

If you've been around CPC, you know that we are very intentional with trying to practice the way of Jesus, to live it out in the ordinary of our daily life. To be formed into the image of Christ will require far more than just coming on a Sunday and listening to sermons. Rather, you'll have to begin to live these things. So each year we take on a new practice.

Right now, the practice is vocation. And for six months, we develop a habit that correlates with that practice. The habit we're in is that of open-handedness, which we define as stewarding our time, talents, and treasures as channels through which God's abundance flows to others. We've been looking at the first two weeks of this series on time and talents. What does it mean for us to live open-handed with who we are, with the very time that we spend doing the work that we do, and then the talents that we've both cultivated and have been given to us?

Last week and this week, we're talking about what it means to be open-handed with our treasures. with our money, because money has a unique hold on us. I would consider money one of the gods of the age. It's one of the reasons that when we say money or the word greed, you may get a little uncomfortable because it is something that we don't like to talk about out in the open.

I get it because it's a sensitive topic, but because it's also part of the zeitgeist of the day that we've bought this myth that more is the path to the good life. It's in the middle of that, in which Jesus has this paradoxical teaching where he just continually talks about the exact opposite of that. Things like the first will be last, and the last will be first. It's better to give than to receive. These teachings come at us right in the midst of this. A paradox of what it means to gain. Two sociologists, Christian Smith and Hillary Davidson, in their book, *The Paradox of Generosity*, are coming at it from an empirical perspective about what the connection between money and happiness is. They write:

**People rightly say that money cannot buy happiness. But money and happiness are still related in a curious way. Happiness can be the result, not of spending more money on oneself, but rather of giving money away to others. Generous financial givers are happier people, as we will see. So, while money cannot buy happiness, giving it away actually associates with greater happiness. The same holds true for other forms of generous giving, such as volunteering and taking care of family and neighbors... [This] points to an important general principle that people ought to be aware of, which is that—contrary to common sense suggested by strict economic cost-benefit analysis—generous givers actually tend to enhance themselves personally by reducing what they spend on themselves. People actually grow by giving themselves away...**

**The data examined here show this to be not simply a nice idea, but a social-scientific fact. Smith and Davidson, *The Paradox of Generosity***

Jesus would summarize that much easier in Acts 20 by saying it is more blessed to give than to receive. What's interesting is our modern myth tells us the exact opposite, that the good life is found in acquiring and accumulating, achieving, climbing the ladder, continuing to build and form your own path towards success. But Jesus is constantly turning the tables on this common sense understanding of the world. So often, we just step into and imbibe because it's the water that we swim in. Jesus has a lot to say about money, generosity, and greed. Scholars state that he taught about 25 percent of his teachings with some connection to generosity, money, or greed. It is his teachings on greed that we're going to look at this morning through the Apostle Paul, because there's something about money and greed that has this grip on our hearts.

Now, as I did last week, I feel it is important to offer a few disclaimers as we talk about this topic because I get the sensitivity of it, particularly in our day and age. First, in a room this size, I know that we are a makeup of people that are diverse across every spectrum we could think of, including our socioeconomic status.

And so some of you in here are concerned about where you're going to find groceries this week. Others of you, your company may have launched the iPod recently, and you've got more money than you've ever had in your life. That's the reality in a room like this, and I just ask for your grace as I teach on these topics. I will not be able to capture all of the nuance and complexities, but I will do my humble best to try to speak in ways that can reach the broad audience wherever you are.

The second disclaimer is that I promise to set your heart at ease. I'm not going to take up an offering at the end of this; there is no bait and switch here. Lastly, it's worth noting, as you may or may not know if you're new to church life, I make my living off the generosity of all of you in here. That can pose complicated issues when talking about money. I don't know what to do with that other than just to name it, so you all know that I see it. As well, my prayer and prep for these past two weeks talking on these topics has been that God would root out any sense of shame or any way that I would lean into coercion, and to try to make that as simple as possible. So I'm just naming that complexity, because I have a feeling you all are thinking it and so let's just name it and put it out there.

