

BIG IDEA

Wise people share what God has given them.

BIBLE

1 John 3:16–20; Proverbs 22:8,9; Matthew 25:35,36,40

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Great coaches are full of insight on how to play our favorite games, and they don't keep it to themselves.

This week, we'll look at one of John's letters as he coached his church to follow the example of Jesus.

Like a great coach, John passed on the wisdom and gifts he had received and showed his church how

wise people share what God has given them.

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

VIDEO | A Clip from Ted Lasso

- We are in the second week of our series Good Call, where we are looking at what it looks like to look to God for wisdom in our decisions. Let's start with inspiration from a coach trying to motivate his team to go out and give their best.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play [this clip from Ted Lasso](#) (0:00–1:46). We always suggest viewing the clip beforehand to make sure you think it's a video that will be a good fit for your context. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
- Wouldn't it be nice to have a coach who could help us navigate the challenges of our lives and help us make the right decision? God isn't precisely a coach, but no matter what we're going through, God is right alongside us, empowering us with wisdom to make a good call no matter what we encounter. Learning to listen and put that wisdom into effect is the tricky part, especially when sharing what we have.

ACTIVITY | Bible Or Coach?

- Coaches and athletes love giving speeches to motivate their teams. Sometimes, the right words from a coach can help players make a good call as they compete. The Bible has some great quotes that can motivate us as well. What I want to know is, can you tell the difference between a coach's motivational speech and the Bible's wisdom? Let's find out.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, you will need a prize for the winner (we suggest something funny [like this thumbs-up trophy](#)). Before your program, choose a few coaching quotes from a list [like this one](#) that works for your culture and a few Bible quotes that are frequently used by professional athletes from a list [like this one](#). Use the blank slides [in the series materials](#), put each quote on a slide, and load them into your presentation software. To play: Designate one side of the room as "Bible Quote" and the other as "Coach Quote." Say each quote, have them pick a side, and then tell the answer. Have teenagers who guess incorrectly sit down. The winner is the last person standing.
- We need wisdom to make good calls in many areas of our lives: relationships, school, jobs, and more. We

also need help with decisions about what we have ... our possessions, time, effort, talents, and energy.

- Every day, we are given choices about what we should do with what we have. How do we avoid becoming possessive or selfish with what we have and be attentive to the needs of others? How can we pay attention to the hurting and vulnerable around us and share what we have with them? What would it look like to make a good call with what we have? This all seems complicated, especially when I don't feel like I have much to offer.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups.*
 - What's the best gift you've ever received? What's the best gift you've ever given?
 - What has it felt like to be on the receiving end of someone else's generosity?

SO WHAT? *Why does it matter to God and to us?*

POLL | Leader Board

- I looked up some words in the Bible to see how often they are used throughout it. Those words are love, believe, give, and pray.
- **How would you rank these for words in order of how often they are used in the Bible?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Poll your group's responses to the previous question. For this poll, you will need index cards and a few pens. Have them write the words believe, pray, love, and give in order of how many times those words appear in your preferred translation of the Bible. If more than one person gets the order correct, guess the number of times each word is used in Scripture. The team who is closest in their guesses wins! After they are done, tell them the results (NIV).*
 - "Believe" is used in the Bible 289 times.
 - "Pray" is used in the Bible 367 times.
 - "Love" is used in the Bible 686 times.
 - "Give" is used in the Bible 1,433 times.
- Giving is a common theme throughout the Bible, but we're not just talking about money. The Bible tells us to give our time in service, to pray for others, to praise God, and to give thanks for all we have. And we have an incredible model for what this looks like in the life of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE | 1 John 3:16–20

