wants to be rich is running and pursuing wealth, which leads to ruin, there is a better pursuit available for the person who belongs to God, and this is what Paul says in verse 11. Paul says, "But you," and I love this. I want to say this, especially the young people, the young adults, high school students who are in the beginning phase of career and pursued. Paul is saying to young Timothy, "But you," he's building a contest. Look, you don't have to run after what all your peers are running after. You get to live a distinct life. You don't have to make wealth your God, promotion your God, success your idol. But you, you can live a different story. You can pursue something different. You can have a better life. That's truly life, and you don't have to give in to peer pressure. You don't have to give in to the culture, but you notice what it says. But you, man of God, before Paul instructs Timothy to do anything, Paul reminds him of his core identity. He's saying to Timothy, "You are not a man of money. You are not a woman of wealth. You're a man of God. You're a woman of God. You belong to God. The way you free yourself from being possessed by earthly riches or treasure is to remind yourself: Who am I? Who do I belong to? I'm not possessed by wealth. I'm not possessed by power. I'm possessed by God. I belong to Him. He says I am His. I've been bought with a precious price, and because I'm a man of God or a woman of God, flee from these things and pursue. So here's how you overcome the craving of money: is to pursue something different. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. Paul is saying, make this your life's ambition. Run after these things: faith, love, endurance, gentleness, righteousness. Because this is what truly living looks like. The world is asking, "What are you gaining? What are you acquiring?" But God is asking, "Who are you becoming? Who are you? What's shaping your soul? What pursuit is all-consuming for you?" And let me just tell you, a soul that runs after these things experiences far more joy and contentment and fulfillment than any other pursuit, and you will recognize this is what's worth it because you're a person who belongs to God. Run after these things. Now that Paul has addressed those who may be tempted to crave wealth by inviting them to contentment, now he addresses the second group: those who possess wealth, those who have it. And I know that in this room and online, most of us who live in North Dallas, according to world status, we're all pretty rich. We're all pretty blessed. Usually, when we think of wealth, we're just thinking about 30%. Whoever has 30% more than me, that's the wealthy person. But if you got food in your refrigerator, which I imagine you do, you got some savings set aside. You're out in like the top 10% of the world. If you have means to share with somebody, Paul's words here are actually for all of us, not just for some.

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All of us can grow in contentment, and all of us can grow in what he invites the next group to. So for those who have wealth, here's Paul's invitation: generosity. So if you don't have wealth, the way you experience freedom is through contentment. If you have wealth, the way you experience freedom is through generosity. Why? Because generosity is the freedom from trusting wealth. A person who doesn't have wealth, they're enslaved by craving wealth, a person who has wealth bear enslaved by trusting wealth. Notice what he says to those who possess means and wealth. Paul says in verse 11, 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. Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share, storing a treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of what is truly life. Notice here that Paul does not condemn those who are rich; he doesn't make them feel bad. He says, "Enjoy it." Why? Because God gave that to you. It's a gift to enjoy. God, who richly provided those things. For our enjoyment, enjoy the meal, enjoy the trip, enjoy the home, enjoy the beautiful experiences and opportunities you have, but enjoy it as a gift, not as a god. He is discipling those who possess wealth and how to not be possessed by wealth. How do you have wealth without being owned by it, and without putting your hope in it, what does it look like to use wealth as a tool rather than trusting it as God? So here's a few things that Paul would say to this group: generosity begins with humility. The way you experience freedom from being possessed or trusting in wealth is through humility. Verse 17 begins, and Paul says, "Instruct those who are rich in this present age not to be arrogant." I love this reframing here. This great equalizer: those who have who are rich in this present age, meaning you may have a lot in this present age, but there's a way to have a lot in the next age. There's some people who have both, who have a lot in this present age, and because of how they've used their resources, they're storing up treasure for the next stage. But he's getting us out of the illusion that this present age is all there is, and isn't that something that brings humility? It removes the opportunity for arrogance to recognize this present age is that the permanent age. It's temporary. It's a great equalizer. So those who have a lot in this present age don't be arrogant. The word for arrogant there is literally high-minded. It is when you exalt yourself to an altitude where you look down on the person who doesn't have as much as you do. So an arrogant person says things like, "Man, I got where I got

because I'm so smart. I have what I have because of all the amazing choices I made. I worked hard for this, and because I am where I am, I have what I have. Other people owe their respect to me. Other people owe it to serve me. Some of those things might be true. You did work hard. You did make some choices. You did make some hard decisions, but arrogance does not take into account the health you have in your body that God gave you. You didn't create the health. Arrogance does not take into account the the very economic structure that allowed your abilities to bring about gain. You didn't create that economy. Arrogance does not take into account the number of mentors and people who spoke into you, people who encouraged you and gave you opportunities. Arrogance seems to forget what others have done for you, but humility says, "Man, I'm thankful for the blessing, and I give God thanks. I give Him glory because it is the grace of God that has allowed me to. He is the one that has provided for me, so there's a way to enjoy your blessings with humility. Because what it does is it removes you from feeling superior to anybody else because you have more than they do.