Flip in your Bibles to 1 Timothy 6. We're in the last chapter of this letter. It's written by Paul to a young pastor of a church, and it's written to him as a way of communicating these important truths that Paul wants him to speak to his church.

**These are the things you are to teach and insist on. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, they are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. 1 Timothy 6:2b-5**

What Paul's going to do here in this section, which is why it is so long, is he will talk about false teachers and their motivation for financial gain. Then he'll tell Timothy how to be a good teacher and how to properly handle funds. So you can see the logic in this argument. But he begins by naming how to identify those false teachers who are coming for financial gain.

In some ways, Paul is laying out a wanted poster to help this church identify them because all of these people were coming through the church proclaiming the name of Jesus, but it was not for the purpose of the gospel, but rather for their own gain and achievement. Paul is offering these words as a way to help the church differentiate between a true teacher and a false teacher, and he lays out three categories.

## **False Doctrine**

The first is that of false doctrine. This would be classified as teachings that are counter to the orthodox teachings of the church as understood and interpreted through the lens of Jesus. Anything that seems to stray far from what we understand of scripture and what church history, which from our perspective has 2000 years of unpacking and trying to embody these teachings, would result in false doctrine.

## **Corrupt Behavior**

The second is just as important. He links the idea of false doctrine with that of corrupt behavior. Now, if you've been around church or if you're just online too much, what you'll find is that this word heretic gets thrown around a lot. We like to call people heretics. It's a way to say that we really disagree with someone. However, it's important to catch that Paul links false doctrine with corrupt behavior because those two things have always been what would qualify someone as a heretic.

Someone is not a heretic just because you disagree with them. Paul links this idea of corrupt behavior because wrong teaching matched with corrupt behavior is what results in a heretic. And Paul doesn't leave it for us to question what exactly is corrupt behavior. He leaves a pretty long list.

He begins saying they are conceited. That means they believe they have some special knowledge from God that others do not. He says they are ignorant, not simply misguided, but ignorant of their very missteps. They believe that they are always in the right, even though they may have strayed from truth.

They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels. The poison within their own heart begins to spill out into the relationships around them. They're filled with envy, a discontented thirst for

advantage and position that breeds strife. It refers to an atmosphere of constant struggle. They speak maliciously. They use degrading language towards others, dehumanizing them with their words. They have evil suspicions. They spread rumors and sow distrust. They have constant friction, always fighting with others.

They have a corrupt mind, and they've been robbed of the truth. False teachers could no longer apprehend God's truth because they've been so corrupted, and it's this list mixed with the false doctrine and the corrupt behavior that then culminates in the reason they peddle in these things.

## **Their Own Financial Gain**

Paul says they believe godliness is a means to a different end. That's the third broad category that Paul names. It's their selling of their teaching, the idea that they could espouse themselves to be godly so that they can be viewed as one who steps into that authority, and yet they have an utterly different means in mind.

We live in a day in which the name of Jesus is being used by people in positions of power, public figures who have much to gain by evoking the name of Jesus. I don't care which political party they're a part of. We as a church need to be discerning because Paul is speaking about those who would assume the name of Jesus for their own ends. We see this over and over in Paul's words to Timothy, where he offers a way for us to navigate and discern this. To evoke the name of Jesus and yet demonstrate a disdain and refusal to be contrite and repentant in heart is, in fact, the definition of using the Lord's name in vain.

In short, doctrine matters and character matters. It matters a whole lot. Because this is what Jesus is doing, this is what the Spirit of God is doing within each of us, renewing our minds to think properly about the world, but also guiding and shaping us so that we live rightly in the world as well. Paul has this strong concern for Timothy and his church that they would use this filter to understand and navigate the way in which Jesus' name is being used. Now he moves from how to identify the false teachers to how to properly operate with money. Look down at verse 6.

**But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 1 Timothy 6:6-8**

What a beautiful phrase. Godliness with contentment is great gain. I've named this sermon the "Paradox of Gain" because that concept of godliness with contentment is what Jesus and Paul in the New Testament offer as the means to the good life. Yet it seems so paradoxical to us. It doesn't seem like the way the world would tell us we gain or the way we get ahead.

