



HOPE
OVERFLOWING



GENEROSITY JOURNAL

HOPE OVERFLOWING

We talk a lot at Hope about how we want to be real people looking to the real Jesus for real change. We do this by meeting on Sundays and during the week to confess our weakness and God's strength, our sinfulness and God's rescue. We believe God's grace to us in Christ fuels real change in our lives. But what does this change look like practically - with our time, money, and abilities? What does it look like to live in a generous, God-centered and God-led reality?

We hope this Hope Overflowing Journal will be a tool to help get practical about these big questions. This journal is meant to help us to think about, feel, pray, and discuss what it looks like to live as followers of a generous God. Jesus tells us, "Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap." (Luke 6:38). We are quick to point out rightly that we don't give to get in this life. But we do live in a world "running over" with good gifts from a Father who loves us and promises, "There is more where that came from!" Let this journal be a tool to help you process and work through some of the topics we discussed at the Stakeholder Event. We won't ask you to give this journal back to us because we want you to keep it, to refer back to it, and ultimately, to reflect on the thoughts you've had, the notes you've taken, and the prayers you've made.

Some of the questions asked in this journal may be easy for you to answer. Others may take some time to really chew on. Our hope is that, as you spend time thinking about the impact that you can make by hope overflowing in your life, this simple notebook will become a means of meditation for how...

1. **We live with a generous God**
2. **God's love richly flows into our hearts**
3. **Our hearts stir with gratitude and joy**
4. **Out of hope's overflow we give generously.**

It is a privilege to be on this journey together with you!

YOUR HOPE ELDERS

"³ Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (ROMANS 15:13)

WEEK 1. YOUR GOOD FATHER

⁷ "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

(MATTHEW 7:7-11)

QUESTIONS

How is God described in verses 9-11? (What is His relationship to you? What kind of relationship is this? What does He do for us as this kind of person in our lives?)

If this is who God is to me, what does that mean about the kind of gifts He gives me? (Take several moments to name and describe a few of your favorite gifts from God- material, spiritual, circumstantial, relational- including in or through Hope Community Church.)

If this is who God is to me, what does that mean about how I can petition Him differently than I do now? (How would you pray more boldly? What would you pray for?)

If this is who God is to me, what does that mean about how I can live in this world differently? (How would I live more expectantly? What could I expect might happen?)

WEEK 1. YOUR GOOD FATHER

PRAYERS

Take several moments to adore God as your Heavenly Father. (This might look like sitting still in silence, speaking aloud words or phrases that come to mind, or writing down a few of your favorite things about God.)

Read aloud these verses from Romans Chapter 8:

“³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”

Read them again and just listen to them as God’s words: let these truths ring in your ears and mind for a while. Let them slowly descend into your heart.

Take several moments to confess the ways you do not live as if God is for you and will graciously give you all things (If it helps, look at your weekly calendar’s events.)

Ask God to give you a vision for what it would look like to live on this side of Jesus’ crucifixion: like He is your good heavenly Father who is for you, who did not spare His own Son Jesus, and therefore graciously gives you all things. (Write out a few ways you would you spend your time and money and strengths differently.)

WEEK 2. YOUR UNIQUE CALLING

¹⁴ “For it [the Kingdom of God] will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶ He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷ So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸ But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money. ¹⁹ Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.’ ²¹ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ²² And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.’ ²³ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ²⁴ He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, ²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.’ ²⁶ But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? ²⁷ Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸ So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰ And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

(MATTHEW 25:14-30)

QUESTIONS

How is God described in verses 9-11? (What is His relationship to you? What kind of relationship is this? What does He do for us as this kind of person in our lives?)

WEEK 2. YOUR UNIQUE CALLING

QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

What do you think trading with talents (verses 16-17) looks like in 21st Century Charlotte? (What are some examples of when you “traded” your time, money, opportunities, contacts, or abilities?)

What do you think digging a hole in the ground and hiding our talents (verse 18) looks like in 21st Century Charlotte? (What are some examples of when you “hid” your time, money, opportunities, contacts, or abilities?)

In this parable, what is a heart-motive for the good use of what God has given you? (How has this motive changed for the better the ways you use your time, money, opportunities, contacts, or abilities?) (Hint: Look at verses 21 and 23.)

In this parable, what is a heart-motive for the bad use of what God has given you? (How has this motive changed for the worse the ways you use your time, money, opportunities, contacts, or abilities?) (Hint: Look at verses 24-25.)

WEEK 2. YOUR UNIQUE CALLING

PRAYERS

Take a few moments to thank God - aloud or in writing - for each of the talents you listed earlier. You can start by thanking God for “the fearful and wonderful way” He made and situated you (Ps. 139), then notice and name the good things in your life.

Take several moments and imagine what it will feel like to hear God boom over you, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”

Read aloud 1 Corinthians 7:17:

“Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.”

Read that verse aloud again and just listen to it as God’s words. Pray these questions:

- What opportunities in the world do these words make you think of?
- What needs in the world do these words make you think of?
- What things you like doing do these words make you think of?
- What things you are good at do these words make you think of?

Is there a place at Hope or through Hope where you feel like all these could meet?

Ask God to show you how your talents and God’s calling motivate you to give.

WEEK 3. YOUR RICH STORY

¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

(1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19)

QUESTIONS

Globally and historically, you are "rich." (For instance, the World Bank reported in 2018 that 46% of the world lives on less than \$5.50 a day). Do you feel "rich"? Why or why not? In what areas of your life do you feel rich or poor?

According to verse 17, whose riches are they that make us rich? Why does it matter if your "everything" is gifted or deserved? Certain or uncertain?

