



Parables of Generosity: Jesus Wants Your Heart

How Jesus redefines value, wealth, and generosity through His parables.

Leader's Guide: A Story of Redefined Wealth

Crowds pressed in around Jesus, not only for His miracles but for His wisdom. On one occasion, a man interrupted Him with a very practical request: "Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." What could be more ordinary, more human, than a fight over money? And yet, Jesus refused to settle the dispute. Instead, He told a story that pierced deeper than coins and contracts—exposing the dangerous illusion that wealth can secure our lives.

That moment captures the heart of this series. Jesus' parables are never about surface matters; they are windows into the soul. He takes the stuff of everyday life—barns, coins, pearls, talents—and flips them upside down. In His stories, the rich man is a fool, the poor widow is honored, the risky merchant is wise, and the fearful servant is condemned. Through them, Jesus asks us the most unsettling questions: *What do you treasure? Where do you place your trust? Who really has your heart?*

This study invites us to wrestle with those questions. It's not about financial planning or charitable habits, though it touches both. It's about discipleship. Jesus is not after our wallets so much as He is after our worship. The parables remind us that true wealth is not found in barns or banks, but in the joy of belonging to God's Kingdom.

How to Use This Guide

Each week's study includes:

- **Icebreaker Questions:** Relational entry points to help the group connect.
- **Reading the Text:** A Scripture-centered focus, often highlighting a key verse.
- **Leader's Notes:** Background insights, pastoral encouragements, or theological anchors.
- **Questions on the Text's Meaning:** Drawing out what Jesus is teaching in context.
- **Questions for Implications:** Moving from understanding to reflection in daily life.
- **Gospel Connection:** Ensuring each parable points to Christ as the true treasure, redeemer, and giver.
- **Apply & Pray:** Moving from insight to practice, ending with the simple *Thank you / Sorry / Please* prayer structure.

Key Reminders for Leaders

- **Keep the Heart in View:** These parables are not about money management tips but about discipleship of the heart. Jesus wants your heart before He wants your wallet.
- **Embrace the Tension:** Jesus' words often confront idols of security, wealth, and control. Allow the discomfort—it's part of the Spirit's work.
- **Highlight Christ, Not Just Example:** The widow, the steward, the treasure seeker—each points beyond themselves to Christ, the ultimate giver.
- **Lead with Grace:** People may come into these discussions with shame, guilt, or anxiety about money. Keep the focus on Jesus' generosity, not on condemnation.

Series Overview

- **Week 1 – Don't Be a Fool (Luke 12:13–21)**
Earthly abundance doesn't secure eternal security.
- **Week 2 – More Than Enough (Mark 12:41–44)**
God measures generosity by sacrifice, not surplus.
- **Week 3 – What Really Matters? (Matt. 13:44–46)**
Give up all for the surpassing value of the Kingdom.
- **Week 4 – The Weight of What You've Been Given (Matt. 25:14–30)**
God expects faithful multiplication, not passive preservation.

How to lead a Small Group Bible Study

Perhaps you've been leading Bible Studies for a long time... or maybe this is your first attempt. Either way, know that we're here to coach and guide you! Here are some simple things to keep in mind and a brief outline as you begin: First, realize what a Small Group Bible Study is. It's not a book club, lecture society, or sensitivity training. A Small Group Bible Study's goal is to apply the Gospel to everyday life as we intersect with the Bible.

A Small Group Bible Study Defined

- 1 – A weekly meeting where the Bible is the one curriculum
- 2 – Two targets: The Gospel and Discipleship Engines
- 3 – 12 People... once it gets larger discussion is hindered
- 4 – Questions to help apply to real life.

Purpose - Discipleship = Follow, Form, Fulfill - "Making Disciples" means we are helping people move into being followers of Jesus to people who are being formed by Jesus to people who are fulfilling the great commission. We are sharing the Gospel, making Disciples, and equipping Ambassadors.

Rules of the Road

- #1 BE SELF-AWARE not AUDIENCE AWARE: Be self-aware of how you personally affect the group through your words, actions, and non-verbal communication. Use "I" statements about what you think/feel... and make sure everyone talks. No preaching! Let Jesus (through his Word) fix people. Give encouragement; speak truth, point to Jesus.
- #2 CONFIDENTIALITY: What's said in the group stays in the group.
- #3 LISTEN: (PAUSE and SILENCE and No "Cross Talk") Value one another during the discussions. Don't think about what to say next. Affirm what's being said right now. Take a breath and think about what's just been said before responding. And don't fill the silence... Stay in the moment... be considerate... listen. No side conversations.