Godliness, in Paul's vocabulary, means a genuine Christian life, a faith relationship with God, a new way of living into the kingdom of God here and now. And contentment is an excellent Pauline word. It has this idea of being found sufficient. Everything you have is enough. It's sufficient for what you need. But the connotation of Paul's word here means a

little bit more than just looking at your things and saying that this is enough. It's deeper than that. It's having all that one's needs through the indwelling of Christ within you.

**"Two things I ask of you, Lord; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God. Proverbs 30:7-9**

See, this is contentment, a rightly ordered desire for that which you need neither riches nor poverty, but only our daily bread as the Lord would teach us to pray. Paul says that this is the contentment we're after. Paul understood this concept of godliness with contentment. In fact, he embodied it quite well for us as readers in the churches in the first century. In Philippians 4:11, he would talk about this as well.

**I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength. Philippians. 4:11-13**

It's interesting because that verse is one that we tend to love to cite, and we pull it right out from Philippians 4, but it's interesting when you see it in context. The thing that Paul is writing about and trying to work out within his teachings to the church is that the thing he needs the strength of Christ to live content. He's saying that he can do all things, including the elusive contentment. It's fascinating the way that we can use that text, but it's not a carte blanche understanding of it.

"I can do all things," but for Paul, it's right in the midst of whether "I am in need or I have plenty. The thing that is most elusive is how to live content." This comes from an earlier section in Philippians where Paul is talking beautifully about how he gave up everything he had achieved, everything the world had to offer. And he said what he found was that it was empty. He said that he got to the end of that, and what I most desired was to know Christ and the power of his resurrection. So somehow he could lay his life down to experience that, which is the secret to contentedness that he talks about.

If we return to our text in 1 Timothy, what we find is the whole discussion is reframed around this idea that Paul is working out both in Philippians and here, where he says, we brought nothing into this world and we can take nothing out of it. It would be something for us to meditate on the reality that everything we accumulate in this life, we will not carry it on to the next. We bring nothing into this world, and we can take nothing out of it.

The wisdom of the scriptures and the harsh reality for us is that we will lose everything we accumulate. It's just whether it's on this side of death or on the other. But look down at verse 8 one more time because it's important that Paul makes this comment. "But if we have food and

clothing, we will be content with that." I love the heart of Paul here because he recognizes the complexity of all of our situations, and he says there is, in fact, a baseline level of need, which he calls food and clothing.

Now, the idea of the clothing is a little bit more of the idea of covering. And it's important to understand this because in the ancient world, the covering was not just like an overcoat you would have, but it functioned both as a coat and a garment, and even as shelter. I think this is a phrase you could easily translate as food and shelter. That's the baseline. Paul is naming this material.

Sufficiency is, in fact, important. There is a minimum level, a very basic level of food and shelter that Paul says you must arrive at that. We desire for all of us to have that level, and therefore, beyond that, we can be content with those things. Real contentment and material prosperity have nothing to do with one another. The desire to accumulate is not directly linked with godliness, but rather, we should be asking the question, Okay, so then how much is enough? That's a very good and difficult question to answer.

I was listening to a podcast with John Mark Comer, who gave a pretty good answer to this, and so I'm going to use his perspective on it. The wisdom in the New Testament is strong because it never gives us a number, nor does it give us a formula to figure out exactly how much is enough. It doesn't give us a percentage of the income we bring in, and the New Testament speaks very little of the Old Testament concept of the tithe. The two times it does, it seems like Jesus is pretty ambivalent towards it. So the New Testament doesn't really offer a clear cut answer, which means we have to use some wisdom to begin to understand. A wise understanding of this we want to name is that wealth is relative.

Wealth is always a relative category, and for us, living in one of the wealthiest areas in the entire world, it's hard for us to wrap our heads around the concept that wealth is relative. We don't like to hear that. We can look around in this area and think that I might have some wealth, but not that kind of wealth over there. The diversity of wealth in this area means that we have a way out of these kinds of commands thinking: "I'm not that rich." But that becomes problematic for a few reasons.

