

Growing Generosity 1

by Greg Sharples

Why are we doing a three week series on Giving? Because there seems to be a connection between our ability to follow Jesus and our use of money.

Jesus talks about money a lot. He speaks about it more than faith and prayer combined. 11 out of the 40 parable he tells are about money? What is the deal with this?

Well in Mt 15:8 he says "...people honour me with there lips but their hearts are far from me". Jesus has a problem with folk whose talk and walk don't match up. In Mt 6:9-12 he says "where your treasure is there your heart will also be". As we look at where we spend our money we see the things give us a sense of value and the things we love. There's a connection between our use of money and our love for Jesus!

So, we're covering three areas:

- Why give?
- How much?
- What stops us?

Why give?

Luke 18:18 - 30

18 A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

19 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. **20** You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honour your father and mother.'^[a]"

21 "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said.

22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

23 When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy. **24** Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! **25** Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

26 Those who heard this asked, “Who then can be saved?”

27 Jesus replied, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.”

28 Peter said to him, “We have left all we had to follow you!”

29 “Truly I tell you,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God **30** will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.”

What are you searching for? In this story we see a guy whose looking for eternal life - this is not just 'an afterlife', but a life that is bubbling, effervescent. A life with the qualities of Jesus himself - things like love, joy, peace and patience (Gal 6). He wants to live in "The Kingdom of God" (v24). A place or environment which is without brokenness and overflowing with good.

But, and it is a big but, money seems to be a hindrance to entering into and living this kind of life. In verse 25 we see Jesus saying money will stop you living this effervescent life... 'it's easier for a camel to fit through an eye of a needle...'

Why is this? You've heard it said that the love of money is the root of all evil. Money has this kind of gravitational pull that makes us revolve around it. It seems **the more we possess the more it possesses us**. Jesus invites us to **throw off the tyranny of stuff, so we can live under his love**. His love is real - he died for us. Money can't do that. Giving helps us step into his love and throw off this tyranny.

Ok, so how much do we give?

Well according v22, it is EVERYTHING! A big ask. What Jesus does with the rich ruler is expose an idol - a false God that will never satisfy. How does that translate for us? Well if you look at your bank statement - what does it say is most important to you? What would it say your greatest love is? House? Car? Food and drink? Jesus himself? v22 goes

on to tell us to give or distribute our money. Distribution is an interesting word - it implies planning. By giving in a planned way, a committed way it can help grow generosity. From the church end of things, there is no sense that we are entitled to receive the gifts of the people, and yet, if you are excited about what God is doing here, help us budget and plan so we can play a more effective part in God's mission here.

What stops us giving?

a. Our organisation

Literally not being prepared. Coming to Church with no money. That will stop us giving.

b. Our organisation

This time from the other side. Do you know where the money goes? We are circulating an overview of our accounts because we want to be transparent about how we use the money that is given. We are working through a process over these three weeks, thinking through:

- What do I currently give?
- What could I give?
- What will I give?

As we do this, our hope is that by the end of this series, you'll have prayed through what you want to give to him for his mission here. That this prayer will be informed by helpful information about how we spend your gift. On the 23rd Feb there'll be an opportunity to actually sign up. To do a standing order and commit to regular, planned giving with your eyes open to where it goes.

c. Our fear of lack

One of the biggest restrictions that inhibits our giving is our fear that we won't have enough. For some of us we fear not being able to pay the mortgage or put food on the table for the kids. For others though the fear is not being able to buy whatever I want whenever I want it. That my holidays won't always be sunny and my car won't always be new.

A couple of years ago Sophie and I heard a story about a guy who received a gift which meant he had no mortgage. God asked him to sell his house and give the money away. He then had to buy a new house with a mortgage again. When we heard that story we saw his freedom and we felt a conviction from the Holy Spirit, that Jesus needs to be number one on bank statement. We work hard to make that the case.

I wonder can you imagine a church where our desire to bless, overcame our fear of lack? Can you imagine the type of Christian leaders that would release? The kind of spiritual parents we might become? Can you imagine the way that would affect the poorest and most affluent parts of our town? Can you imagine a church that communicates the generosity of God in that kind of authentic way?