Open – Help the group focus on the reason they're there - Start by checking in. Ask what people learned the previous week and shared with anyone. This will help move people from "information" to "transformation".

"Open" questions help break the ice and get people relating with each other and the text. Use what's provided or make one up to help your group connect as you see fit. A great opening question will tie real life with the theme of the text... and it helps get people on task in a fun relational manner.

Story the Bible Passage - *Leader: Tell the story in your own words, asking the group to re-tell it back to you.*

This method is called "Storying" and it really helps people to engage with the story. It doesn't replace the reading of God's Word, but it does help people focus and hear things they might not have from the text. After they've heard the passage, and re-told it to you, read the passage. There are some great Storying helps at the end of this booklet.

Dig - Ask the questions in the book OR create new questions with simple journalist investigation. The point of these questions is to dig into the who, what, where, when, why facts of the passage. This helps keep the Bible the main teacher. Everyone has an opinion, but we always want to go back to what the text says. Help everyone keep in mind that the Bible is God's Word, all of it, so we need to let it teach us... rather than simply being commentators.

Apply - This is where a group really learns to apply. In order to apply the Gospel to daily living, it's important to ask these four kinds of questions. They help us see God's character and actions and contrast them to people's (and our!) character and actions. Once we see that, the Good News begins to come into focus. And, if you can identify the Good News then it's easy to share it with others.

1. What did you learn about God? (His character, ways, concerns)
2. What did you learn about people? (yourself?)
3. What does God do for us? In what way does this point to what Jesus does for us that we can't do on our own? How is this passage Good News rather than Good Advice?
4. What do we (I) need to do? Who do I need to share this with?

Pray - *Thank you / Sorry / Please* - Keep it simple, inviting everyone to pray, out loud, with simplicity. Simply list the thing(s) you're thankful for in prayer. Then share what you're sorry for (Perhaps something in this study reminded you of something about God you need to remember, or something you need to do that you've neglected) Then, going around as a group, individually listing out your requests (Ask God to please help you with what you need to do... or help you in another area).

Week 1: Don't Be a Fool (Luke 12:13–21)

“But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:20–21, ESV)

Week 1: Don't Be a Fool (Luke 12:13–21)

Theme: Earthly abundance doesn't secure eternal security.

Focus Verse: Luke 12:20–21

Icebreaker Questions

1. Have you ever saved up for something only to find it didn't satisfy?
 2. What's the biggest "foolish purchase" you've ever made?
 3. If someone looked at your bank account, what would they say you value most?
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Reading the Text

Read Luke 12:13–21 aloud together, then return to verses 20–21.

"But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." (ESV)

Leader's Note: This parable follows a man's request for Jesus to solve an inheritance dispute. Instead of settling the matter, Jesus warns against greed, shifting the focus from material fairness to eternal reality. The "fool" is not condemned for planning, but for trusting in wealth as ultimate security.

Questions on the Text's Meaning

1. What danger does Jesus identify in verse 15?
 - Life does not consist in possessions. Greed redefines success in terms of "more" rather than in terms of God.
 - Leader's Note: Tim Keller says greed is unique because "it hides itself from its victim."
 2. Why does God call the man a fool (vv. 20–21)?
 - His plans were secure only in this life, ignoring the reality of God and eternity.
 - He measured success by barns and goods, not by being "rich toward God."
 3. How does the man's reasoning (vv. 17–19) expose a false sense of security?
 - He talks only to himself, never to God.
 - He assumes years of life are his to control.
 4. How does this parable redefine success?
 - Earthly abundance can't secure eternal life.
 - Ryle: "A man may be poor in this world, yet rich toward God; and a man may be rich in this world, yet poor in God's sight."
 5. How does this connect to the larger teaching of Jesus on treasures (cf. Matt. 6:19–21)?
 - True treasure is not stored in barns but in heaven.
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Questions for Implications

1. Where are you tempted to measure life by possessions rather than by God's approval?
 2. How might our "bigger barns" look today—careers, retirement, experiences, or security systems?
 3. What would it mean to live "rich toward God" in your financial, relational, and spiritual life?
 - o Keller: "If your money is your hope, it will plague you. If God is your hope, money will serve you."
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Gospel Connection (Good News, not Good Advice)

Transition Question: What kind of security do you most often seek apart from God?