If you're looking for loopholes, that would go counter to Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount of *"Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto you."* Our posture should not be looking for ways to justify but should cause us to seek first the kingdom of God. Then that allows us to maybe unpack some of it.

Wealth is relative, particularly in America. Zoom one more layer out to the poorest five percent of Americans are wealthier than 99 percent of the rest of the world. But here's the struggle. Those who are on that lower end of the spectrum don't feel wealthy, nor are their basic needs always met. Some of you here are living in one of the wealthiest parts of our country. Still, due to all sorts of different reasons, you don't have the food and shelter that we've talked about.

So what do you do with this idea of relativity of wealth? See, here's a general principle. One way to look at this is that people should be able to look at our lifestyle, such as the car we drive, the house we live in, the clothes we wear, the number of times we go out to eat, and if they were to guess our household income, the principle is that they should guess lower than what we make.

The principle here isn't a performative spirituality. It's not to just come on Sunday and wear your worst outfits and drive the clunky car, whatever, to somehow make it appear like that. But my logic is this: they should guess that we make less than we do because we are intentionally living beneath our means to create margins in which to be a generous, open-handed people.

The idea that when they look at us, and hopefully there's enough nuance in this, they see not a performative spirituality, but after our basic necessities are met, that excess amount of income, we live well beneath that to create margin to be more generous. Most of us live on the line of our income, and we spend most of the dollars that come in. And so, therefore, when we're called to be generous, we have no margin in our lives. That principle carries over to time and talents as well. If your calendar is so full that you never have the opportunity for a holy disruption, that's a problem. If you don't have time to love your neighbors, I don't know how you can live those commands.

Apply that to this concept of budgeting. The way to answer that is to try to understand where the margin is in our budget, where we have space to relinquish some of those funds. However you decide to do that as a way, not so much just for the gift that it is to give, that's important, but also naming that greed has a corrosive element to our souls, and so we need to learn to live with less.

**Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 1 Timothy 6:9-10**

Paul shifts now to the very clear danger of greed. Money is neutral unto itself. It is neither good nor bad, but we often forget that money is powerful, and so the wealth that is powerful has a hold on our lives and hearts. It plunges us into ruin and destruction. Just think of the words that Paul is using here. This idea of falling into temptation. All of these things are beyond the control of the individual, but rather it creates the environment in which they can get caught up in this type of problem.

But notice where verse 10 goes. It pushes it beyond just the trappings and temptations of the individual and moves into the systemic problems of wealth. Paul says that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Now, I don't think it takes too much convincing of this truth, but we recognize that in our world, so much is fueled by the quest for more. But it can also, on the systemic side, do a lot of good. All the food pantries that fill the gap of basic necessities for the poor foundations that help alleviate those on the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum.

Funds that go towards resourcing under-resourced schools. But again, on the flip side of it, we can quickly understand and empathize with what Paul's saying that money is the root of all kinds of evil.

Think about a pornography industry with its insatiable stirring of sexual deviance towards monetary gain. Billions of dollars have been made and built on an industry that exploits men and women to extract a dollar. Or think of the ecological disasters from corporate disregard for the effects on the environment to create a cheaper product. We can all see that the cheapening of products comes on the back of those across the world who work for less than a livable wage. Money is a root of all kinds of evil, and many of those things seem beyond us.

It's hard for us sitting here in this moment. How do we tackle all of those things? And I don't know the answer to that, but I do know that at least trying to attempt to live a little more open-handed with our things is the start. I don't know how to solve all those issues, but I do know that Jesus is teaching us to step into a way of life that tries to alleviate some of those tensions, at least in the way I monitor my budget. The love of money is far more dangerous than any of us wants to admit. So how do we work against that?

**But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen. 1 Timothy 6:11-16**

Notice the active word "fight." Paul shifts now and looks at Timothy and says that he is the chief among those who are to live in this direction. There's a weight on religious leaders to abide by these types of teachings. And unfortunately, there have been a litany of cases in which people in my position, standing behind pulpits like this, abuse and coerce for the sake of financial gain, as Paul had just named.