So:

- What do you give?
- Where does Jesus feature on your bank statement?
- What stops you giving more?

THE RICH RULER //////////////

GROWING GENEROSITY



THE RICH RULER //////////////

"These people honour me with their
lips,
but their hearts are far from me."

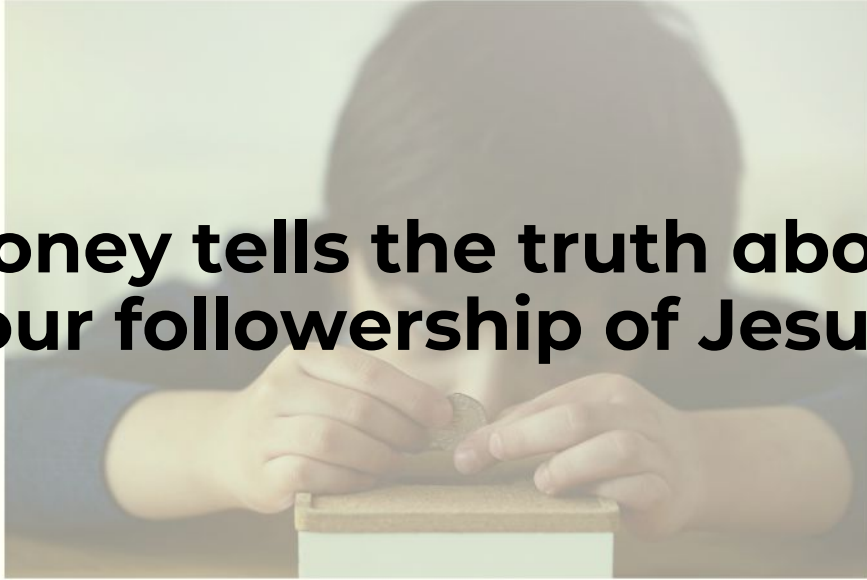
Mt 15:8

For where your treasure is, there your
heart will be also.

Mt 6:21

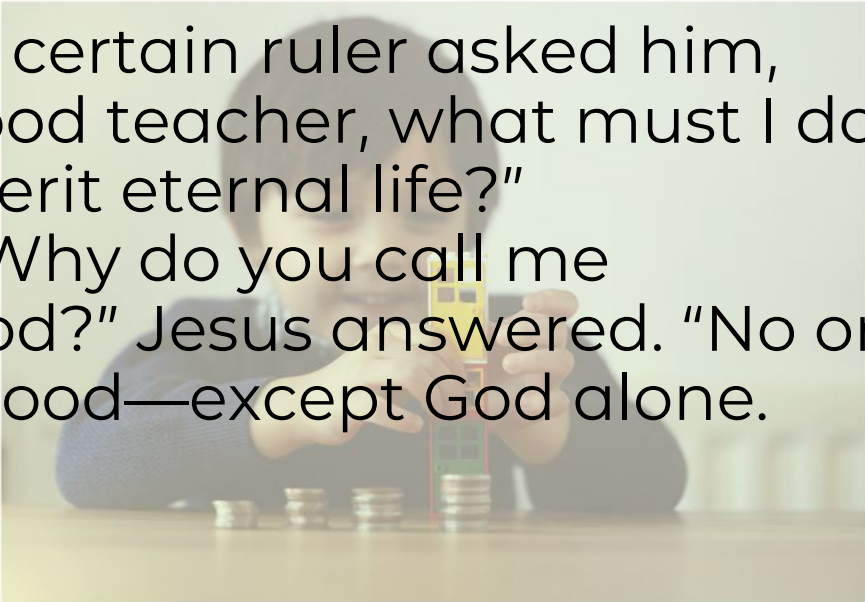


**Money tells the truth about
our followership of Jesus**



A young boy with dark hair, wearing a blue sweater, is sitting at a wooden table. He is focused on stacking several coins into a tall, narrow tower. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The text "Why Give?" is overlaid in the center of the image.

