

Sermon for October 8, 2023

BMZ Church

Series: "The Generosity Secret"

For Message: 2 Cor 9:6; Deuteronomy 15; Matt 25:21; Philippians 4:11-13

Message Title: "The HEART"

Introduction: Welcome to BMZ CHURCH! Glad you're here as we BEGIN our FALL DISCIPLESHIP CAMPAIGN with our WORSHIP SERIES called: "**THE GENEROSITY SECRET**"! I believe this will be a POWERFUL SERIES where we will get GREAT OPPORTUNITIES to GROW in our FAITH RELATIONSHIP with JESUS. BTW – for JESUS, THAT'S the POINT of THIS LIFE!

So, maybe COMMIT to being HERE for the ENTIRE SERIES ... Get in a GROWTH GROUP. We're going to GROW in our FAITH, with the ADDED BENEFIT of EXCHANGING FINANCIAL STRESS for FINANCIAL PEACE. Sound good?

Now, WHAT we LEARN in this SERIES is going to seem COUNTERINTUITIVE / BAZAAR / "That CAN'T be RIGHT!" ... WHY? Because you and I have been RAISED by THIS WORLD and we ASSUME if "EVERYONE" THINKS that WAY, then it MUST BE RIGHT ... RIGHT? One of the REASONS this SERIES gives us a SERIOUS OPPORTUNITY to GROW in our FAITH is because we will NEED to make DISTINCT DECISIONS about WHICH we will FOLLOW ... The WORLD, or the WORD.

Let's GET to GOD'S WORD ... **JAMES 1:17 = *Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.*** JAMES REMINDS us that EVERY GOOD THING in the WORLD and YOUR LIFE is a GIFT from GOD. Then, JAMES REVEALS that GOD NEVER CHANGES or CASTS a SHIFTING SHADOW. It means that GOD is ALWAYS GENEROUS ... in our PAST / PRESENT / FUTURE. GOD is GENEROUS CONSTANTLY and CONSISTENTLY, BECAUSE that is WHO HE IS!

Now, THINK for a MOMENT of ALL the GOOD GIFTS GOD has GIVEN YOU ... If you want to, WRITE them DOWN. ALL you have to be THANKFUL for ... My FAMILY / HEALTH / JOB / MONEY / SALVATION / FAITH / BREATHING TODAY, etc.

GOD is GENEROUS, because GOD is LOVE. IT is HIS CHARACTER. IT'S WHO HE IS! GOD is GENEROUS with YOU because He LOVES YOU. BUT GOD is GENEROUS for ANOTHER REASON ... God's GENEROUS with YOU and ME, because He wants US to BE GENEROUS with OTHERS. That's WHAT this SERIES is ABOUT ... GOD is GENEROUS with YOU, SO YOU can be GENEROUS with OTHERS. That is the HEART of The GENEROSITY SECRET. The MORE GENEROUS we are with what GOD has BLESSED US WITH, the MORE our LIVES will be OPEN to RECEIVING God's GENEROSITY.

We find the GENEROSITY SECRET THROUGHOUT The BIBLE. OK. LET'S START with our MEMORY VERSE ... Together ... **2 CORINTHIANS 9:6 = *Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop.***

Would you please UNDERLINE that LAST PHRASE starting with "BUT"? WHOEVER PLANTS / OFFERS / GIVES GENEROSITY will RECEIVE GENEROSITY. NOW, you think, "**But PASTOR STAN, HOW is Generosity the SECRET of LIFE where I HAVE MORE because I SHARE MORE with OTHERS? Doesn't that MEAN I'm going to HAVE LESS and MY LIFE will be MORE STRESSFUL? I WON'T HAVE ENOUGH or AS MUCH!**"

Please UNDERSTAND that WE'VE been TRICKED by the WORLD (The prince) into THINKING THAT WAY. And we APPROACH LIFE with THAT in MIND, don't we? We LIVE out of this primordial HOARDING MENTALITY ... SCRATCH, CLAW, and FIGHT for ALL you can GET ... RIGHT? Then, ONCE you HAVE IT, HOLD on for DEAR LIFE!

Listen, The GENEROSITY SECRET says the MORE GENEROUS you are with your MONEY, the MORE GOD can TRUST you with MONEY. The SECRET says the MORE we BLESS OTHERS, the MORE God BLESSES our RELATIONSHIPS. The SECRET says the MORE you let GOD CONTROL your FINANCES, the LESS your FINANCES will CONTROL YOU. The GENEROSITY SECRET is NOT Positive Thinking. IT'S BIBLICAL TRUTH. It's NOT HUMAN WISDOM. It's WHO GOD IS. IT'S NOT FINANCIAL PLANNING, it's a NEW WAY of LIVING!

