



Week Four: Selfishness/ un-generosity

OPENING PRAYER:

Dear Loving God, we give you thanks for today and all that we have because we know that you are our source and provider. Please work in our hearts and increase our capacity to love you and our neighbors more. We lift up those who are in quarantine and those who have been economically impacted by this pandemic. By your grace and mercy, provide healing and essentials for those in need.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen!

ENCOUNTERING GOD:

Where have you seen God at work in your life this week?

What good have you done for others this week?



WEEKLY SCRIPTURE READING:

Text: 1 Timothy 6:9-11

But people who trying to get rich fall into temptation. They are trapped by many stupid and harmful passions that plunge people into ruin and destruction. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some have wandered away from the faith and have impaled themselves with a lot of pain because they made money their goal.

SUMMARY AND CONTEXT:

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, people are flooding stores buying up essentials. The length of time we should practice social distancing (to slow the spread of the virus) remains a moving target. The fear that we will not have enough leads to hoarding or storing up more than enough for ourselves. Things such as toilet paper, hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, laundry detergent, bread, and whole chickens are highly-coveted items and are often missing from store shelves.

The stock market continues its downward spiral, meaning our 401ks and other investments are taking a beating. People in the service industry are losing their jobs due to cancellations and social distancing mandates, causing the unemployment to rise daily. WE Will GET THROUGH THIS, but how we get through it is important. Will we be selfish and stingy? No, we will reflect the light and love of Jesus Christ.

So, how can we be light amid this darkness? How can be generous during this health and economic crisis? I have seen a view examples in our church and through the media. Some of the men in our men's ministry have volunteered to pick up groceries and prescriptions for people who are high risk for infection and do not want to leave their homes. FaithWorks is continuing to provide for the needs of our most vulnerable members of society. Zion Williamson, 19-year-old basketball rookie sensation from the New Orleans Pelicans, pledged to pay the wages of all Smoothie King Center arena workers for a span of 30 days while

WC ENCOUNTER GROUPS CURRICULUM

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the NBA enforces this hiatus. Others have followed the 19-year-old's lead, like Mark Cuban, owner of the Dallas Mavericks. Most of us aren't millionaires or billionaires but we can do our part. The greatest commandment is that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The second is like it, to love our neighbor as ourselves. Being generous is rooted in our love for God and neighbor. We can do this by following the simple advice of the founder of Methodism, Rev. John Wesley, "Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can."

The words "the love of money is the root of all evil" are not unique to Christianity. It was a widely used proverb during antiquity. The proverb was used in the writings of the Greek philosopher, Diogenes the Cynic, and the Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria. Paul uses this widely-known proverb to support his instruction to be content. Rather than "imagining that godliness is means of gain" he taught "if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these" (1 Timothy verses 3-8). According to health officials, there may be some difficult weeks and months ahead. So during this time of spatial distancing, let us pursue contentment.

Once we have provided for our own needs, we need to look around us and see how we can help others. Here are two examples that I read about on social media. Rebecca Mehra was walking to the store when she heard a woman yell from the woman's car. She walked over and found an elderly woman and her husband. The elderly woman cracked the window open a bit more, and tearfully explained to Rebecca that she and her husband were afraid to go in the store, for fear of contracting the coronavirus. They had been waiting in their car 45 minutes. The elderly woman gave Rebecca \$100 and a list. She bought the groceries and returned to the elderly couple's car with the change from the transaction. Roxane Gay, a writer, sent out this tweet, "If you are broke and need to stock up on groceries, I will Venmo you \$100. Like 10 people. It's not much but I know it's rough out there. Reply with your Venmo." Rebecca was generous with her time and Roxane was generous with her money. Both actions made an impact on the lives others. Both gave of themselves. Please choose the love of God and neighbor over the love of money. Lastly, your gifts to the church enables us to continue to do ministry that impacts the lives of our church family and our community.

GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Encounter the Head:

Is money evil? How and where do we find contentment?

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What can we do to remain socially and spiritually connected, while following the guidelines of our health officials?

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Define generosity in your own words?

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Encounter the Heart:

Share with the group the ways that you have been generous this week.

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Do you have any fears about losing your job or how you are going to provide for the needs of your family? Share those fears and concerns with the group.

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GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

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Encounter the Hands:

In what ways can we be generous during this time of spatial distancing?

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FaithWorks has hygiene kits that need to be delivered to a local shelter. All you need to do is the pick-up from the church and the drop-off at the shelter. Please contact me at rsmith@whiteschapelumc.com if you are interested.



PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Encounter The Hands:

Please go around the group and have each person share a praise for this week and a prayer request/

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CLOSING PRAYER

Have a volunteer lead closing prayer: asking for prayer concerns and lifting up the needs of the group.

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DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

We encourage everyone to do a daily reflection. This can be done alone, as a couple, or with your family. This spiritual practice will help answer the questions you have and it will improve your ability to see where God is at work in your life, and in the lives of those around you. Please answer the following questions during your personal devotional time at the end of the day.

Where have you seen God today? For the children, we say, “what made you happy today?”

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What broke your heart or made you sad today?

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What good thing did you do for someone else today?

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What are you thankful for today?

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