

**Generosity Code**  
***Materialism destroys it***  
Part 5

**Intro:** It's amazing what we do to try to protect ourselves during the flu season. Some get their vaccinations – flu shot / maybe you wash your hands more than normal / hand sanitizer (even when your grocery shop – explain) When I work out at the gym – explain. Some take extra vitamins – D. It's as if our awareness is heightened during this season. We're just all more conscious that we need to do whatever we can to stay healthy.

As followers of Jesus, there is a spiritual virus that is always in season that we need to protect ourselves from. This spiritual virus is called, materialism.

Today I want to share how generosity protects us against this spiritual virus. Materialism can destroy the generosity code in our lives. It is something we need to take seriously and something we should be proactive in guarding ourselves from. HOW?

**1. Understand how prone we are to its influence**

What is materialism? It is the spiritual condition where the value of money and or possessions influences our lives more than following Jesus. It is the condition of sacrificing following Jesus in areas of our lives for acquiring / possessing / advancing our own material world. It is where we trade the values of the Kingdom for the values of this world when it comes to money and wealth.

- The simple question is this: Which has the greatest influence on your life...Material or Jesus?

*1 Tim. 6:17 "Teach **those who are rich** in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God..." (NLT)*

- Most people simply assume since they are not rich they have no issues with materialism. But we usually compare ourselves with the wrong people. People who simply have more than us.
- World income stats:

If you earn \$60k annually in household income, you are in the top 10% of global income.

If you earn \$130k annually in household income, you are in the top 5% of global income.

- Now let's look at this verse again. "Teach those who are rich in this world..." This is written for us. We are the rich of the world.
- It's easy for us to be completely unaware that we have been influenced by the virus because we are comparing ourselves to a very tiny percent of the global population. Then, our decisions are influenced by this perspective.
- Just think how many times we have chosen not to be generous while we are the global 5-10% of the population in wealth? You don't think we have a materialism problem?
- Why do we seem to think it's almost our responsibility to play this bigger and better game with materialism? We strive for a better house – nicer place to live / we work to

have nicer vehicles / we purchase more and more adult toys in the driveway / we pride ourselves in only expensive name-brand clothing.

- In and of themselves there is nothing morally wrong with having anything I just mentioned. What is our motivation behind it all? How does it impact our generosity? Pay attention to your heart.
- Because often, we get angry over the issue of giving and generosity. The only reason anyone gets upset over this issue is because something you love is being threatened. If you didn't love your stuff, you wouldn't be upset...in fact, you'd be excited. It's evidence of the virus.

Jesus told a story to illustrate how difficult it is to follow Him and be wealthy.

- Story of a rich man coming up to Jesus - summarize

*Mark 10:23-25 "Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God!" <sup>24</sup> This amazed them. But Jesus said again, "Dear children, it is very hard to enter the Kingdom of God. <sup>25</sup> In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!" (NLT)*

- This story should scare the pants off of rich people. Do you know why it doesn't? Because in this country we have associated wealth with spirituality...AND this is a lie! (Jesus never says one good thing about wealth. Not one thing!)
- According to Jesus, it is nearly impossible to be wealthy and have eternal life. WOW! It is very difficult to handle wealth and still be a follower of Jesus. Therefore, generosity is pretty important to protect us from this disease. Let me explain how.

## **2. Give to keep our focus on God's Kingdom**

*Matt. 6:33 "Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need."* (The context of this passage has to do with money / wealth / and worry.)

Jesus connected our use of money to seeking the Kingdom of God.

- We cannot be materialistic and seek first the Kingdom of God. Impossible. It's a clash of two kingdoms. BUT, generosity helps protect our loyalties. Generosity helps to keep our focus on advancing God's Kingdom here on earth.
- This is why we give. This is why we develop consistent Kingdom generosity. This is why you give to a church that is committed to advancing the Kingdom of God. Giving allows us to be Kingdom minded together. (Purpose on the Wall – explain)
- Giving to God's Kingdom just may delay my own kingdom. These are the tough decisions we face in a materialistic culture. If we can never delay our own advancement for the sake of God's Kingdom we have a materialism issue.
  - **For example:** If you go and buy a new home or a new vehicle so that it causes you to no longer be generous to the Kingdom of God you made a materialistic decision. You sought your kingdom first. The virus made the decision.
- We don't advance God's kingdom with money we have left over or if it's convenient. We seek the Kingdom of God FIRST. We currently have Kingdom opportunities going on now.

- We make generosity part of our monthly budget. How does your household budget reflect the Kingdom of God? For some it means you have decided to begin giving regularly. (Giving boxes – Online platform)
  - Others have made it more of a priority by increasing the amount. WHY? Because you can. God has blessed you with resources so you can be a river of generosity not a reservoir.
  - Together we're going to raise \$500K to get this parking lot paved. We understand that it's not just a parking lot, it is a faith journey. Does it meet needs? – is it the loving thing to do? – Is it the right thing to do? Absolutely! Therefore, even a parking lot can be Kingdom.
- If we say we prioritize the Kingdom of God, then we prioritize resources to advance it. It means we do not make financial decisions that cause us to sacrifice generosity.