- John was an older, coach-type figure. He oversaw a few churches, but things didn't go smoothly. Several community members decided they no longer viewed Jesus as the savior, so they left the churches and began criticizing those who stayed.
- John wrote a letter to these churches to encourage and remind them to root themselves in Jesus, and instead of giving in to the conflict, division, and finger-pointing, John told his friends to follow in his footsteps.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read 1 John 3:16–20.*
- Jesus modeled what it looks like to give to others. He gave his life for us, and we are to give what we have to offer to others as well. This had to be difficult for people feeling confused, hurt, or defensive. It may have been easy for the people in John's churches to hoard things for themselves. That's what we often do when we feel threatened, right?
- But John called them to love the way Jesus had loved them, and we are invited to do the same. He challenges us not just to say we love others but to love others *through our actions*.
- Think about it this way ... If I told you I have a really good friend and described him to you, but then you asked me what our friendship looks like in action, that would tell you a lot. What if you said ...

- Do you ever help him with anything? And I say no.
- Do you ever say encouraging words to him? And I say no.
- Do you ever pray for him? And I say no.
- Do you ever hang out with him? And I say no.
- Do you ever share what you have with him? And I say no.
- After asking and getting those answers, would you conclude that I love my friend? Probably not, because love requires action. Jesus showed love for us by giving his life for us. We may not be asked to give our life to our friends, but we can give our gifts, talents, and some of what we have with them. As we do this, we not only show them we love them but also experience and participate in the same love Jesus showed us.
- You can be generous and give to others, no matter how much or little you have. John is showing us you don't have to have much to show love to others.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
 - **What would it look like for you to live generously even when you don't feel like it?**
 - ★ **When John talks about how Jesus demonstrated love, why do you think giving is the thing he asks of us more than anything else?**

QUESTION | "What keeps us from being generous?"

- Where do you struggle to share? Is it with your money? Or is it with your time? Something else? We all have places where sharing is difficult.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Have teenagers turn to a group of two to three people around them and discuss the following questions. After a few minutes, allow a few volunteers to share their responses.*
 - **What keeps you from being generous? Fear? Feelings of inadequacy? Comparison? Busy schedules? Past hurt?**
 - **If you could erase those barriers to generosity, what are specific ways you'd like to be generous with what you have?**
- The Bible doesn't say Jesus showed us what love is by giving everyone a million dollars. Jesus gave all he had for us to show us his love. It won't always be easy for us either, but God has given us resources, talents, wisdom, and gifts to share.

SCRIPTURE | Proverbs 22:8,9

- When it comes to being generous, I understand why it's so difficult. I often believe I will be at a loss if we give something away. Here is what I mean.
 - If I give \$50 away, I am down \$50 and may be unable to buy the new jersey I want.
 - If I give my time to serve, I don't think I will have enough time to wind down and play video games.
 - I worry I will get burned if I am generous with my words and invest in a friendship.
 - But what if generosity isn't about losing things but rather about gaining something so much more?
- Last week, we heard about Solomon, who asked God for wisdom above all else. He wanted God to guide his leadership and decision-making ... but that only lasted so long. Solomon lived by God's wisdom for a while, but then he got swept up in the desire to hoard power and possessions.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Proverbs 22:8,9.*
- Early in his leadership, Solomon allowed God's wisdom to lead him to care for and be generous with others. He thought about how his decisions impacted those under his leadership.

- But when selfishness entered the picture, he became more self-centered, and injustice scattered through the fields of his life. He didn't care about those on the margins. He focused on elevating himself and began to push others down. These decisions eventually led to the nation being ripped apart.
- He lived into both extremes of this Scripture. When he was generous, he experienced blessing and was a blessing to others. But when he was selfish, he experienced destruction and disaster, as did others. What we have to gain from being generous is far more than what we may lose. As we learn to be generous, we don't lose something. Instead, God brings peace, freedom, and true security.
- Living generously reminds us that our value is more than the stuff we hang on to. Our value is in the love of God ... and when we know how deeply we are loved, we can share love with others. A generous life is truly the most fulfilling life. That is why God invites us to be generous. Not because God wants to take something from us but because God wants to fill us up. **Wise people share what God has given them.**

