

# Serving Like Christ

## Lesson 8

Unit Two: Self-Esteem

Scripture: Psalm 112:5; Acts 20:35; Philippians 2:4

Life Focus: We are *not* number one!

### Distracting Wealth

A few members from fledgling churches in Ukraine visited sponsoring congregations in the United States. Coming from a land suffering from widespread poverty, these new Christians were amazed at the abundance they saw in America. Concerned, they spoke to the leaders of their host congregations. "We see why it is so difficult to be a Christian in your country," they said. "Your wealth must be a terrible distraction."

So true! Abundance never seems to bring contentment and gratitude, but leads to the trap of materialism. From the Scriptures we can find some basic principles that allow us to crown our self-esteem with generosity rather than debasing it with selfishness. God has provided for us out of His *plenty* and gives us a *pattern* for using it wisely.

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### Hide It in Your Heart

. . . not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

—*Philippians 2:4*

For a pre-session or take-home activity, lead kids in memorizing this key verse, using the puzzle found on your *Young Teen Resources* CD.

### Psalm 112:5

<sup>5</sup>Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice.

### Acts 20:35

<sup>35</sup>In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

### Philippians 2:4

<sup>4</sup>. . . not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

### Today's Challenge

*How hard is it for you to put the needs of others over your need for stuff? After being a part of this lesson, see how your priorities have changed.*

#### Step 1

##### Setting the Stage

*Discuss the impact of selfishness and of generosity.*

#### Step 2

##### Searching the Word

*Articulate biblical principles that allow us to live generously.*

#### Step 3

##### Making It Real

*Apply biblical principles of generosity to present-day situations.*

#### Step 4

##### Living It Out

*Evaluate the degree of selfishness in your life.*

# Encountering God's Word

## PROVIDED Philippians 2:4

When Paul wrote to the Philippians from his Roman imprisonment, he knew what was on their minds. If their leader was imprisoned, how much longer before *they* were under attack? Time to look out for number one!

In response to that thinking, Paul urged them to have the kind of attitude that is not self-centered. Because Christians share the same love, spirit, and purpose (Philippians 2:2), Paul told them to do nothing out of "selfish ambition or vain conceit" (v. 3). Being secure in their position as beloved children of God, they were to exercise humility and

**God gives us enough to share.**

consider others as more important than themselves. Paul issued a challenge to "not [be] looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (v. 4). Note that Paul doesn't advise people not to value themselves at all, but rather says "in humility value others above yourselves" (v. 3). Acting in one's own self-interest is a natural instinct. Yet Christians are commanded to care about the well-being of others first. In practical terms our material blessings have two purposes: to take care of ourselves and to share with others.

Financial planner Larry Burkett encouraged Bible-believing parents to teach their children the basics of budgeting at an early age. He suggested that children learn to place their earnings into four categories: spending, short-term saving, long-term saving, and giving. In God's economy, there is always enough for all four.

## PLENTY Psalm 112:5

A common assumption in the Western world is that economics is a "zero sum game." In other words, there are only a set number of goods in the world. Therefore, when one person has wealth, he must have taken it from someone else. When someone gives goods away, he takes a smaller slice of the economic pie so someone else may have a fair share.

**Blessings come from God's abundance.**

An ancient psalm gives another view. A person is not blessed materially because he takes from those who do not have. Rather, people who "are generous and lend freely" will receive even more goodness (Psalm 112:5). "Wealth and riches are in their houses" (v. 3), even though they have "freely scattered their gifts to the poor" (v. 9). The world says, "The more you take, the more you have." The Bible talks about wealth built by generosity.

The reason for this distinction is a proper understanding of the source of wealth. The amount of blessings is not fixed but comes from God's unlimited supply. That is why God challenged those who out of fear refused to tithe, thinking they were giving away what they might need. "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse. . . . Test me in this . . . and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it" (Malachi 3:10).

Burkett pointed to some phenomena in our culture that tend to counter the idea that God is the source of all wealth. The huge salaries of professional athletes, actors, and musicians cause some children to unrealistically desire one of these professions. The rise of state and multistate lotteries has given the idea that wealth can be achieved by gambling. We must learn that security is not found in a basketball scholarship or a scratch-off ticket, but by being faithful to the manager of all wealth.

## PATTERN Acts 20:35

At the end of his third missionary journey, Paul called for the elders from the church in Ephesus to meet him in nearby Miletus. In the course of giving a tearful farewell address, Paul reminded them how he had brought them the gospel at great personal risk and did not hesitate to proclaim to them "the whole will of God" (Acts 20:17-27). He urged these elders to follow his example in being selfless shepherds of the flock. Sacrifice from leaders would be necessary to protect the church from "savage wolves" and false teachers (vv. 28-31). Like Paul, the leaders should work hard to help the weak (v. 35).