So he begins by telling Timothy to flee the love of money and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. But this has always been the role of the pastor in many ways, to follow Jesus just a few steps ahead of the congregation and try as best they can to emulate him. So that when you look at us, we are a living monument for what is possible in following Jesus. We fall unbelievably short of this often.

But in short, Paul's saying that the leaders of these communities are to embody and be that living example for the congregation to look at and walk alongside of. That's why Paul, in other places, tells the church to



follow him as he follows Christ. Then he says the proper way to steward wealth.

**Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. vv. 17-18**

The first command is that we must recenter the object of our hope. We've hit on this throughout this series because I really believe that what you hold as the object of hope in your life is where you will live leaning towards. Often, it is far more subconscious than we care to admit. Very few of us are able to name the thing we are living for. But rather, if you were to evaluate your calendar and budget, that might point a little bit to where the object of your hope lies. But what is this idea of hope? Here's the definition that is helpful.

Hope is the joyous anticipation of good that is not yet here or is unseen. The joyous anticipation of good. Think about that in relation to how you view money. Is there a sense within you of a joyous anticipation of the good? I personally know I have watched and refreshed my little Amazon thing to see how many stops away the delivery is before it comes. There's something about that moment, isn't there? A joyous anticipation of the good.

Now, that's a bit of a trite example, but if we were to extrapolate that a little bit further, maybe it's a promotion, maybe it's an upturn in the market. Maybe it's an acquisition of another business or company. Maybe it's whatever you could imagine. But the idea of putting your hope in wealth hits home. Paul says to command those who are rich not to be arrogant and not to put their hope in wealth, which is fleeting. Says it's so easily here one day and gone the next.

It's a good evaluation tool to be thinking through. What is it that I'm hoping for? What is it that I get joy-filled about? It isn't that you can't get excited about those things. It's aiming towards that ultimate hope, that big longing, your properly ordered loves.

But then Paul says there's a second command. He says to first command those who are rich in this present world, not to be arrogant, nor to put their hope in wealth. And then in verse 18, he commands them to do good. Because it's not just the negative aspects of wealth, but rather for those who have means, he commands them to do good, to channel that as the abundance that flows through us into the world around us.

For Paul to do good is, in fact, to be rich. That is the good life, not in the accumulation of wealth and possessions, but in the service of others. Describing the outworking and outward life of those who are wealthy and stewarded well is to take a posture that recognizes their responsibility to others.

This text exactly mirrors Jesus' teaching from last week in the Sermon on the Mount to not store up treasures on Earth, but treasures in heaven. The wealthy are to assume this healthy detachment towards

their wealth, using it for the others. This is the perspective in which we come. I would summarize it this way.

The responsibility and proper attitude toward wealth come from a proper understanding of God. That's the object of our hope and responsibility to others. But here's the problem with all this, and this contentment is that it sounds excellent. I will definitely be content as soon as "fill in the blank," I get that job, that offer's accepted on the house, as I drive this car, or as soon as I get that office or position.

Most of us want to believe that this contentment teaching is about someone else. But may I remind you that Jesus' first listeners, the overwhelming majority of them, were not wealthy. They were quite poor, living paycheck to paycheck in our vernacular, and yet Jesus somehow had a word for them. Twenty-five percent of his teachings were on wealth. It would not do us well to think that these kinds of teachings are for others over there, because the reality is that greed is not a condition of a certain tax bracket. It's a posture of the heart.

It's a way in which you see the world, and so you can be of no means and be quite greedy, or you can be of significant means and be quite generous, or anywhere in between. Jesus doesn't need our money. The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. What he's after is how we liberate our own souls from the tyranny of more. That's what Jesus is trying to teach us, and to teach us how to live open-handed.

We work on this in two directions. We pursue contentment by working towards generosity and away from greed. We have to go in both of those directions. First, contentment moves us away from greed.

