# Generous Life Project – Boundless Generosity

**Session 4**

**Theme:** Jesus provides in abundance as a sign of the Kingdom of God!

**Hook: Are we a roadside rest stop in the Kingdom of God or a clubhouse?**

**Text:** John 2:1-11, Luke 6:37-38, Psalm 72:15-20

**Video**: Congregations Working for their Community (Bethel, Encino – no title in video)

**Learning Goal**: To discover ways your abundance can overflow into your neighborhood

**Learning Activity**: Congregation and neighborhood analysis.

**Sending:** Psalm 72:15-19

**Preparation/Need**

1. “Images of the Kingdom of God” newsprint
2. Analysis newsprint
3. Markers
4. Copies of the last page of the session with Psalm 72

## Welcome

**Hook:** Are we a roadside rest stop in the kingdom of God or a clubhouse?

**Theme:** The abundance which Jesus provides as a sign of the nearness of the Kingdom of God will be the main idea for our focus.

**Prayer:** Blessed be God, whose abundance is unlimited.

Blessed be God, whose generosity never ends.

Blessed be God, who showers riches on us,

so we might share this bounty wherever there is need.

Blessed be God, Creator, Sanctifier and Redeemer, forever and ever. **Amen.**

## Video

No Title

## Relevant Quotes

Voiceover (VO): Jesus turned water into wine as a sign – for everyone – for all of us…a sign that shows his boundless generosity...believe in him, and celebrate his abundance…

VO: And partner with community organizations to serve their neighborhoods…

VO: Over the last eight years the congregation has gone beyond caring for themselves and their own survival.

VO: Like water transformed into wine, the church community reveals a glimpse of Jesus.

VO: But Bethel had struggled before. The church had dwindled in numbers and in finances.Everyone was holding tightly to what they wanted their church to be and to do.

VO: Before the church’s ministry was resurrected, the congregation had to decide to become what their community needed.

VO: Only when they learned to work together to meet God’s call did their small numbers increase and their ministry became truly generous.

Richard Newcomb: And now there are so many younger people with young families…’cause they identify with that, that’s what they wanna do, that’s what doing God’s work is…is looking outward to serve, rather than, oh gee, how can we get a renter to maintain our social inward looking club here. I mean the whole mentality has changed tremendously and you can feel that energy every Sunday.

VO: What must we overcome to create ministry that meets our neighbor’s deepest need?

## Biblical Foundation

What are the biblical images, words, and passages that come to mind?

Have someone read John 2:1-7.

**1On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” 4And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” 5His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” 6Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim**.

## Conversation Starter

**Large Group**

What do you think happened at a first century wedding party if they ran out of wine? Would it continue or would that mean the end?

Where do you see Jesus being generous? What opportunity does Jesus’ generosity create?

## Biblical Foundation

Have someone read verses 8-10.

**8He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. 9When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom 10and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.”**

## Commentary

Robert Kysar states that the steward’s comment demonstrates that Jesus’ miracle was both “generous and superb” (Kysar 1986, 46).

## Conversation Starter

## Large Group

What does this miracle add to the images we are accumulating for the Kingdom of God?

Add insights to “kingdom of God” newsprint.

## Commentary

## “In Christ that promised day has arrived and all the abundance of God’s blessings is poured out on the people. Their depleted resources are filled to the brim with God’s grace” (1:16 “from his fullness we have received grace upon grace”) (Kysar 1986, 46).

Have someone read verse 11:

**11Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.**

## In the Gospel of John, the disciples are not limited to the twelve, but include all believers (Kysar 1986, 44).

This is the first sign…of many…all designed to reveal his glory and encourage faith.

## Conversation Starters

In the video, Bethel member, Richard Newcomb noted that people began coming to the congregation because they want to be part of what God is doing! They want to give! They settled at Bethel because it offers opportunities to be signs of God’s abundance in the community: to take what is overflowing and let it flow to fill the deepest needs. As the voiceover noted, “Their generosity calls people to their church.”

**Large Group**

What are some things this congregation did that caught your interest?

What are some ways your congregation connects with its neighbors?

**Small Group**

What new ways could your congregation partner with community organizations to serve your neighborhood?

## Learning Activity

As a large group, share your insights and record relevant ideas on your congregation and neighborhood analysis in the Circle of Opportunity.

## Biblical Foundation

Share another “generosity” passage: Luke 6:37-38 – The Sermon on the Plain.

**37“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; 38give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”**

Note that this Gospel goes on to ask:

**46“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I tell you?**

That’s a pretty convicting question for most of us. Let’s explore it.

**Large Group**

What is the mission statement of our congregation? Is it well known? Is it up to date? Is it accurate? Does it describe life in our congregation?

Does it include a “call to action” to serve the community? If it doesn’t, should it?

**Elbow Buddies**

To use language from the last session, what is the best reason to *become* a neighbor to your community?

1) Because we believe it is the best way we to be the Body of Christ revealing the Kingdom of God for the world.

2) Because that’s what young people want to see, and we want more young families.

Which of these provided the motivation for Bethel Encino?

Which would motivate your congregation?

**Think, Pair, Pray**

How do you, personally, live out our congregation’s mission statement? What parts are easy for you? Where would you like to challenge yourself to grow?

Share as you are comfortable with your elbow buddy.

Pray for one another based on what you have shared.

**Think, Pair, Share**

What is your gut response to this question:

Is your church a “social club?” (Richard Newcomb quote in the video)

Spend a little time and think of examples that illustrate your gut response.

How would you answer the question offered in the video: What must we overcome to resurrect ministry that meets our neighbor’s deepest need?

## Learning Activity

Add to your congregation and neighborhood analysis focusing on the circle labeled “Obstacles.”

## Sending

Read responsively Psalm 72:15-20

**Right Side: Bold** Left Side: Normal

**15Long may he live!  
    May gold of Sheba be given to him.**

May prayer be made for him continually,  
    and blessings invoked for him all day long.

**16May there be abundance of grain in the land;  
     may it wave on the tops of the mountains;  
     may its fruit be like Lebanon;**

**and may people blossom in the cities  
    like the grass of the field.**

17May his name endure forever,  
    his fame continue as long as the sun.  
May all nations be blessed in him,  
    may they pronounce him happy.

**18Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,  
    who alone does wondrous things.**

19Blessed be his glorious name forever;  
    may his glory fill the whole earth.

**Amen**

and Amen.

## Dismissal

**Leader: Go in Peace. Reveal the Kingdom!**

People: Thanks be to God!

[[1]](#endnote-1)

1. Robert Kysar. 1983. “John” Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)