

WEEK 1 - SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14

MESSAGE NOTES

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PART 1 - “IMAGINE”

MAIN IDEA FOR THOUGHT: God wants to continually change and grow us to be more like him. That requires us to humble ourselves before him. Where might that begin for you as it relates to your generosity?

OPENING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. If you think about it, the mission of changing lives and changing eternities seems rather grandiose. And it's hard to think that God still wants to change us every day to be more like him. The truth is that sometimes transformation is big, but other times it comes through multiple small transformations within us over time. Do you resonate with this? Do you feel like God has already changed and grown you? Do you believe that you are still being transformed?
2. How does our growing relationship with God relate to our continued transformation?
3. What does transformation look like as it relates to our giving?

DISCUSSION GUIDE



A. SOME OF OUR MONEY PRACTICES ARE SINFUL, BUT THEY ARE REDEEMABLE.

| READ ROMANS 6:3-14

Some of our money practices are sinful, but they are redeemable. This may sound like a strong statement, but for us to truly be transformed in our giving, we must first recognize that there may be ways we spend our money that is not honoring to the one who gave it to us. When the Apostle Paul talks about “offering every part of ourselves to God as an instrument of righteousness,” this should be reflected in our wealth and in our poverty as well. Are we honoring God with our spending decisions? With our saving decisions? With our giving decisions? This passage also reminds us that just as Christ died and was raised again, we too can be redeemed from our sinful ways. We must recognize them first, though.

Be very honest. As you read this passage and think about how you might ask for God to redeem an area of sinfulness in your finances, what area comes to mind? What transformation do you need to ask God to make in you as he continues to mold you into his image?

B. WE WORRY AND SPEND MONEY ON NEEDLESS THINGS.

| READ MATTHEW 6:25-34

We worry and spend money on needless things. Money can be an idol. Money can also reveal what our idols are. An idol is a fading treasure of earth that we value more highly than God himself. What do you worry about and spend money on unnecessarily? Clothes to make you beautiful or handsome? Particular types of food for every situation to prove that you are “healthy” or a “foodie?” Or do you spend money on security because you want to have control over the future? Jesus says, “Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” If we truly take hold of this passage, it can be quite convicting and transformational for us. We need to take a hard look at what we are seeking above God and determine what it will take for us to seek him first and go to the next stage in our generosity.

Take a look at what you spent over the last month (or take a longer period, like a year, if you wish). What were the top 5 things you spent money on? Housing? Food? Entertainment? Clothing? Was giving to God in your top 5? If not, why? Do your spending priorities reflect your actual priorities? If not, what would it take for your spending to reflect them better? What changes do you need to make? (Actually take time to figure this out, whether in your Group as an estimate or at home as an actual calculation.)

WEEK 1 - GROUPS DISCUSSION

C. GENEROSITY HAS THE POWER TO TRANSFORM HOW WE RELATE TO OTHERS AND HOW OTHERS RELATE TO GOD.

| READ ACTS 2:42-47

Generosity has the power to transform how we relate to others and how others relate to God. This passage is potentially one of the most profound points in Scripture in sharing with us what a church community could and should look like. This description of the early church is something we as Christians are called to become as we seek to make more disciples of Jesus. We seek to encourage people at Hope to live in this type of way, in which we are in this kind of community with one another.

This means we must live in such close communion with one another that we are vulnerable enough to let others know of our needs, and we must have open ears and hearts enough to hear those needs as voiced by others. We must all recognize, both on the giving end AND the receiving end, that we are Christ's Church.

This also means we must be living in such a way that we have enough margin in our own resources to be able to share with others. We cannot live as though we have already arrived at our personal “second stage” and that we have nothing more to give. We must always stay humble, seeking to be ever transformed further by God. We must see our possessions as not our own and live with a continuous “open hand” of stewardship toward those in our realm of influence. Generosity has the power to transform how we relate to others. Generosity also has the power to transform how others relate to God. When we are generous beyond human comprehension or human sense, others are baffled and see that Christ must be in us for us to live in this type of way. In this sense, generosity becomes evangelism, and God demonstrates his transformative work IN us.

When we read about the early church, how generous they were, and how transformative their generosity was, what thoughts and aspirations come to mind for you? Are there some goals you want to make for your generosity in response to this?

D. WHEN WE ARE NEW IN CHRIST, WE NO LONGER LIVE FOR OURSELVES; WE LIVE FOR HIM.

| READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-21

When we are new in Christ, we no longer live for ourselves; we are a new creation that lives for him. There is hope in this truth, as well as a challenge. We desire and aspire to live for him. But if we really embrace that, then it means that we can no longer continue living for ourselves. When it comes to your finances, are you living for God, or are you living for yourself? If Christ's love truly compels us, we want to respond accordingly in our devotion to him. Falling more in love with him makes us more generous. Is this true of your life?

Have you ever thought of financial generosity as having the ability to actually transform you, to keep you centered and grounded in what you truly value? If you were to make a significant commitment in your giving through the 2nd Stage initiative, how would that transform and change other things that you currently spend your money on? What would that do to your "spending portfolio?"

