

# A Resilient Faith

## FINDING HOPE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

### Growth Group Questions November 17, 2024 “Generous”

#### Context:

1 John was written to encourage believers who were not only facing persecution because of their faith, but also being inundated with false teaching. It is not certain when these letters were written, or even the exact order of the letters. In all three letters we see John acting much like a shepherd as he teaches, comforts, encourages and challenges his listeners and reminds them of the joy that is theirs because they know Jesus.

John has been building a case for what we read in verses 16-18. He wants the people to know that love is the evidence of a life that is rooted in God. He then gives the ultimate example of love by talking about what Jesus has done for us. Jesus showed his love for us and the world by sacrificing his life. To choose to lay down one's life is a deliberate and willful act. Jesus chose that path to show his love for us so that we might be right with God

John knows that most people will not be required to give one's life, but everyone does need to look out for brothers and sisters who are in need. Believers are to apply their Christian love in their own context and “see” one another. The verb “sees” in verse 17 is more than just a casual, passing glance. Instead, it is a continual, contemplative observation in which the beholder pauses “to appreciate and understand the circumstance of the case.”

Johns is saying that if you have the means to meet the need, and yet choose to turn your back on the situation you do not fully understand the love of Jesus. See James 2:15-16.

Love expresses itself in deeds. The quality of truth is added because even actions can be hypocritical and John's challenge in these verses is for people in the church to be genuine in their love. One of the things that distinguishes a child of God is love, a love that originates in God and displays itself in actions of self-sacrifice and generosity.



## **Scripture:**

### **1 John 3:16-18**

<sup>16</sup> This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup> If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? <sup>18</sup> Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

### **Deuteronomy 15:7-11**

<sup>7</sup> If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. <sup>8</sup> Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need. <sup>9</sup> Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: “The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near,” so that you do not show ill will toward the needy among your fellow Israelites and give them nothing. They may then appeal to the Lord against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. <sup>10</sup> Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. <sup>11</sup> There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.

### **Acts 13:1-3**

<sup>13</sup> <sup>1</sup> Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. <sup>2</sup> While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” <sup>3</sup> So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

### **Hebrews 13:15-16**

<sup>15</sup> Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. <sup>16</sup> And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

### **David Brooks, *The Second Mountain, The Quest for a Moral Life***

“When people make generosity part of their daily routine, they refashion who they are. The interesting thing about your personality, your essence, is that it is not more or less permanent like your leg bone. Your essence is changeable, like your mind. Every action you take, every thought you have, changes you, even if just a little, making you a little more elevated or a little more degraded. If you do a series of good deeds, the habit of other-centeredness becomes gradually engraved into your life. It becomes easier to do good deeds down the line.”



**Questions:**

1. What is generosity? What does it mean to live a generous life?
2. What does the Bible tell us about generosity or being generous?
3. What does it mean to “not love in words or tongue but in deed and truth”? (1 John 3:18) Can you cite examples of “loving in deed and truth” rather than in words?
4. In both 1 John 3:16-18 and Deuteronomy 15:7-11, we are told to “see” others and their needs and, then, to respond to those needs with generosity. What can keep us from truly seeing others and their needs?
5. Pastor Paul spoke about the importance of being generous in our relationships. What does it mean to be generous in our relationships, and how can we better practice generosity in our relationships with others?
6. In Hebrews 13:15-16, we are told to “continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise.” What is a sacrifice of praise and why is it important?
7. Pastor Paul said that generosity begins with praising God. What does that mean to you?
8. In his book, *The Second Mountain*, David Brooks says: “When people make generosity part of their daily routine, they refashion who they are.” How does making generosity part of our daily routine refashion us?
9. What can each of us do to make generosity part of our daily routine?

**Sermon Questions:**

1. Where have you been too busy making a point instead of making a difference?
2. What’s a tangible act of generosity that you can participate in this week?

