

Sufficiency and Generosity

By Bobby Schuller

First of all, thank you for being a generous person. You may say you don't know. I know that you give a lot more than you're given credit for and I don't just mean of your money, I mean of your time, of your heart, of your compassion and of your empathy. And I want you to know that the axiom you cannot out give God is true. And I want you to know that if you test God in this and try to out give him, I promise you in this age and in the next, he will give to you a hundred times more than you ever gave. That's a promise of scripture.

Generosity is the cure for lack. It's the cure for feelings of lack. It's the cure for actual lack. If you are lacking give more. Give more of your money, give more of your time, give more of your heart and watch and see that God won't open up heaven and pour out so much blessing on your life there is not enough room in this world to contain it. Thank you for being so generous. I'm so proud of you. You have the kind of gift and power that surpasses monetary wealth, and many of you are wealthy, some of you. Many of you are not and that's okay. All of us, if you have Christ, are wealthy in unsurpassed power to transform the world.

I'll tell you a story. In the medieval age, Thomas Aquinas and the Pope were walking along. And at this point in medieval history, the church was fabulously wealthy. They had lands, they had property, they had humungous buildings; they might even have had an army at this

time. I think they did. And the Pope and Thomas Aquinas are walking along, and the Pope takes Aquinas to like, I picture, a treasure vault. And he opens it up and he has him look: mounds of gold coins and deeds and, why not, I love pirates, they had treasure chests and pearls and swords and just a vast treasure. And the Pope sort of, with a smirk on his face, looks at Thomas Aquinas and he says, 'See Thomas, no longer can we say silver and gold have I not.' And the story goes that Thomas Aquinas says, 'Yes, but neither can we say rise up and walk.'

Look before I keep going, I want you to know I hope you make lots of money. I hope you succeed in your business. I hope that you do better financially, but I hope you always know that anything that is good comes from God. And when you lose or when you gain, God has all the power to change everything, and that the true wealth is in the power of being able to say rise up and walk and you have that power. Don't give it up for anything. You have the power to change the world! And that's the most important thing.

There is a bit of a fickleness in money and in health, and I pray again, I hope you're wealthy and healthy and successful, but we all know that it just takes one sickness, or one lawsuit, one government policy change could wipe out all your wealth. And there is a sort of fickleness in money that we forget when we daydream about financial security. I want you to know the greatest financial security you could have is a relationship with Jesus Christ. I want you to know the greatest kind of

health you can have is a healthy soul. And I want you to know that whatever it is you're going through, God will carry you through. And although you may be poor and may not have anything now, God can carry you through.

One of the greatest ways to activate your destiny in regards to whether its finances, or your profession, or your family, or ministry if you want to go into ministry, one of the greatest things you can do is to lean into your loss. To lean into your lack by being generous in what you lack. If you lack money, start giving some of your money away. If you lack wisdom, start teaching. If you feel like people are not there for you and caring for you, start being there and caring for other people. I have watched over the years that the axiom from Oral Roberts, "if you have a need plant a seed" is true. And I know that there are many preachers who have taken that too far, but do not throw the baby out with the bathwater. You cannot out give God.

Jim and Susan Dawson, Susan's in the hospital, by the way. She got an infection in her back. She was here last week. And so pray for them. But when she was having her surgery; oh before I get there, this couple, they're elders, they visit everybody. Like anytime anyone goes into the hospital, they're there visiting them if they barely know them. And they'll go lots of times, and they'll send cards, and they'll send gifts. How many of you know Jim and Susan, maybe you've been touched by them in some.. oh my gosh, I mean it's like.. okay, when Susan had her

surgery two weeks ago, the waiting room was a zoo filled with people trying to get in to see Susan. Why? Why did so many people care? Because they were the ones who gave first. If you care for others, in the long run, more people are going to care for you. If you need wisdom, teach, and if you need money, give money. That is a principle. And what you are showing God is that Lord, I trust you more than I trust this thing.