- The fool builds bigger barns; Jesus offers Himself as the true treasure.
 - Naomi's barns were empty, but Christ fills the soul with eternal riches.
 - Cranmer's collect reminds us: "Whose service is perfect freedom"—true wealth is freedom in Christ.
 - Lewis: "He who has God and everything else has no more than he who has God only."
Leader's Note: Emphasize that Jesus does not merely say, "Don't be greedy." He offers Himself as the treasure that satisfies both now and forever.
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Apply

1. What did you learn about God? (His character, ways, concerns)
 2. What did you learn about people? (yourself?)
 3. What does God do for us? In what way does this point to what Jesus does for us that we can't do on our own? How is this passage Good News rather than Good Advice?
 4. What do we (I) need to do?
 5. Who do I need to share this with?
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Pray (Thank you / Sorry / Please)

- **Thank you** for offering eternal riches in Christ.
- **Sorry** for hoarding and trusting in possessions rather than in You.
- **Please** help us to be rich toward You, storing treasure in heaven and not in barns.

Week 2: More Than Enough (Mark 12:41–44)

“For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.” (Mark 12:44, ESV)

Week 2: More Than Enough (Mark 12:41–44)

Theme: God measures generosity by sacrifice, not surplus.

Focus Verse: Mark 12:44

Icebreaker Questions

1. What's the most meaningful gift you've ever received?
 2. Do you find it easier to give when you have plenty or when you're stretched?
 3. How do you decide what "enough" is?
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Reading the Text

Read Mark 12:41–44 aloud together, then return to verse 44.

"For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on." (ESV)

Leader's Note: Jesus observes people giving at the temple treasury. The disciples notice the large sums of the wealthy, but Jesus singles out a poor widow whose two copper coins reveal a deeper truth: God weighs the heart, not the amount.

Questions on the Text's Meaning

1. How does Jesus contrast the rich and the widow?
 - The rich gave out of surplus; she gave all she had.
 - Her gift was small in value but immense in sacrifice.
 2. What does this reveal about God's view of generosity?
 - God looks at the heart, not the number.
 - Keller: "It is not the amount but the sacrifice that reveals where your heart is."
 3. How might this scene have challenged the disciples' assumptions?
 - They saw impressive gifts; Jesus redefined true value.
 4. Why is the widow's gift especially striking in the context of the temple system?
 - She gave into a corrupt institution (Mark 12:38–40 shows religious hypocrisy), yet Jesus still honors her devotion.
 5. How does this passage challenge cultural views of status, wealth, and value?
 - Ryle: "A religion that costs nothing is worth nothing."
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Questions for Implications

1. What would sacrificial generosity look like in your life?
 2. How does the widow challenge our excuses about “not having enough to give”?
 3. In what ways do you give God leftovers instead of first and best?
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Gospel Connection (Good News, not Good Advice)

Transition Question: What keeps us from giving freely—fear, pride, or unbelief?

- The widow gave all she had to live on; Christ gave His life as the ultimate offering (2 Cor. 8:9).
- Cranmer: “Whose property is always to have mercy”—God’s mercy secures our generosity.
- Lewis: “Nothing you have not given away will ever really be yours.”

Leader’s Note: The widow points forward to Jesus: her poverty anticipates His self-emptying, giving all to save us.

Apply

1. What did you learn about God?
 2. What did you learn about people?
 3. How is this Good News (not just good advice)?
 4. What do we (I) need to do?
 5. Who do I need to share this with?
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Pray (Thank you / Sorry / Please)

- **Thank you** for Christ’s full sacrifice on our behalf.
- **Sorry** for holding back out of fear or selfishness.
- **Please** shape our hearts to give joyfully and sacrificially.

Week 3: What Really Matters? (Matthew 13:44–46)

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”

(Matthew 13:44, ESV)

Week 3: What Really Matters? (Matthew 13:44–46)

Theme: Give up all for the surpassing value of the Kingdom.

Focus Virtue: Sacrificial joy

Focus Verse: Matthew 13:44

Icebreaker Questions

1. What's the most valuable thing you've ever found?
 2. If you could trade everything for one thing, what would it be?
 3. When have you experienced joy in giving something up?
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Reading the Text

Read Matthew 13:44–46 aloud together.