GENEROSITY is WHO GOD IS ... WE are CREATED in HIS IMAGE to LIVE like HE WANTS. WE were CREATED for GENEROSITY! Let's TRY IT. Let's BEGIN by UNDERSTANDING we will need to **EXCHANGE some OLD / INEFFECTIVE WAYS of LIVING for GOD'S GENEROUS WAY of LIFE.** Start with some KEY Biblical Principles.

How to Develop a Generous Heart How do I DEVELOP a GENEROUS (Godly / Christ-Like) HEART? Start EXCHANGING ...

- Exchange Close-Fisted Living for OPEN-HANDED LIVING.

TWO ways we can LIVE LIFE – CLOSE-FISTED or OPEN-HANDED. The FIRST way is CLOSE-FISTED. It's what MOST of us have been TAUGHT. Let's DO IT ... CLOSE your FIST TIGHT ... Like you have a \$100 BILL and SOMEONE is trying to GET it FROM you. HOLD it TIGHT until I TELL you to STOP. Ready? GO! This is the way MOST of the WORLD LIVES. We've been TOLD that IF you want to SUCCEED, have ENOUGH, you'd better HOARD it. FIGHT / SCRATCH / CLAW to GET it and HOLD ON TIGHT ... EVEN IF you have to PUT OTHERS DOWN to GET IT, DO IT! Every PERSON for THEMSELVES. Looking OUT for NUMBER ONE! GETTING TIRED? KEEP SQUEEZING.

DEUTERONOMY 15:7-8, 10 = *"But if there are any poor ... do not be hard-hearted or tightfisted toward them. 8Instead, be generous ... 10Give generously to the poor, not grudgingly, for the Lord your God will bless you in everything you do.* STILL SQUEEZING? IS it getting DIFFICULT? Is it EXHAUSTING to KEEP it TIGHTFISTED? Let me TELL you, TIGHTFISTED LIVING IS EXHAUSTING.

So, START to LOOSEN your GRIP until your FINGERS are COMPLETELY OPEN. Feel BETTER? FEEL LESS STRESSFUL? Good. NOW, with your HAND OPEN, you can SHARE with OTHERS what YOU'VE been BLESSED with. ALSO, your HAND is OPEN to GOD BLESSING your MORE. When our HANDS are TIGHTFISTED, not ONLY are you NOT ABLE to be GENEROUS to OTHERS, but GOD can NOT pour His BLESSINGS into YOUR HAND. That LAST LINE is **WHY we're DOING this SERIES ... DON'T want YOU to MISS OUT on The LORD your GOD BLESSING YOU in EVERYTHING you DO!**

MAYBE you're thinking, *"Pastor Stan, I'd LIKE to be GENEROUS, but I CAN'T. I do NOT have ENOUGH INCOME. I have TOO MUCH DEBT, so I CAN'T LIVE GENEROUSLY."* Listen GOD tells us OVER and OVER in His WORD that the KEY / SECRET to FINANCIAL FREEDOM is in our GENEROSITY. The SECRET to getting OUT of DEBT is GENEROSITY... Because IF you will LIVE Open-Handed, and Trust God, he will MEET your NEEDS and BLESS you MORE ... BECAUSE God KNOWS you will BLESS OTHERS as HE WANTS you TO.

SO, as a CHURCH we TRY to be GENEROUS and OPEN-HANDED. We GIVE towards MISSIONS and MISSIONARIES. We GIVE away FOOD and CLOTHING. If you JOIN a Growth Group (you should!), you will get a FREE BOOK (FTGs?!). Then, I have a PLAN for THREE WEEKS from NOW. On SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28th, I'm going to SHARE some Biblical Principles on HOW to get OUT of DEBT. It will be VERY HELPFUL. And THEN, IF I can GET it DONE, we're going to ACTUALLY HELP PEOPLE in DEBT get a JUMPSTART on PAYING DOWN their DEBT! Gotta be IN PERSON at Boscobel.

So MANY have this MIXED up. They THINK the SECRET to Financial Freedom and SUCCESS is to HAVE MORE. NO. It's to GIVE MORE. Truth = The JOY of LIFE is GIVING!

- **Exchange Ownership for STEWARDSHIP.**

#1 = Exchange Close-Fisted living for Open-Handed LIVING. #2 ... The VIEW in our Culture is that MY MONEY is MINE / My STUFF is MINE ... I EARNED them / I WORKED for THEM and I'M the OWNER! Right? JESUS says that's a WARPED VIEW! Jesus says this OWNER MINDSET leads to a GREEDY HEART and NOT a GENEROUS HEART. Jesus says IN REALITY we are STEWARDS / MANAGERS of what BELONGS to GOD.