Today we're talking about the famous story of the rich young ruler. In this story there is a rich young man who sees Jesus from afar; a Jewish guy, does very well in life, successful, and he sees Jesus and he has this sense that he's missing something in his life. And he has this maybe sense of guilt or loss or insecurity even about his own salvation. And there he sees the great rabbi at a distance. And the bible says "he came to him running." Everyone say running. This is important because at the end of the text you'll see why. Remember this word: "he came to Jesus running. And fell on his knees. And he said 'good master, what must I do to be saved?' And Jesus says something like 'why do you call me good? There's only one above who is good.'" And essentially what I think he's saying is just chill out, hold on here.

So Jesus looks at him and he says "you know the commandments: you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, and honor your father and mother." So Jesus is giving him a hint. And almost

immediately this boy or teenager, I think picture him or young man maybe in his twenties, almost immediately this guy looks up at Jesus and he says “I’ve kept all of those since I was a little boy. I’ve kept all of them.”

Now let me just pause real quick. Jesus was giving him a hint that everyone in the audience saw except him because of his enthusiasm. In Jesus’ day, to be Jewish meant your whole life was built around Torah, around the bible, the first five books of the bible. Every child, unless they had some kind of a learning disability or something, would have not only read but memorized the first five books of the bible. That includes Leviticus. Memorized. Later on, they would go into a type of schooling where some of them would actually memorize the rest of the writings and the prophets, others would debate it.

And you have to understand that in Jesus’ day, the greatest thing you could be as a Jewish man was a rabbi. The rabbis in those days were not just religious teachers, and they were, they were almost also sort of like chieftains or judges. They settled things. They were honored. They were wealthy. They did very well. And so it was like being governor or something. It was an amazing thing that could happen to you. So many of the young boys would strive to be a rabbi. It would be like I could be like the president or something, or being like on an NBA basketball team. It would have been incredible.

And in those days, if you were good enough, you would go to one of a handful of famous rabbis in your community, and you'd say I want to be a rabbi. And then the rabbi would test you with things over and over and over. And if he thought you were good enough, and usually he didn't, he would say these words: Lek Hackeri. Lek Hackeri. It means follow me. But it was a famous phrase. That's like your acceptance letter into Harvard. It's the dream. That is the ultimate dream to hear these words: Lek Hackeri.

So Jesus' whole community was built around the bible, knowing the bible, memorizing the bible, debating the bible, and the most simple thing, the first thing they learned is the Ten Commandments in order.

When Jesus responds to what must I do to be saved, how many commandments does he say, did you count them? Five. We have a slide. Here are the Ten Commandments. And everybody would have instantly.. it's like ABC's in those days. His whole audience, everybody would have known these for sure. Jesus says five through nine, and let's see which ones he left out. He left out all the ones having to do with worshipping God and thou shalt not covet. There's an obvious hint that he's giving to this guy. You've obeyed me in everything, except one area. There's one area: you trust your money more than you trust the Lord.

He says to him; he says, "Do these five things," he misses the point. And he says, "I've done all those things since I was a little boy." And then it says "Jesus looked upon him and loved him." I love that line.

And said “one thing you lack – sell everything you own, give it to the poor, and then follow me.” Follow me. It’s powerful stuff. I wish there was a pause in the text because it’s there. There’s a dramatic pause where this young man is weighing should I become a rabbi and follow this rabbi? But then I’ll lose everything. Or should I hang on to my business and my money and everything I have.

And you know what it says? What did it say when he came to Jesus? What was he was doing, do you remember? He was running. The scripture says he walks away. “He went away sad for he had much.” You realize if this young man had said okay, I’ll do it, I’ll sell it all, I’ll give it all to have you, Jesus. I’ll give it all. To follow you, I’ll do it all, whatever you want. It’s going to be hard, but I’ll do it. If he had said that, he would have been one of the disciples. We’d know his name like Andrew or Peter or John. We’d know his name. Maybe he would have written a book of the bible. Maybe he would have brought the gospel to India where it never went. Who knows what he would have done. He would be an historic figure. He’d have churches named after him. Instead he’s just the rich young guy that made the wrong decision. He’s the one who walked away sad because he had much. He’s the one who couldn’t say silver and gold have I not, but he also could not say rise up and walk.