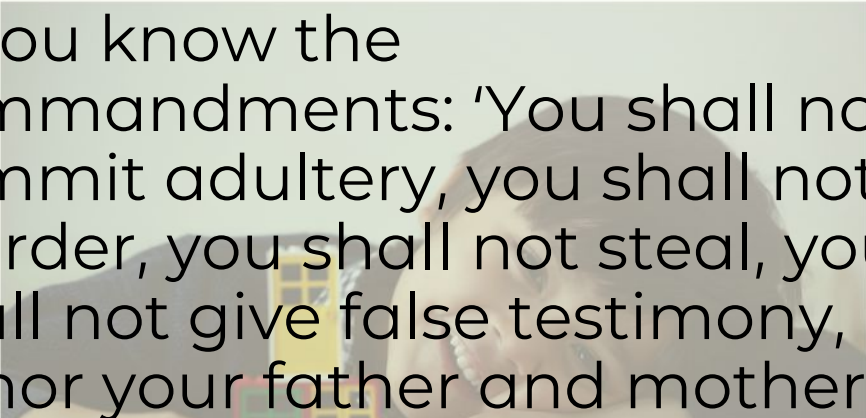
Why Give?

A young boy with dark hair, wearing a blue sweater, is sitting at a wooden table. He is focused on stacking several coins into a tall, narrow tower. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

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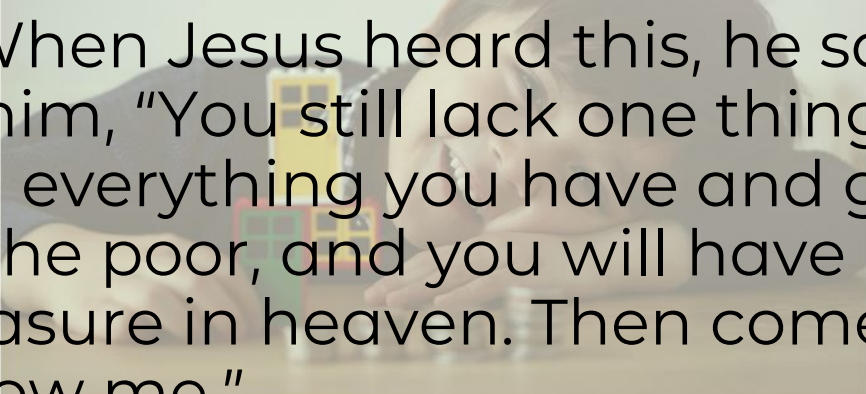
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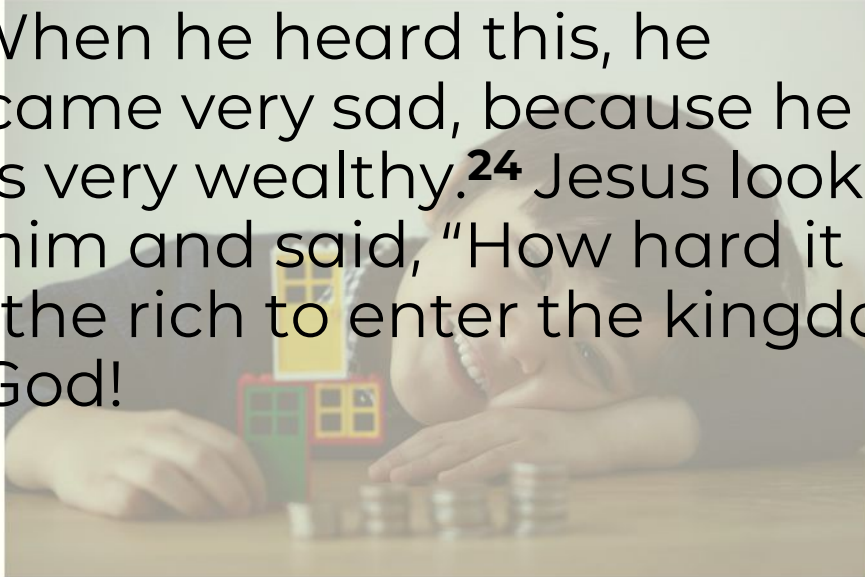
A young boy with dark hair is sitting at a wooden table, playing with colorful blocks. He is looking down at the blocks with a focused expression. The background is slightly blurred, showing a dark surface, possibly a wall or a piece of furniture.