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

REFLECTION | Keep Your Eye On The Ball

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this reflection, you will need a few volleyballs and several permanent markers. As you teach, reference this ball like an object lesson. After you are done teaching, invite the group to reflect on how they feel like God uniquely gifts them to be generous to others and how they want to share that with others by writing their gifts and ideas on how to share them on the ball.
- Have you ever heard a coach say, "Keep your eye on the ball?" They say it because they don't want you to miss what is right in front of you. Similarly, God doesn't want us to miss what is right in front of us. Here are three ideas to help you share what God has given you with others.
 - **CELEBRATE YOUR GIFTS:** Sometimes, our gifts are so close to us that we forget to use them. We miss a chance to connect with others when we don't use God's gifts, either because we're unaware or feel inadequate. Take some time this week to write down a few ways you think God has gifted you and how you can share those with others.
 - **CELEBRATE OTHER PEOPLE'S GIFTS:** The beautiful thing about being on a team is that we're all wired differently and have different gifts to share. We need each other and all our gifts to make a difference. Let's not let intimidation or feeling threatened get in the way of us cheering for others. We're all part of the same team. When you see someone be generous with their time, resources, or gifts this week, tell them you noticed and you are grateful for sharing what they have.
 - **USE YOUR GIFTS:** We all have something valuable to contribute, and we will miss out if we ignore our gifts and try to be like someone else. Maybe you can be generous by being a good listener, giving your neighbor a ride to school, serving in the kids or worship ministry at church, or writing a card for a family member who is sick.
- Whatever it is, choose at least one way to share what you have this week, and then follow through because **wise people share what God has given them.**

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.
 - ★ **What do you think when the Bible says that the generous will be blessed? How does this challenge how you follow Jesus?**
 - **What are some of the ways you could be generous that don't just include money?**

STORY | Good Call Community

- The good news is that it isn't just those of us who gather here every week trying to follow in Jesus' generous footsteps. We are surrounded by many others trying to share what God has given them wisely.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before the program, find a few adults who follow Jesus well and ask them how they've learned to share their gifts uniquely and experienced God's love through serving. Try to pick people with interesting ways of serving (not just church leaders or people who work or serve at churches).*
- I love that all these stories help us see that making wise decisions is great, but wise decisions are a byproduct, not necessarily the goal. The goal of wisdom is to know God better. As this happens, you grow in wisdom and can make a good call beyond your strength and experience.
- Remember, you don't have to be rich, have the best singing voice, or be the quarterback. God will use what you do have to give in amazing ways. Living generously is the best call because **wise people share what God has given them.**

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups.*
 - **How have you experienced generosity from someone that did not involve money? What about the generosity shown you made it so impactful?**
 - **What is one way you could share what God has given to you this week with a stranger? Someone in your family? To a friend? What is stopping you from making a plan to follow through on that this week?**

RESPONSE | Playbook: Reflect On God's Words

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Every week of this series, there's a handout with different ways teenagers can listen to and apply God's wisdom in their lives. At the end of the series, you have the option to bind them all together. For this response, [print the handout included in this week's series folder](#) and put one underneath each chair. Invite them to connect with God all week using this "play." This week, they can do this by reflecting on Scripture. Please encourage them to use this to help them reflect on Scripture this week.*
- God doesn't want us to give to the point of exhaustion to please people or give more than we have to offer. However, the Bible shows us what it looks like to live generously in ways that honor God, ourselves, and others. Each morning this week, read this Scripture in the playbook and ask God how to help you know what it looks like to be generous with what you have.

ACTIVITY | Small Group Party Kits

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you are doing the Small Group party kits as your fall discipleship activity and haven't done them yet, this would be an awesome place to remind people about the activity. Share some of the time God has given to you with each other. All of the information for that event can be found in the discipleship section of your Grow dashboard.*
- We have all been given finite time, so let's share that with each other and have fun because **wise people share what God has given them.**