And this dialogue continues. Jesus sort of shakes his head and in Matthew chapter 23, he looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.” The disciples were

what? Amazed at his words. Why? Because in Judaism it's a good thing to be rich. It's a great thing. You read through the Old Testament and it is all about be wise and make money. Make money! It's all over. So Jesus is sort of re-teaching them that money is good if it's second and God needs to be first. I mean you know that. But he says, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God. It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God. The disciples were even more amazed and said to each other, then who can be saved?" Right? That's a natural question. How much is rich?

And here is the point that Jesus makes. This is the ultimate point. Oh of course Jesus says, "With man this is impossible but with God all things are possible." And then of course Peter, who has a very bloated ego at this time, still hasn't denied Christ three times, he says "We've left everything to follow you." Aren't we great? And Jesus just kind of ignores him and says, "Truly I tell you," and this is so important because this is the lesson. If you make this about giving away all your stuff to the poor, you've missed the point. Or if you make this about not being rich, you've missed the point because it's good to be rich, if you have the character. He says, "Truly I tell you, Jesus replied, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much" when? "In this present age." Everyone say in this present age. "Homes, brothers, sisters,

mothers, children, and fields, along with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and those who are last will be first.” Jesus tells us right there if you give up everything for the sake of the gospel, you’re going to get a hundred times back in this age and in the age to come. It is the classic you cannot out give God. It is so clear to me that the rich young ruler wanted both. He wanted to live a life for God, he wanted to do good things, but he wanted to like keep his portfolio sound, you know? He’s a very smart guy, obviously, or else he wouldn’t be wealthy. He was a businessman. He was sensible, he was practical. But when Jesus put it to him, prove to me that you trust me more than your money, he said no, and walking away.

So Jesus calls us to say Lord, I give you everything and watch as you give to God, he is going to give you a hundred times back in a hundred ways in this age and in the age to come. Can I get an amen? I want you to know, man, so many of you, I want you to know first of all, it can be hard when you’re generous with your money or your time or your life or your compassion, but I want you to know God will give it back a hundred times. I believe it. It is hard sometimes to preach a sermon like this. One: because this message has been abused by many preachers, but two: in particular, it’s very self serving when you lead a ministry that requires donations.

But I’m saying not just to the church, give to your neighbor, give to your friends, help the poor, help those who are in need and watch as you

give. When the Lord calls you to give, even if you're wrong, even if it wasn't the Lord and you give with a spirit of your desire to please God, I still believe he's going to give back to you a hundred times. I just believe it because I've seen so many people do so many things that I thought was so stupid, and you just watch how all of a sudden they're like the luckiest person in the world because they leaned into, they leaned into their lack.

See the world says when you lack, then clenched fists, back up, go into defense mode. But the gospel says when you are lacking, lean into it. When you don't have much, give more. When you need somebody to help you, help others. If you need to learn, teach. Lean into it. Live the life of the open hand because in our spirit, when we open the hands of our heart to give, we're also opening our hands to heaven to receive. And it gives us clarity, it removes fear, it gives us crystal clear vision, we stop wasting all of this willpower on trying to protect everything. When we just start giving, you feel rich, you feel successful, you feel like you're making a difference. There is just something good that happens to the heart and something that happens in heaven when you give, and that's what the bible teaches us.

So trust him, trust him with everything. Man, if you're wealthy, do not take this as a condemnation. I'm so glad that you're wealthy. I want every single person in this church to be super rich. If you're a good person, and you have a good heart, and you have character, I want you

to be so filthy rich it's crazy. And if you're a bad person, I want you to be dirt poor. I want good people to have money and I want bad people to have no money.

But, you clapped before the but. But the good money that comes from God only comes from God when you've proved to him it's not about money and you have. I'm so proud of you. You have put God first in your life, you've given to those in need, you've given to this ministry, you've given to others, you've given your time, you've given your hugs, you've given your empathy, you are such an awesome person and I believe good things are coming, so respond in faith to the promise and the covenants of God that God responds to generosity, not to fear. God responds to faith, not to fear. Do you know why? God is the most generous being in the universe.