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells a PARABLE / Story about an OWNER who goes on a LONG TRIP. He leaves 3 WORKERS in CHARGE of ALL HIS MONEY / POSSESSIONS and asks them to INVEST WISELY on the OWNER'S BEHALF ... HIS MONEY. When He RETURNS, TWO of the WORKERS INVESTED and did a GREAT JOB EARNING the OWNER MORE ... Here's what the OWNER / MASTER says to THOSE who MANAGED WELL what He TRUSTED to THEM ... **MATTHEW 25:21 = "The master was full of praise. 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!'"**

Jesus speaking ... they SERVANTS were REWARDED for HOW they MANAGED what did NOT BELONG to THEM! Jesus TEACHES that YOU and I are MANAGERS of GOD'S BLESSINGS in our LIVES. We're NOT OWNERS. It MATTERS how we HANDLE what GOD has BLESSED us WITH.

3 BIBLICAL TRUTHS that, IF we ACCEPT them will CHANGE how we VIEW and HANDLE our MONEY: **1) GOD OWNS IT ALL** ... Every GOOD thing is a GIFT from GOD. Your LIFE and EVERYTHING IN IT ... Money / Possessions ... BELONGS to GOD. **2) GOD ENTRUSTED YOU with SOME of IT** ... God TRUST YOU and ME to CARE for WHAT is HIS. The DEFINITION of a "STEWARDSHIP" is someone who has been ENTRUSTED to CARE for and INVEST WISELY the RESOURCES of SOMEONE ELSE. **3) YOUR STEWARDSHIP is a SPIRITUAL TEST.** Your STEWARDSHIP is a MEASURE of your SPIRITUAL MATURITY. It TESTS you for a GENEROUS HEART or a GREEDY HEART.

- **Exchange Debt for DISCIPLINE.**

Some of you are DEBT FREE. Awesome! But DEBT seems to be a BIG PROBLEM here in the U.S., doesn't it? I want you to IMAGINE being DEBT FREE. For SOME that is HARD to DO ... you're SO FAR AWAY. Don't GIVE UP. In a FEW WEEKS we're going to GIVE a PROVEN / PRACTICAL / BIBLICAL PLAN for GETTING OUT of DEBT.

Look at what the PSALMIST wrote about DEBT and GENEROSITY ... **PSALM 37:21 = The wicked borrow and never repay, but the godly are generous givers.** THOSE who BORROW and NEVER REPAY are in DEBT. DEBT PREVENTS us from being GENEROUS ... we can NOT be GODLY. The GODLY are GENEROUS GIVERS. DEBT is a SERIOUS PROBLEM with STUDENT LOAN DEBT and CREDIT CARD DEBT ... we HURT. WE

FEEL the WEIGHT of the BURDEN. And GOD does NOT want US to have UNNECESSARY PAIN in our LIVES. DEBT is SNEAKY ... BUT GOD wants us to have FREEDOM!

But DISCIPLINE is the OPPOSITE of DEBT. DISCIPLINE helps us make WISE DECISIONS with our MONEY. USUALLY, DEBT comes from PURCHASING things we did NOT PLAN in ADVANCE for ... **PROVERBS 21:5 = *Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty.***

Don't BUY what you CAN'T AFFORD. PLAN CAREFULLY. Good ADVICE! Back to DEBT on SUNDAY, OCT 28th ... BE HERE! Next ...

- **Exchange Comparing for CONTENTMENT.**

WE LIVE in a COMPARISON CULTURE. Look at SOCIAL MEDIA. It's the BRAGGING CHANNEL, right? People SHARE ONLY their BEST STUFF ... it's ONE more OPPORTUNITY for PEOPLE to SAY ... **"I'm BETTER than YOU!"** STOP BUYING INTO IT! I understand when a FRIEND posts a PICTURE OUT at a NICE DINNER and you're at HOME eating MAC and CHEESE in your SWEATPANTS watching NETFLIX, you think ... MY LIFE STINKS!

Here's the PROBLEM: By WANTING what OTHERS have, you become UNGRATEFUL for what GOD has BLESSED you with and LONG for something that DOES NOT REALLY EXIST. It's SUCH a BAD WAY to LIVE. There is something WRONG when you're BLESSED with SO MUCH, but YOU are MISERABLE because you COMPARE. Solomon wrote ... **ECCLESIASTES 6:9 = *Enjoy what you have rather than desiring what you don't have. Just dreaming about nice things is meaningless—like chasing the wind.***

SOLOMON had ALL and he WARNED in his WISDOM that WANTING MORE and NOT being CONTENT is a WASTE of your LIFE / MEANINGLESS! BUT we FALL for the LIE that IF I have a LITTLE MORE, THEN I'll be SATISFIED / HAPPY. Never happens!