Listen to the way Rebecca DeYoung, in her excellent book, *Glittering Vices*, writes of the vice of avarice, which is an archaic English way of saying greed, which comes from the Latin word to crave, and that's a helpful understanding of greed. She writes,

**The inner condition of the heart gives rise to greed's outer manifestations, which typically include excessive acquisition and excessive retaining of money or possessions...We are greedy when we excessively love or desire money or any possession money can buy. The greedy person's overattachment to things wears many faces—an overflowing shopping cart or a single cherished purchase, a stock portfolio that is aggressive or conservative, a wallet full of credit cards or a safety deposit box with a few carefully guarded treasures, a garage full of expensive cars or a closet full of great deals. Greed can captivate the young, the old, and everyone in between. In all its varied expressions of gain and grasping, however, greed is a perverted love. Its profile has distorted desire written all over it. Rebecca DeYoung**

What makes her critique so piercing is that it names that greed not just a behavior but a disordered love. It's not simply about having too much or spending too much. It's about an inward condition, a craving, a restless desire that we're aiming at something less than the thing that will satisfy it. The object of our hope is God. It's a subtle sickness of the soul that buys into the myth of more. And yet again, as DeYoung reminds

us, this craving is a distortion. It's a twisted love that Jesus wants to heal within us. And here's maybe one of the paths to that. You realize there are two ways to get rich. You can make more money and just keep making money. Or the Christian tradition would offer the practice of simplicity, where you can learn to desire less.

The latter will cost you significantly less. Quite literally. How do we learn to identify and seek first the kingdom of God to where that love consumes us? I believe, as we fall more in love with Jesus, as a preacher, hyperbolically as this may sound, I believe the other desires begin to take care of themselves when we have the object of our love. The more we lean into the fact that Jesus really is the thing that satisfies.

We live in one of the wealthiest areas in the world. The median income at this level is double the national median income. We don't have to live like everyone around us. This is one of the hard things that I'm trying to wrestle with. Even if you can afford it, you don't have to live like your neighbors. You don't have to keep up with the Joneses. You don't have to get that promotion that'll require 15 more hours a week of work. You don't have to achieve the external markers of success to live joyfully and peacefully in the kingdom of God.

You don't have to chase more and more and never feel satisfied. You can be free from all of that, but it will cost you. It will cost you some pain as your loves are reordered. But the weight of the good life, Paul says, when I have food and clothing, I can be contented with that. Not because he's abandoned this life, but because he's found true life.

You see that the parable that I often cite is this man's walking through a field, and he comes across this treasure, and in his joy, he sells everything he has to buy the field because he found the actual treasure. You don't have to keep up with everyone around you. The wisdom of Jesus is that this is not the path to the good life, but rather, somehow, contentment bursts into that.

Secondly, contentment moves us towards generosity. Suppose greed is a disordered love that turns us inward. Contentment is a healed love that turns us outward. Generosity is the natural overflow of a healed love, a healed, distorted love. Richard Foster, in his great book, *The Freedom of Simplicity*, writes of this tension between the inward reality that overflows into our outward life. He says,

**Simplicity is an inward reality that can be seen in an outward lifestyle. We must have both; to neglect either end of this tension is disastrous... The outer expression of simplicity must flow from the inner resources. It's like learning to walk in the Spirit that builds the life of purity, unity, and grace. There is an inwardness that is central to our task; without it, all is lost. We delude ourselves, however, if we think we can possess the inward reality of simplicity without its having a profound**

**effect upon the way we live; the tension must be maintained. Richard Foster**

Foster is reminding us that by extension, generosity is part of the way to contentment. It's the outward expression that gives shape to the inward reality. We often think that we will be more generous when we feel it. We'd never say that, but we tend to think that when we feel things, that will propel our actions.

But I would say that in all of life, we more readily act our way into new feelings than we feel our way into new actions. Practice generosity even when it hurts. You may think that you don't want to do it, but it may, in fact, be the means by which your heart becomes more generous.

It's the same as all the practices. Trying to do these things that are counterintuitive because they open up your life to the work of the Holy Spirit's inward work. Contentment moves us towards generosity.

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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