21 "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said.

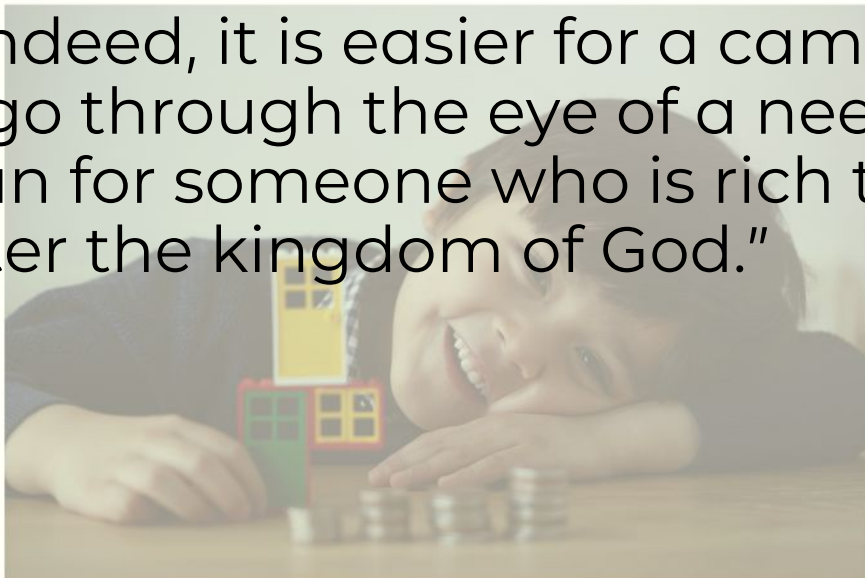
22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

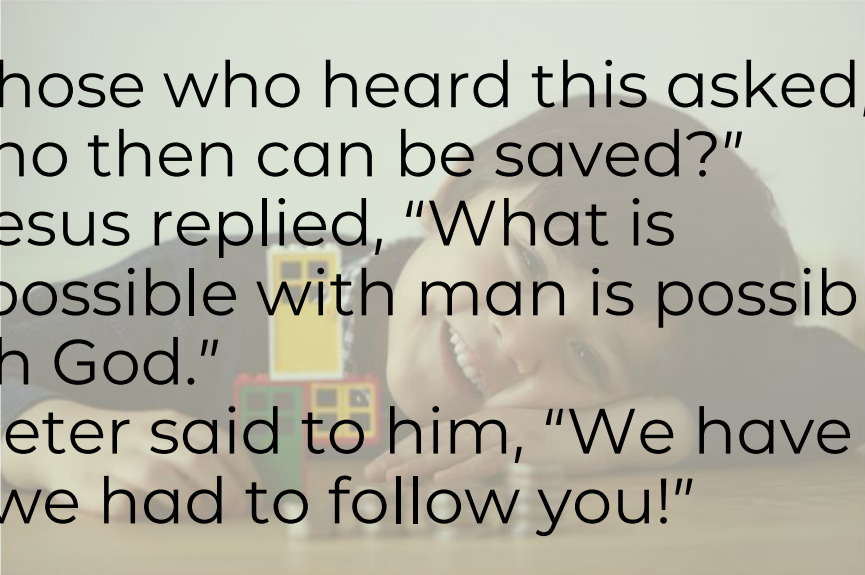
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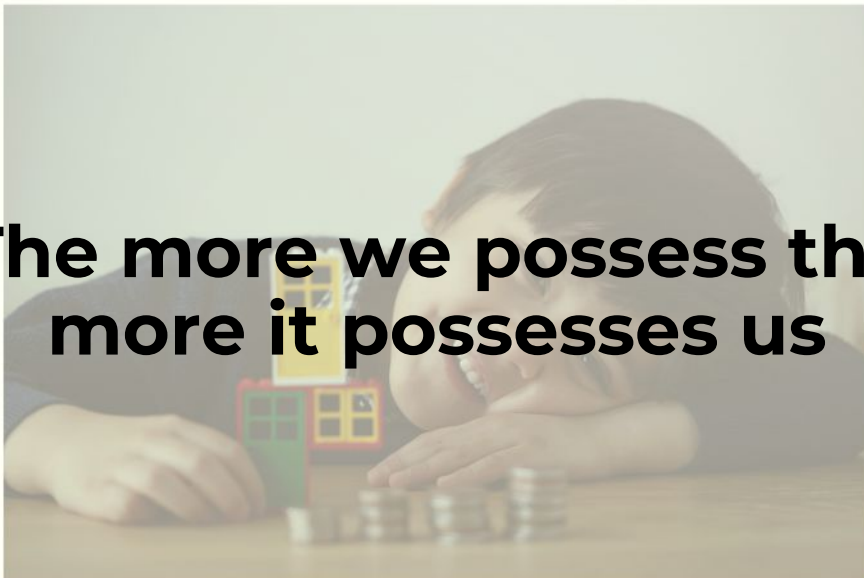