I remember I went to this event in New York City, it was a somewhat secret event, and it was a gathering of great scientists from Harvard and MIT. And they were there as born again bible believing Christians to talk about science. We had a worship time together and I saw the head of astrophysics of one of the most prestigious scientific institutions in America raising her hands like this worshipping God. The whole room of some of the world's greatest scientists worshipping and just praising God, and not in like a good sensible political way, but like these were people that loved God. It was a great experience.

And one of the things that happened was I can't say her name, because I don't have permission, I don't think, but she was one of the main scientists out of MIT that ran the Hubble Telescope. And she just loved God and loved Jesus and was showing these pictures of the universe. And it was like being in a worship experience where she's like look at what God did here. And look at what he did here. And she had this giant screen in HD that she brought so you could really see it. And then when she talked about the scope and the grandeur of these nebulae and like all of this, it was just an incredible experience. And what she just kept saying was how generous God was. How creative he was. And how he just did it all just cause its beautiful, whether or not anybody ever sees it, it's just fun, it's gorgeous, and he's just going to keep pouring out of himself more beauty and more goodness.

God is not going to withhold generosity from you. He is going to pour out so much blessing in your life because he loves you, he loves you, and I believe this. And of course Jesus being God is so generous, he's just constantly meeting the needs of others. Jesus' whole ministry can be summed up into one word: generosity. His whole life he's just giving everything.

There's this one scene where he's just healing people and preaching and teaching, and then someone's like you need to come and heal Jairus' daughter, she's died, can you raise her from the dead? He's like okay, I'll go heal Jairus' daughter. And then as he's on his way out

the room, some other lady who has a bleeding disorder is like oh he's leaving, if I can just reach out and just by touching the hem of his garment, she got healed. Power went out over him. It was like everywhere he went he was just meeting the needs of everyone to the point of giving his very blood, his perfect blood and perfect life on our behalf that we could be reconciled with the Father, he gave everything, and so did his disciples. You think giving up your wealth was a lot, the disciples gave their lives. And they know that in this age and in the age to come, you cannot out give God. That he will always give back a hundred times whatever it is that you gave. It's only a test. That's all it is. It's a test for you. God already knows but it's a test for you. Is my stuff the most important thing or is God?

And so I want you to know, man, are you worried today? I want you to know God has seen what you've given. God has seen your generosity. I want you to let go of fear today. Let that go. Faith pleases God. God has seen how you've given, how you've blessed others, how you've helped your neighbor. And I want you to know, begin to respond with faith, begin to give, begin to desire to give, begin to bless people, bless your neighbor. If you have neighbors with kids or something, go babysit their kids and buy them movie tickets and give them \$50 for dinner. If you see someone and they don't know how they're going to pay their rent, pay their rent for them. Give and watch that God won't just

pour out so much blessing on your life there won't be enough room to contain it. If you don't have money, give what you can.

I remember one pastor before he was a pastor he was a young man. He had lost everything. All he had was the clothes on his back and a pencil. And he loved his pencil because it was all he had left to write on cocktail napkins when he wrote ideas for books and things. And he was in church and he heard a sermon about leading into your lack, and he put that pencil into an envelope. And he said and it was next day all of heaven opened up in my life. It was so hard, you think like a pencil, it was so hard for him to take this pencil and put it in an envelope, but he said I'm even giving up my pencil. I'm giving it to you, God.

This is a principle that has gone out of fashion. It doesn't matter. It remains true. You cannot out give God. It's more blessed to give than to receive. When you give, you feel successful. When you give, opportunity comes to you. I've met so many wealthy people who have done so well in business, and you ask them and they're like you know I was just at the right place at the right time and I met the right person and I just took a hold of that opportunity and nothing was ever the same again. There is something about opportunity and I think opportunity comes for us when we give, very often.

The most important reason you should be a generous person is because God is so generous. And you are a generous person. And what that does is it keeps you aligned to what really matters. That people

matter. That heaven matters. You're going to have to say goodbye to it all someday. And when you get to heaven, you might wish you would have given more and lived by faith more, and you won't. You won't because you are living by faith, you are generous, you are loving. I'm so proud of you, and I think I just want to say thank you and I want to promise you that God is going to pour out hundred times more than you've given. He is just going to pour it out on your life. And I want you to leave here with a sense of hope that you're going to receive good this week from the Lord, and you will. Amen? Amen.