Paul REMINDS us that CONTENTMENT with WHAT we HAVE leads to JOY ... **PHILIPPIANS 4:11b-13 = *... for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. 12I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. 13For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.***

Okay ... EXCHANGE Closed-Fisted for Open-Fisted, Ownership for Stewardship, Debt for Discipline, Comparing for Contentment and finally ...

- **Exchange a Now Perspective for AN ETERNAL Perspective.**

A GENEROUS HEART is NOT just about LIVING DIFFERENTLY TODAY, but also THINKING DIFFERENTLY about TOMORROW. DRAW a DOT on FAR LEFT SIDE of your PAPER. Got it? Good. That DOT represents your LIFE on THIS EARTH ... 50-90 YEARS HERE. It's SHORT with BEGINNING and END. NOW, DRAW a LINE across the PAGE to the RIGHT ... ALL the WAY ACROSS. THEN, put an ARROW on the END of the LINE. WHY do we spend SO MUCH TIME in a "NOW PERSPECTIVE" / on the DOT when our ETERNITY is SO MUCH LONGER ... and we WILL SPEND it SOMEWHERE!

The BIBLE says this WORLD is NOT our HOME. We are CREATED for ETERNAL HEAVEN. Jesus WARNS us NOT to LIVE LIFE for the DOT ... and SOMEHOW what we DO with our MONEY and POSSESSIONS MATTERS ... **MATTHEW 6:19-20 = *"Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. 20Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal.***

Jesus TELLS us to STORE TREASURES in HEAVEN. HOW? By being GENEROUS in THIS LIFE with what GOD has BLESSED us WITH! Let's have an ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE with ALL THIS LIFE, INCLUDING our FINANCES.

An ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE SURE MATTERED to GOD ... JOHN 3:16 = *"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."* WE can NOT OUTGIVE GOD. He GAVE FIRST. He GAVE HIS SON FOR our ETERNITIES. That's a GOOD START to the SERIES. DON'T MISS ANY ...

Let's PRAY Together!

Next Steps: *Memorize 2 Corinthians 9:6*
Read Matthew 6
Attend the rest of The Generosity Secret this fall (as much as possible)
Sign Me Up for GG# _____

Hosting (Closing)

HEY, it has been a GREAT DAY here at BMZ... Glad you've been here with us! In a moment, we are going to RECEIVE the OFFERING so please take this time to finish COMPLETING any information.

- Or NEXT STEPS on your CONNECTION CARD (**FULLY FILLED OUT!!**)
- AND when our ushers come around to RECEIVE our OFFERING
- You can drop that card in the offering basket.

IF you are a First-Time Guest with us today

- We are so glad you joined us ... And we have a GIFT for you. It's this book **"UNSHAKABLE"** and it's at the BACK TABLE / By the DOORS...
- all you need to do is HIT **"SEND"** your COMPLETED Connection Card
 ++++++
- I just want to remind you ... STEWARDSHIP is DISCIPLESHIP ... we RECEIVE an OFFERING EVERY Sunday BECAUSE it's BIBLICAL ... AND it HELPS us GROW in our FAITH!
- STEWARDSHIP VERSE ... PROVERBS 21:5 = *Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty.*
- FIRST of our EARNINGS go back to the ONE who Blessed us in the first place! That's why WE/I do Automated Giving! I get paid ... the TITHE comes OUT FIRST!
- God's plan for BUILDING His Church was through TITHING and GIVING of the FOLLOWERS ... Share the GOOD NEWS! To REFRESH OTHERS!
- As Developing Followers of Jesus Christ, WE need to KNOW what the BIBLE says about GIVING ... NOT just what we THINK it should say.
- **MONEY is a HEART ISSUE.** And GOD wants what is BEST for your HEART! Listen, if GOD LOVES US so much that HE is willing to GIVE UP His OWN SON FOR US, WHY would GOD LEAD us ASTRAY in FINANCES?! USHERS ...
- NEXT WEEK: **GENEROSITY SECRET ... There are SOME MYTHS FLOATING AROUND about GENEROSITY. Let's get BACK to THE TRUTH!**

"Truth without Grace is Fundamentalism (Brutality). Grace without Truth is Sentimentalism (Hypocrisy)."
 Special thanks to Andy Stanley, Warren Wiersbe, Nelson Searcy, and R.A. Pegram for outlines and ideas for this worship series