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The more we possess the more it possesses us

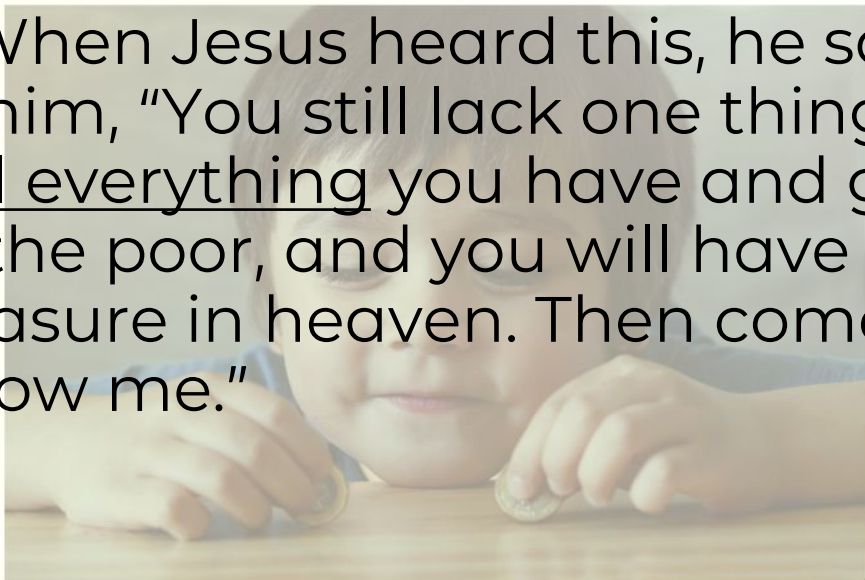


**Throw off the tyranny of
stuff so we can live under
Jesus's love**

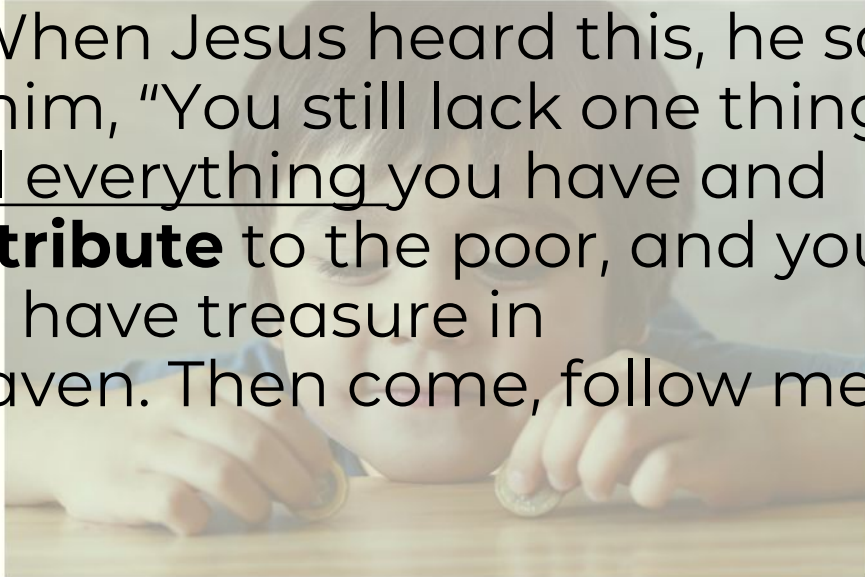




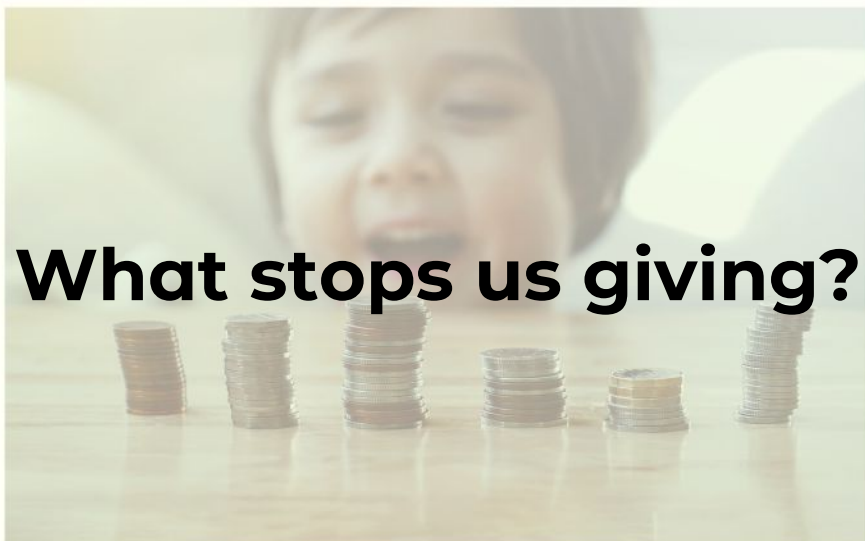
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22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and **distribute** to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