**God's faithful servants have set an example of generosity for others to follow.**

Finally, Paul said they were to remember a saying of Jesus, which Paul himself had taught them: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (v. 35). These precise words of Jesus are not recorded anywhere in the four Gospels, but the overall principle fills His sermons and is the theme of His life. Jesus "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

The lure of materialism is great. The enemy wishes that we fall into this trap and live selfishly. Yet by trusting that God will give us enough to share, recognizing that God himself is the source of all good gifts, and studying the examples of the saints of God who have gone before us, we can live selflessly in a selfish world.

Life Focus: We are *not* number one!

Use one of the following activities to help your students discuss the impact of selfishness and of generosity.

### QUICK STEP Selfish vs. Generous

Have your students turn to page 32 in the student books. Take turns reading the scenarios one at a time. After each, discuss the following:

- Describe the long-term effects that could happen if the first person in each situation acted selfishly.
- Describe the long-term effects that could happen if the first person in each situation acted generously.

Encourage your students to really think long-term (affecting someone's self-esteem for life, helping a person turn his life around, etc.).

Lead into Bible study by saying: **One act of selfishness or generosity can make a major difference. Yet it can be difficult for us to be generous all the time. God gives us some principles in His Word that can help us lead a more generous lifestyle.**

### Cutthroat

Select two of your more competitive students to play this game. Give each player one red and one black checker. Explain the rules: **For each round, each of you will place one of your checkers in my hand, without showing anyone. If you both give me a red checker, you each get 5 points. If you both give me a black checker, you each lose 10 points. If one black and one red checker are submitted, the person who gave the black checker gets 15 points and the person who gave the red checker loses 15 points. You may talk with each other before each round.**

Keep a running tally on the board. Obviously, each player could gain high scores simply by both agreeing to submit red checkers. But soon, one will realize that by betraying the other player and submitting a black checker, he can gain more points. The betrayed student will likely counter by submitting a black checker, and soon both scores will be far below zero!

Stop the game after selfishness has sabotaged the efforts of both students. Have students explain what they saw and why they believe it happened. Lead into Bible study by saying: **Yes, selfishness destroyed both competitors in this contest. They both could have done much better! Yet it is difficult to resist selfishness at times. God gives us some principles in His Word that can help us lead a more generous lifestyle.**

### The Scene

For an opening activity based on a current events, download The Scene online. Go to <http://www.21stcc.com/> and click on "Downloads." There you'll find a free article with discussion questions to begin this week's lesson.



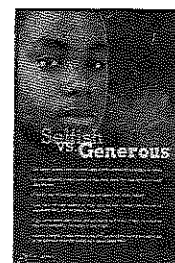
Time

10 minutes

discussion

Materials

Young Teen Student



Time

10 minutes

game

Materials

2 red checkers, 2 black checkers, whiteboard, dry-erase marker

news



## Step 2 Searching the Word

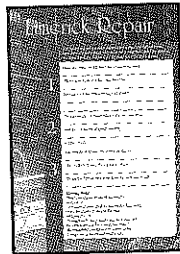
Life Focus: We are *not* number one!

Use one of the following activities to help your students articulate biblical principles that allow us to live generously.

Time  
20 minutes

puzzle

Materials  
Young Teen Student, Bibles, pens



### QUICK STEP Limerick Repair

Turn with students to page 33 in their student books. Ask them to place the missing lines and references in the limericks to state biblical principles. Allow them to work individually or in small groups.

Recite the completed limericks when everyone is finished:

Here's some words  
for Christians  
who dare  
*To step out on faith  
and really care:*  
"Don't just look out  
for number one.  
*Give your stuff to  
some who have  
none,*  
Because God  
provides enough  
to share."

Verse: Philippians  
2:4

*Don't be afraid to  
give to the poor  
Or lend freely to  
those at your  
door.  
'Cause your  
generosity  
Will not cause your  
poverty,  
For whatever you  
have, God surely  
has more!*

Verse: Psalm 112:5

The words of Jesus,  
the work of  
Paul—  
*Throughout  
history, God's  
people stand tall.  
They gave all that  
they had away.  
Their faithfulness  
still speaks today:*  
"Be giving like  
others who have  
heeded God's  
call."

Verse: Acts 20:35

Have students share their answers. Briefly explain each principle for living a selfless life found in these Scriptures, referring to *Encountering God's Word* as necessary.

Time  
20 minutes

art

Materials  
paper, pens, markers, Bibles, copies  
of *Encountering God's Word*

### Bumper Stickers, T-shirts, Buttons

Divide the class into groups of three to five students. Give each group a Bible, a copy of *Encountering God's Word*, and art supplies. Their job is to take one of the lesson Scriptures and create a bumper sticker, T-shirt, or button that would summarize the message.