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.” (ESV)

Leader's Note: These twin parables emphasize joy and sacrifice. Both men gave up everything, but their sacrifice was fueled by delight, not duty.

Questions on the Text's Meaning

1. Why does Jesus use images of treasure and pearls?
 - Both symbolize ultimate worth, worth losing all else for.
 2. What is the key action of both men?
 - They “sold all” to gain something greater.
 3. How does this contrast worldly pursuits?
 - Keller: “You don't get into the kingdom by sacrifice but by joy.”
 4. Why is joy emphasized in verse 44?
 - The man does not sell grudgingly; his joy in what he gains surpasses all loss.
 5. How does “selling all” connect to discipleship?
 - Following Jesus means surrendering lesser loves for the greater treasure of Christ.
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Questions for Implications

1. What competes with the Kingdom as your “pearl of great price”?
2. How can joy, not guilt, drive your generosity and obedience?
3. How does this parable challenge our views of success and fulfillment?

Gospel Connection (Good News, not Good Advice)

Transition Question: What joy have you experienced from choosing Christ over the world?

- Christ is the true treasure who gave all to redeem us (Phil. 2:6–8).
- Cranmer: “Whose service is perfect freedom”—joy comes in surrender.
- Lewis: “Aim at heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in’; aim at earth and you will get neither.”
Leader’s Note: The Gospel frees us not by saying “give it all up,” but by showing us something far greater worth giving it all for—Jesus Himself.

Apply

1. What did you learn about God?
2. What did you learn about people?
3. How is this Good News (not just good advice)?
4. What do we (I) need to do?
5. Who do I need to share this with?

Pray (Thank you / Sorry / Please)

- **Thank you** for giving us the greatest treasure in Christ.
- **Sorry** for clinging to lesser treasures.
- **Please** help us find joy in surrender and generosity.

Week 4: The Weight of What You've Been Given (Matthew 25:14–30)

“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’”
(Matthew 25:21, ESV)

Week 4: The Weight of What You've Been Given (Matthew 25:14–30)

Theme: God expects faithful multiplication, not passive preservation.

Focus Verse: Matthew 25:21

Icebreaker Questions

1. What's something entrusted to you that carried great responsibility?
 2. Do you find yourself more cautious or bold with what you've been given?
 3. Who has been a faithful steward in your life?
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Reading the Text

Read Matthew 25:14–30 aloud together, then return to verse 21.

“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’” (ESV)

Leader's Note: This parable is about stewardship in the light of Christ's return. The faithful servants multiply what they've been given. The fearful servant buries his gift, revealing mistrust in the master.

Questions on the Text's Meaning

1. What is the difference between the faithful servants and the fearful one?
 - Faithful: trusted the master's generosity and multiplied boldly.
 - Fearful: hid the gift in mistrust and wasted it.
 2. What does the parable teach about God's expectation?
 - God entrusts His people to use His gifts for His glory.
 3. What is the ultimate reward?
 - Entering “the joy of your master” (v. 21).
 4. Why does fear distort stewardship?
 - Fear sees God as harsh, not generous. It paralyzes obedience.
 5. How does this connect to Christ's return and accountability?
 - Every servant must give an account—our stewardship has eternal weight.
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Questions for Implications

1. How do fear and mistrust keep us from using our gifts?
2. What talents/resources has God placed in your hands to multiply?
3. Where are you tempted to bury what God has entrusted to you?

- Ryle: “The saddest waste of all is the waste of a soul’s opportunities.”
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Gospel Connection (Good News, not Good Advice)

Transition Question: Where do you feel most tempted to “bury” what God has given you?

- Christ is the faithful servant who multiplied life through His death and resurrection.
- We steward grace received, not to earn salvation, but to reflect the Gospel.
- Lewis: “Every faculty you have... is given by God. If you devoted every moment of your whole life exclusively to His service you could not give Him anything that was not His own already.”

Leader’s Note: The Gospel motivates stewardship not with fear but with joy—we live boldly because Christ has already secured our place.

Apply

1. What did you learn about God?
 2. What did you learn about people?
 3. How is this Good News (not just good advice)?
 4. What do we (I) need to do?
 5. Who do I need to share this with?
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Pray (Thank you / Sorry / Please)

- **Thank you** for entrusting us with gifts and grace.
 - **Sorry** for burying what You’ve given in fear.
 - **Please** give us boldness to multiply for Your glory.
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