

A culture of favour and generosity

1. Living from favour	
Teaching:	We live in the New Covenant of the Lord's favour (Isaiah 61:2). In Christ every blessing is ours (Eph 1:3), and no good thing is withheld from us (Romans 8:32). His grace has been <i>lavished</i> upon us (Eph 1:7-8). This means <i>poured out wastefully</i> . Our primary posture then is to be seated <i>with</i> Christ in abundant favour (Eph 2:6), not coming to him in our need. We live <i>from</i> favour, not <i>for</i> favour. This is the foundation of a culture of generosity.
Beliefs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am already rich through the sacrifice of Christ (2 Co 8:9) • I too am growing in favour with God and man (Lk 2:52) • God's favour is on my life in a unique way (Eph 4:7) • I am equipped to be rich in good works (1 Tim 6:18)
Testimony:	Is someone aware of an area of their life where they have experienced the favour of God to an unusual degree? What happened?
Practices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We choose daily to believe in God's favour over our lives, despite the difficulties we face. • We pursue the favour of God specifically in areas where it has already been released in our lives. • Our relationships with one another are driven more by what we can give than what we can get.
Activation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRAY: Is there anyone who has been disappointed and lost the conviction that God's favour is on their life? Pray for them for courage to trust again. • SHARE: Think of a gospel story where you can positionally identify with the God-figure rather than the human frailty (e.g. the prodigal father, Jesus walking on the water, the sower of the seed). How does that perspective change how you think about yourself? • BELIEVE: Add the 4 beliefs above to your daily declarations
How are we doing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WELL: I have been inspired with hope in conversations with people here. • BADLY: I find people quite small-minded

2. Giving freely

Teaching:	<p>Because we live in his favour without cost, we can give it away freely (Matt 10:8). Giving is what love looks like (John 3:16). We can give finance, time, emotional involvement, service, glory. We can be generous to our spouse, our children, our family, our friends, our church community, our work colleagues, customers, strangers. We can be generous to the poor and to the wealthy.</p> <p>Because his favour is a river (Rev 22:1-2) it never runs out, so we can give without fear that there won't be enough left over for us. Generosity is always a faith challenge, but no one ever fell into poverty through being generous.</p> <p>His favour comes to us, even though we don't deserve it (Romans 5:8), so we don't need to stress about whether the people we give to are worthy cases (Matt 5:45). (Although we might ask ourselves whether our generosity will be a blessing to them.)</p>
Beliefs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no lack of resources in heaven (Rev 21:21, Ez 47:9-12) • God is a giver and I am too (John 3:16) • God is committed to supporting my lifestyle of generosity (2 Co 9:10)
Testimony:	Does someone have a story of overcoming fear in order to give?
Practices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We refuse to allow fear to rule the decisions we make • We partner with the Holy Spirit in looking for opportunities to give • We expect to live in increasing measures of generosity
Activation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRAY: Some of us have been brought up with an expectation of lack. Pray for a release from fear into abundance and generosity. • SHARE: What new areas of generosity would you like to move into? • BELIEVE: Add the three beliefs above to your daily declarations
How are we doing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WELL: I have experienced unusual generosity from people here. • BADLY: Fear seems to dominate people's financial decisions.

3. Generosity among powerful people

Teaching:	<p>Giving is always a choice. God wants us to partner with him in distributing his favour, but only when we can do it <i>cheerfully</i> or <i>hilariously</i> (2 Co 9:7). If we find ourselves giving resentfully, or out of guilt or obligation or for appearance, we need to press pause. The solution is not to give up on giving, but to reconnect with the heart of the father. We are free to say “No” for a season, but the heart of God is a big “Yes” (2 Co 1:20).</p> <p>Generosity must also respect the choices of the recipient. The business world gives favour in expectation of favour in return. In the Kingdom we give with no strings or hooks attached (Matt 5:46, Lk 14:12). Our giving never buys us relational loyalty from the recipient. We need to package our giving in such a way that people know there is no expectation in return.</p>
Beliefs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God loves a cheerful giver (2 Co 9:7) • I am free to give as I choose (Ac 5:4) • The harvest of my giving comes from God, not people. (2 Co 9:6, Ecc 11:1, Matt 6:4)
Testimony:	Who here has been the recipient of generosity with absolutely no strings attached?
Practices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We align ourselves with the giving heart of the father • We give without expectation of relational loyalty
Activation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRAY: For people suffering from “donor fatigue”, to recover a connection with the father’s heart. • HONOUR: One another for generosity manifest in your lives. • BELIEVE: Add the three beliefs above to your daily declarations.
How are we doing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WELL: There is no pressure to give here, but I want to. • BADLY: I have felt controlled by people who helped me.

4. Planning to give

Teaching:	<p>We can only give what we have (2 Co 8:12). If we are exhausted emotionally, financially, spiritually we cannot participate in God's generosity. So we need to plan our lives to have surplus resources, first and foremost by spending sufficient time in intimacy with him (John 15:5) and drinking deeply of him (John 7:37-38).</p> <p>Then we need to learn how to guard our resources, so we have more to give. The enemy comes to rob us (emotionally, spiritually, financially) so that we cannot be generous (John 10:10). It is good to know where our resources are going to, so we can plug the leaks.</p> <p>Third, we need to learn how to consume less ourselves. The same seed is for food and for sowing, but the more we eat, the less we sow (2 Co 9:10). A good plan is to set aside seed for sowing <i>before</i> we start eating! (1 Co 16:2)</p>
Beliefs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am a steward of great and increasing resources for the Kingdom (Matt 25:14-18) • Great fruitfulness comes from abiding in him (John 15:5) • My true identity is expressed in how I give, not how I spend (2 Co 8:7)
Testimony:	Who has a story of discovering they were being emotionally robbed, and dealing with it?
Practices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We spend time in his presence in expectation of being resourced • We audit our lives to know where our resources are going • We exercise self-control in order to be generous
Activation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRAY: For those who feel they are being robbed to know how to deal with it. • SHARE: How could we get better at self-control? • BELIEVE: Add the three beliefs above to your daily declarations
How are we doing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WELL: I have been overwhelmed by generosity from someone who didn't look like they could afford it • BADLY: People seem to be perpetually exhausted