As students work, move among the groups to help them. Refer to *Encountering God's Word* as needed to help summarize each principle and give ideas for their art projects.

When group work is done, have groups explain their work. Comment as necessary to make sure all points are made clearly and completely.

**Life Focus:** We are *not* number one!

Use one of the following activities to help your students apply biblical principles of generosity to present-day situations.

## QUICK STEP Money, Money, Money

Divide your class into three groups and have them turn to page 34 in the student books. Assign each group one of the scenarios. The groups will need to act out the situations. They must portray what would happen if the families of these three people confronted them about being selfish or thanked them for being generous. In their skits, groups should use the principles learned in today's Bible study.

Write the three points from *Encountering God's Word* on the board for your students' reference. We see each character matching up with each main point in this way:

**Emily=Provided:** She needs to know God wants her to share what He's given her (Philippians 2:4).

**Jake=Plenty:** He needs to know God will continue to bless him if he is generous and lends to others freely (Psalm 112:5).

**Lillian=Pattern:** She should be praised for setting an example of generosity for others to follow (Acts 20:35).

After some time to prepare, allow the groups to act out their skits. Then discuss: **Would your friends, family, or others around you be generous or selfish if they were in these same situations? Explain. Think about the people you encounter each week at school, at home, at the mall, etc. Are most of these people generally selfish or generous? Lead into the final lesson step by saying: Selfishness is an easy trap to fall into. Let's look at our own lives and see how we measure up.**

## Proverb Rewrite

Write the following proverbs on the board:

- You only go around once in life, so grab for all the gusto you can.
- Whoever dies with the most toys wins.
- Look out for number one!
- Follow the golden rule—whoever has the gold makes the rules!
- Money is our way of keeping score, and I want to win.

Students should break into small groups of two or three and select one of the proverbs on the board. Groups should decide why the Scriptures just discussed in the Bible study disagree with the proverb they chose. Then the groups should rewrite that proverb to make it agree with the principles studied today. (Write the three main points of *Encountering God's Word* on the board for their reference.)

Allow students to share and explain their new proverbs. Lead into the final lesson step by saying: **God's principles about generosity and selfishness are very appropriate for life today. By applying them, we can avoid the trap of arrogance and selfishness. Let's look at our own lives and see how we measure up to God's standards.**

**Time**

20 minutes

**drama**

**Materials**

*Young Teen Student*, whiteboard, dry-erase marker



**Time**

20 minutes

**writing**

**Materials**

whiteboard, dry-erase marker, pens, paper, Bibles

## Step 4 Living It Out

**Life Focus:** We are *not* number one!

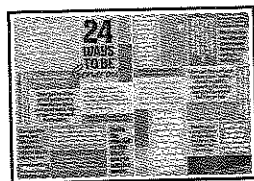
Use one of the following activities to help your students evaluate the degree of selfishness in their lives.

**Time**  
10 minutes

**challenge**

**Materials**

*Young Teen Resources* Sheet 4 (or  
*Young Teen Resources* CD, projection  
equipment)



**Time**  
10 minutes

**self-evaluation**

**Materials**

*Young Teen Student*



### QUICK STEP 24 Ways to Be Generous

Post Sheet 4 (or project it from the CD). The poster contains 24 ideas for increasing one's generosity.

Briefly discuss the ideas from the poster. Students should feel free to bring up some additional suggestions as well. Which ones seem the most doable for individual students? for the class as a whole? Which ones would they have difficulty doing?

**Say:** We know what God expects of us. So let's challenge ourselves to take steps this week to have a more generous attitude. Let's look for opportunities to give of our time and our possessions.

Close in prayer, confessing times of selfishness and committing to strive for God's standards of generosity.

Distribute ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine*. You can either print these articles and hand them out or e-mail them to your students each week.

### Don't Mess with My Stuff!

Let students break into small groups of two or three and turn to page 55 of their student books. Listed there are situations to get them thinking about whether they struggle with selfishness or whether they are generally generous. After some time, gather back together and have groups report on the areas in which they struggle or are generous.

**Say:** We know what God expects of us. So let's challenge ourselves to take steps this week to have a more generous attitude. Let's look for opportunities to give of our time and our possessions. Close in prayer, confessing times of selfishness and committing to strive for God's standards of generosity.

Distribute ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine*. You can either print these articles and hand them out or e-mail them to your students each week.

**ENCOUNTER™**

Here's what's in ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* this week:

- "You Are a Gift!"
- "Skates"
- "That's Epic!"