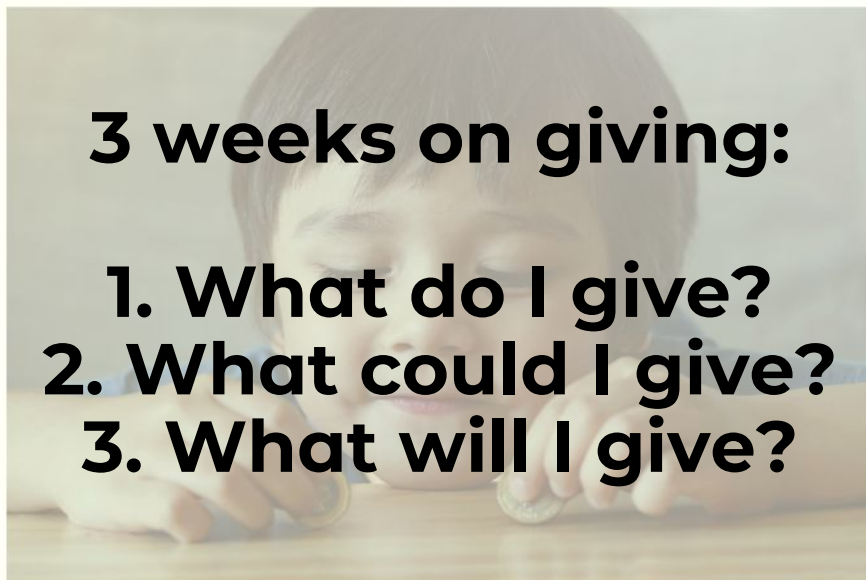


What stops us giving?





Our organisation



3 weeks on giving:

- 1. What do I give?**
- 2. What could I give?**
- 3. What will I give?**



Our fear of lack



**Imagine:
A Church where our desire
to bless overcomes our fear
of lack!**



What do you give?

THE RICH RULER // // // // //



**GROWING
GENEROSITY**

THE RICH RULER // // // // //