What do verses 17 & 18 tell us our riches are for? How do I make time for that?

How can you specifically apply how Tim Keller answers this question: "While secular individualism says that your money belongs to you...the Bible says that all your money belongs to God, who then entrusts it to you... you have moral obligations to both God and your neighbor to use your money unselfishly and with great generosity to love others with it, according to both your ability and to their needs"?

WEEK 3. YOUR RICH STORY

PRAYERS

Verse 19 tells us that being generous with all, we "store up treasure" and is "a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

Ask God what about the way you grew up makes that so hard for you to believe right now? Ask Him to show you if there is something about your life right now that makes generosity feel like a shaky foundation for the future.

Lord, forgive us for the ways our riches make us prideful with others and trusting in things that rust, die, or can be taken from us. Forgive our self-centered and insecure view of Your world. Please assure us - by Your Spirit - that we will not just be "okay" if we give away what we have been given, but that we will have greater joy in the present, peace about the future, and participation in "that which is truly life".

Lord, I thank You for the money and resources You have given me. I receive them from You, as a gift. How might You want me to use them to love others? (Lectio 365)

Today, O God, I let go of my pride and my fearful financial agenda. And I grab hold of the many ways You richly take care of me and mine and I cling to what is truly life.

WEEK 4. YOUR SEARCHING HEART

QUESTIONS

In Matthew 6:21 Jesus says, "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

What feels like treasure to you right now? (If you had a wish, what would it be for?)

Where do you find your heart today- what is it paying attention to?

In Matthew 6:22-23 Jesus says, "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness."

Do you tend to perceive scarcity or generosity? (Is the world filled with not enough or plenty for all?) How does this affect your ability to share what you have?

In Matthew 6:25-26 Jesus says to our hearts, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

How was the subject of money or wealth handled or discussed in your home growing up? Do you find yourself saving money to achieve a sense of security? How?

WEEK 4. YOUR SEARCHING HEART

QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

In Matthew 6:27-30, Jesus says to our hearts, "And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

How was the subject of money or wealth handled or discussed in your home growing up? Do you find yourself spending money to achieve a sense of significance? When?

PRAYERS

Ask God to show you how the subject of money or wealth is handled or discussed in your home now, in your adult life. Is there a memory of a moment or conversation?

Ask God to show you what - if anything - gets in the way of you having a generous heart? Take a few moments to confess that, asking for God's forgiveness and help.

Name specific ways God has been generous in demonstrating his love for you, in your life. Are there specific ways that God has used the people at Hope to do this?

WEEK 5. YOUR ABOUNDING JOY

⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶ who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

(MATTHEW 13:44-46)

QUESTIONS

What do you immediately think of or feel when you hear the phrase "the Kingdom of Heaven"? Now, what do you think this passage means when it uses this phrase?

What is Jesus trying to push on in our hearts when he compares the Kingdom of God to a treasure hidden in a field and a pearl of great value?

Why is it significant that selling all we have to buy into the Kingdom of God is described with the phrase "in his [read: our] joy"? Do you feel joy in the ask of campaigns like Hope Overflowing? Why or why not?

What giving experiences – of time, talent, and/or treasure - have brought you the most joy? Has one of these brought you more joy than the others? Why is that?

WEEK 5. YOUR ABOUNDING JOY

PRAYERS

Ask God to show you what might be blocking your joy in giving. Are there fears you need to be delivered from? Lies you need to refute? Sins you need to confess?

Ask God to produce in you: spiritual fruits you want to grow in; good works you want to do by faith; specific ministries of Hope Church you want to support by giving?

Read aloud these verses from Zephaniah Chapter 3:

¹⁴ "Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ The Lord has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies...¹⁷ The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing."

Read verse 17 aloud again and just listen to it as God's words to you. Feel the embarrassment and pleasure of God rejoicing over you, with loud singing.

Settle into a comfortable sitting position. Place the soles of your feet firmly on the ground. Close your eyes. Take several deep, slow breaths. Do nothing for 5 minutes. Simply sit in the presence of God: "I am in God's presence. What a joy. Let us be still."

WEEK 6. YOUR HOPE OVERFLOWING

⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work...¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. ¹² For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.

(2 CORINTHIANS 8:7-12)

QUESTIONS

In what areas of your life have you been given much more than you really need?

According to verses 8, 10, and 12, what is God's purpose for your abundance?

What would it look like to see my material and spiritual assets as "seed for sowing" from God? What kind of impact (where, with whom, for whom) would this make?

What do I need to say "no" to in my life - on my calendar, in my finances - to say "yes" to "produce thanksgiving to God" and supply "the needs of the saints"?

WEEK 6. YOUR HOPE OVERFLOWING

PRAYERS

Take several moments to adore God's generosity.

(This might look like sitting still in silence, speaking aloud words or phrases that come to mind, or writing down a few of your favorite things about God.)

Take a few moments to ask God to pour out His love richly into your heart, stirring you with gratitude and joy for who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do.

I welcome all that God has so generously given me. I welcome all thoughts, feelings, emotions, persons, situations, and conditions. I let go of my desire for power and control. I let go of my desire for affection, esteem, approval, and pleasure. I let go of my desire for survival and security. I let go of my desire to change any situation, condition, person or myself. I open to the love and presence of God and God's action within. Amen.

(Adapted from Thomas Keating's Welcoming Prayer)

Lord God, able to make all grace abound, would you make my decision to give cheerful, not reluctant or under compulsion? Would you help me to give self-sacrificially - trusting God will enrich me to do it, overflowing in many thanksgivings to God? Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift of Christ in me, the hope of glory!

YOUR NOTES

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YOUR NOTES

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