

### Hold On Loosely

by Dave Rueter

#### A Study on Stewardship

##### Introduction

We know from Ecclesiastes 5:19 that, "Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God." Life and all that we enjoy as a part of our lives are thus gifts from God. Our sinful nature warps our understanding of God's gracious giving, resulting in a dysfunctional concept of possession. We stop seeing our possessions as gifts in which we are called to be good stewards and begin to see them as items that we need to protect from the greed of others. In this study we will consider how "holding on loosely" to our possessions helps us to establish the practice of generosity in our lives and avoids having our possessions possess us.

##### Bible Passage

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

##### Cross Reference

Deuteronomy 15:10; Romans 12:8; Isaiah 55:10; Hosea 10:12

##### Exegetical Idea

"Through generosity, God's adopted children give joy to their heavenly Father by displaying His image and likeness." (*The Lutheran Study Bible*, p. 1992)

##### Pedagogical Idea

Christians are to view their blessings as true gifts from God for use according to His will and for His purposes.

##### Lesson Targets

Cognitive (Head)

Students will learn what it means that they are stewards of God's creation.

Affective (Heart)

Students will learn how to examine their hearts to recognize whether they are holding on too tightly to their possessions.

Behavioral (Hands)

Students will cultivate a generous heart, having identified ways in which they can share God's blessings to bless others and support the work of His kingdom on earth.

##### Hook

Before students arrive create a pair of similar sculptures using play dough.

When you begin, ask for two volunteers. Place the sculptures in their hands. Have one volunteer hold the sculpture in their open palm. Have the other volunteer hold the sculpture with a closed hand, at first loosely without squeezing. Gradually have the volunteer tighten their grip on the sculpture, slowly crushing it. Once crushed, have each of the volunteers, without moving their fingers, offer their sculptures to someone else in the room.

Question: So which one of these sculptures would you like to have? Why?

Comment: Talk with the students about why they make the choices that they do.

Question: How might this sculpture be like the gifts God has given each of us?

Comment: In discussing this question lead the students in a transition toward the introduction of the Scripture reading.

##### Book

Introduce passage.

In chapter 8 of 2 Corinthians, Paul has been discussing how local churches can financially support and

uplift one another through gifts of generosity. In the beginning of chapter 9, Paul offers an example of this generosity as a relief effort which was underway in Macedonia for the church in Jerusalem. In this context, Paul then introduces that a proper understanding of generosity flows out of God's blessings to us.

Have a volunteer read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15.

Commentary on passage:

The Gospel rather than the Law ought to be our motivation to share generously. As God's grace flows out on us, it then overflows our lives and flows into the lives of others. This is the natural course of God's gracious giving activity. We receive out of the generosity of others only to then impart generously God's gifts to yet more people. We offer thanksgiving to God through our generosity and demonstrate His grace to those who do not yet know Him.

Questions

1. What ought to be our attitude toward the calls from Scripture to give generously?
2. How is it that we come by this attitude?
3. What prevents the cultivation of this attitude?

**Look**

Pose the following hypothetical situation for small groups to discuss and offer suggestions: A student in your high school is known to have limited resources. He has worn out clothes. He eats leftovers he gathers from other students. He appears tired and worn out, seemingly aged beyond his years. How might you help him?

**Took**

After having the small groups share their ideas with the larger group have them then spend time thinking about concrete ways in which they need to adjust their attitude toward generosity with God's gifts. Have them pray together about how God might empower them to desire out of love for Christ to share His love through acts of kindness and generosity. Encourage the small groups to remain in prayer for each other throughout the coming week(s) that they may adopt God's will for their lives and truly seek to serve and give a thank offering for all that God has graciously done for them.