### 3. Give to keep the focus off ourselves

*Phil. 2:3-5 "Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had." (NLT)*

- Materialism makes us selfish, worry what others think / become prideful / and become self-focused and think of ourselves first. BUT, a lifestyle of generosity protects us from these issues and reminds us to have the same attitude and lifestyle of Jesus.
- Phil. 2 goes on to describes the reckless generosity of Jesus stepping into humanity, serving the needs of others and sacrificing His life on a cross. Jesus life was all about others.
- Giving protects us from thinking we get to use all our resources for ourselves. It protects us from a self-absorbed life, which is the opposite of what following Jesus looks like.
- Giving forces us to look at the brokenness of humanity / the pain and neediness of others / the unfairness and the injustice of life and decide to act like Jesus and make a difference.
- I can't begin to tell you how many believers in Jesus over the years have said to me..." I have a right to have these nice things." "I've worked hard; sacrificed a lot and I deserve these things."
  - I understand the emotions behind these statements. Many of us have worked extremely hard to get where we're at in life.
- BUT, for a follower of Jesus to use the terms; "I have a right" and "I deserve these things" may reveal more about our hearts than our work ethic. Statements like this reveal a deeper issue.
- Materialism causes us to forget who we belong to. *I Cor. 6:19-20 "Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? **You do not belong to yourself,** <sup>20</sup> for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body." (NLT)*

- As followers of Jesus, we do not have the right to use our bodies, with all the gifts, talents and abilities God gave us, to simply accumulate wealth and use it for ourselves. WHY? Because we do not belong to ourselves! We are servants of the Most High!
- Wealth can cause us to think we are more important than we really are. Wealth can cause us to believe we are too good for some things. For example:
  - Conversation with someone years ago who was well-off financially - about Bi-Mart. "I would never shop there. That's just a poor man's Costco."
  - BUT, I've heard other believer's say things like this about Wal-Mart. I would never shop at Wal-Mart. Do you hear the pride in this? "I'm too good to go to these stores. 'I'm better than that!'" Wealth can create these attitudes in us.
  - Now put these comments in context of Jesus leaving eternity / laying aside His Divine power / Being born in poverty to peasant parents. Do you see how ridiculous and materialistic these comments are compared to Jesus?
- There is nothing wrong with having nice things (or shopping at high end stores) as long as we are walking in humility and generosity. As long as our focus is not on ourselves.

#### **4. Give to stay connected to the heart of God**

*Matt. 6:21 "Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be." (NLT)*

*Matt. 6:24 "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money." (NLT)*

- How we use money and wealth is a reflection of our heart condition. Jesus told us our treasure and heart are connected. Therefore, the usage of our money and wealth should reflect God's heart.
- When Jesus told people the greatest command is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, how is this even possible unless generosity defines our lives? How can we say we are loving God with everything we have until we love Him with our resources?
- Giving protects us from trying to serve two masters. The great lie of the American church is the belief we can serve God and money. BUT, when we try to do this we end up being devoted to materialism and despise the Kingdom of God.
- I know this is harsh verbiage but it is what Jesus said. Jesus didn't give us any middle ground here. It's easy to sit there and say; "Hold on Pastor...I do not despise the Kingdom of God!" Then prove it by your generosity. Prove it by your lifestyle.
- If we use all our resources only for ourselves and growing our own kingdom, how are we not serving money and despising the Kingdom of God?
- This is why generosity is so essential! Our giving keeps our hearts connected to what Jesus cares about. It keeps us connected to His Kingdom and His priorities. What is on Jesus' heart?
  - Meeting the needs of others (In Matt 25, Jesus said that when you did it to the least of these you were doing it to me.) Feeding people / clothing people /

loving the hurting / wading into the brokenness of humanity and making a tangible difference.

- This is why we are so passionate about our need meeting ministries here at Foothills and why we give away so many resources to these issues. It is the heart of God!
- Food Pantry
- Backpack Buddies
- Sponsoring almost 200 kids in Guatemala so they can escape the bondage of poverty.
- Giving to these issues keeps our hearts tender / compassionate / and broken for others.

○ Advancing the Kingdom of God

Jesus told His disciples to Go and make disciples of all nations. Go and make more followers. How does Jesus do this? He accomplishes this through His church. Jesus said; “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.”

- This is why we give to a church. The church is God’s program for transforming planet earth. The church is God’s heart.
- This is why we are Kingdom focused church. This is why we are obsessed with advancing the Kingdom of God.
- Our hearts need to keep longing for people to come to know Jesus and our resources should prove that our hearts beat in sync with Jesus for the same thing.

Giving is one of the most influential ways we can keep our hearts connected to God’s heart.

Materialism is a spiritual virus we can avoid. It’s not easy in our culture because the virus is everywhere. BUT, there are some practical things we can do to immunize ourselves from its effect, AND giving is that answer.

How is God speaking to your heart about protecting yourself from materialism so that the generosity God wants to unleash through you is not destroyed?