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Freedom begins with humility, Not arrogance, generosity then relocates our hope. It changes where we put our hope. So Paul goes on in verse 17 as we read. Okay, 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. So God gave you this to enjoy, but don't put your hope in it. Have money, don't hope in it. It is a gift, not a god. Money can buy you really great medical insurance. Can money provide you immortality, though? No. Money can buy you a house, but can it create a home? No. Money can attract a lot of people to you, but can it buy you friends? No. Money can prepare you for the future, but it does not control the future. So Paul's saying, "Don't put your hope in the uncertainty of wealth. So we, I just got into a dark hole, reading all the articles about how all these banks were having emergency meetings because they recognize it's AI bots moving money around in their accounts. They can't tell if it's a person or an AI bot that's been given permission or an AI bot that's not been given permission, so they're using AI systems to spot what is AI bots. We seem to be losing autonomy over our own stuff and institutions. Things do feel like they're becoming more and more uncertain. But that's what Paul is warning us of. You can have all the things in the world, but there's a level of uncertainty you cannot erase. So don't put your hope in wealth, which is uncertain, but put your hope in God, who provides everything we need to enjoy. Money is a great gift, but a horrible God. Next, Paul says generosity makes us rich in a different direction. In a different direction, you can use your earthly treasures to give you a better kind of riches. Here's verse 18. He says, "Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share. There's a way to be rich in compassion, to be rich in serving others, to be rich in not just having opportunities but creating opportunities. To be rich in serving those in need. Paul says, "Use your generosity in a direction that blesses people, and that's true riches. So true riches is not measured by how much we accumulate, but by how many good works are produced by our willingness to share. So if earthly wealth is temporary, this is riches set in a different direction. That's permanent. One of my heroes in seminary was a fourth-century church father by the name of Basil of Caesarea. Basil was born in a really affluent Christian home. He had a lot of wealth and power to his name, and he could have used easily coasted through his life, using it all for himself. But he didn't. The end of the fourth century, a famine struck Caesarea and that nearby region. Basil decided to sell his property and use his money to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked. Basil would then, when he became the bishop of the church in Caesarea, he started the first public hospital ever in the world. He set up this incredible multi-complex building called a basilia, a basiliad, and in one floor it had place just for lepers to come and get taken care of. Other floor was a place for people to be fed, a place for travelers who needed shelter, a place for people to be spiritually ministered to, physically ministered to. It was the first hospital to be built for the public, and that first construction of that hospital would then launch the slew of Christian hospitals and schools and community centers that we so take for granted today, but it was begun by a man who said, "I'm not just going to use my riches for me. How can I use my riches to serve others?" So Saint Gregory would come later on and look at what Basil created, and he would say, "That's one of the wonders of the ancient world, a sinner that put others first. Why? Because Basil recognized something we must recognize. When we are generous, we are not getting poorer.

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When we are generous, we are moving our riches in a different, more lasting direction. We're moving it in a way where it lasts, where it counts. So the true riches is using our earthly temporary riches and moving it in a direction. This is what the next and last thing that Paul says in this text: the generosity gives temporary wealth eternal significance. Generosity gives temporary, fleeting wealth eternal significance. Look at verse nine. Storing up treasures. So when we use our earthly riches to do good works and to store up treasures, he says, "You are storing up treasures for themselves as a good foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of what is truly life." Man, you to hear me. Paul is not saying you can buy a seed in heaven by your good works. He's not saying you can buy heaven. We're saved by faith through Jesus Christ alone, grace

and faith alone. But Paul is saying you can actually use your earthly resources to be about God's purposes that survive into eternity. Whatever you keep, you'll end up losing. But you can use what you have to be about eternal purposes that make a difference for all eternity. And he says, you can store up treasures for yourselves, " he said. " This will be rewarded to you. You will see the beauty of what God did through you, and you will be so thankful that day when you see it that you paid it forward here. So when you give to missions and that missionary sent, man, their life.". Is used by God to gain eternal souls into the kingdom. When you give to the ministries of our church or whatever church you belong to, if you're online, man, God is discipling the next generation, and those families are impacted. When you give to local needs, whether it be homelessness or human trafficking, God is rescuing people from the grip of the enemy, and their lives are being marked by forever and eternity because the church was generous, so you can choose to keep what is temporary, or to actually live with open hands, storing up treasures for ourselves in heaven in a way that does not erode or be stolen. So here are two questions for us to consider. Wherever you find yourself among these two groups, or somewhere in the middle, what do I believe becoming rich would finally solve? There's some of you maybe because you don't have a lot, or you don't think you have as much as you need, or because other people have more, you're thinking, "Man, I just if I could just get more, it would solve." What would it actually solve? Have you bought into the lie that this would actually be the thing that would set your soul free? I'm not saying be complacent, but I'm saying you can become content. What would it actually solve? And second of all, what has God placed in my hands that could gain eternal significance by being shared. As you see needs around you, ways to make a difference. What are the good works that could be produced that will last forever because your heart was open to what the Lord is doing? If you're enslaved by craving wealth today, I pray you have freedom through contentment, and if you're enslaved in your soul by trusting wealth, I pray the generosity opens up the tight grip of your soul to store treasures in heaven, to move your resources in a direction that makes a forever difference. Would you pray with me? God, I know these words from Paul are so direct to where we are and who we are, because it confronts the idols of our time, the cultural current we're often swimming in. But I pray, Lord Jesus, that you would move in our hearts to experience what is truly life. For some, that's going to be to step into contentment. What does gratitude and thanksgiving look like? Godliness with contentment, and for others, it's generosity. What would it look like to live more open-handed, and to use my resources to to move in a direction that is eternally significant? We pray that at the end of the day, we would be faithful stewards of all of the blessings you've given us to enjoy. Thank you for the home. Thank you for the relationship. Thank you for the career opportunities.

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Thank you for the opportunities you've given us. May we be found faithful in our day and time to steward them for eternal significance in the world. God, you have gifted the church with everything the world needs, every humanitarian need, every soul need. God, you've gifted the church, and we pray that we could be faithful as a local church to live with such a generous heart that what you've given to us will be stewarded for your fame and your glory, and the good of others. Lord, we trust you. We love you. In Jesus' name, we pray. We said together aloud, Amen, Amen. Are you thankful for the words of Paul that have been preserved, for our instruction and our guidance?