**The Gift of Giving – the spiritual disciplines**

**Intro**: The joyful discipline (God loves a hilarious giver!)

**The Risks:**

1. Poor teaching on Christian giving (coercive, legalistic, or manipulative) makes us wary about teaching about giving money

2. Teach you to become a Pharisee (Luke 18:9-14) – pride and self justification ‘I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get!’ Must never become a legalism or self-justifying, or a means of manipulating God.

3. Fear – financial insecurity

4. The biggest risk…missing out on one of the most joyous aspects of following Jesus, one of the best parts of Christian living – discovering the unfathomable generosity of God and participating in it!

**God loves a hilarious giver (2 Corinthians 9:7) …for God is able to make all grace abound to you…you will be made rich in every way so you can be generous on every occasion**

A couple of hilarious giving stories…

Pastor Nathan – the story of Anne and Andreas

Tim Niewand - ???

**The basis of Christian giving – God’s grace**

2 Corinthians 8:9

Christ was rich- he became poor so we through his poverty might become rich. We are now heirs of God. Rich beyond measure through God’s grace.

**The promise of Christian giving – you can’t out-generous God! (Luke 6:38) – multiple other passages! (Malachi 3:10, Psalm 112:5…)**

A closed fist gathers no blessing

Jesus: ‘Give and it will be given to you’ Luke 6:38

Corrective to poor or coercive teaching: Not ‘if you give, God will bless you’

God is always blessing us. As we recognise God as the giver and reflect his character by giving,

God opens our *eyes* to *see* his blessings;

God opens our *hands* to *receive* his blessings;

God opens our *hearts* to *rejoice* in his blessings.

**The upside down economics of God’s kingdom!**

God is far more generous with us than we can possibly be with him.

**The Basics of Christian giving**

(While we are already a wonderfully generous community in many ways, this section is focusing on giving to God’s work of spreading the gospel through the church, and God’s work of caring for the poor through charity)

**Prayerful:** 2 Corinthians 8:5, 9 (Romans 12:1-2)

An act of worship. Responsive to God’s generous grace. ‘What you have decided in your heart’ = will, intention and decision

**Priority:** 2 Corinthians 8:3-4, 10-12; Matthew 6:19-21; Matthew 6:33

All we have belongs to God, comes as a gift from God, and is given by God for us to steward for his glory. Not the last thing but the first thing in our budgets.

**Proportional**: 2 Corinthians 11-12, 2 Corinthians 16:1-2;

Multiple times we are instructed/urged to give ‘in proportion to what God has given us.’ Not a dollar amount, but a percentage of what God has graciously given us. Aim for a proportion that ‘is a bit of a stretch’ – that is sacrificial, that will actually cost you something – so you can discover God’s provision in a situation which you thought may be tough! Pastor Brett Kennett says ‘For some of us, 10% will be far too much. For others, 10% will be far to little.’ Another pastor said: ‘If you’re not giving cheerfully, you are either giving too much or too little.’ Think about that one for a while and pray about it!

**Progressive**: 1 Timothy 6:17

Stretch your giving muscle! As you grow in trusting God’s amazing generosity and provision in the economic realm, grow in your proportional giving. See if you can prayerfully and joyfully grow your giving by 1% per year.

**What our church might look like as we walk with the risen Jesus in the economic realm**

30 committed givers giving prayerfully, as a priority, proportionately, and progressively.

Becoming a generous church in local and global mission!

**Putting it into practice: The secret proportional giving pledge**