

We Were Eager to Share with You Our Own Souls

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the importance of giving of oneself in relationships, particularly in small groups, focusing on the need to move from a mindset of 'I have nothing to give' to 'I will give what I have.' It highlights the risks, purity, authenticity, and legacy of giving, drawing from the apostle Paul's example in Thessalonians. The goal is to lead individuals towards deeper joy by embracing their identity as givers, reflecting Christ's love and selflessness.

Scripture: Romans 8:10, 1 Corinthians 6:19, 1 Corinthians 2:13, 1 Peter 4:10, 2 Corinthians 5:17, John 4:14

Topics: "Selflessness in Relationships", "Embracing the Identity of a Giver"

Description

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Transcript

Let's pray together. My prayer, Father, is that you would come in on all three campuses, do the miracle of removing the falsehood from the heart of any believer that they don't have anything to give. I ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. As with every sermon that I preach, my aim in this one is to take you down paths that will deepen and strengthen and intensify and lengthen your joy. And the biblical warrant for thinking about sermons that way is 2 Corinthians 12:4, where Paul says, not that we lord it over your faith, but we are workers with you for your joy.

So my apostolic model says, I don't lord it over people's faith. I come alongside and I work for their joy in every sermon. And then he calls it the joy of faith in Philippians 1, verse 25, where he says, I don't know whether to die or live.

I am persuaded that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith. I'm staying on the planet for your joy. Amazing.

So I have zero hesitancy to say every sermon should target the joy of God's people. That's what this one does. I am going to take you down some paths that if you walked them would intensify, strengthen, deepen, lengthen your joy.

And to do that, I direct you to the work of God and to the word of God and to the ways of God. When I say work of God, I mean mainly that central core work. He sends Jesus into the world to die in the place of sinners and bear my guilt and my punishment and provide a perfect righteousness for me.

He rises triumphant and defeats all my destructive enemies like hell and death and the devil. And then he pours out his Holy Spirit into me and he gives me all of this by faith alone. So that's the core work.

And I direct you to this over and over again. And I direct you to the word of God because Jesus said, these things I have spoken to you, spoken to you, that your joy may be full. So the core work is gospel, good news.

And you didn't get good news to feel sad. That's not the way it works. Good news makes you glad.

Bad news makes you sad. The core of the Bible is good news. And therefore you should be glad because of the work of God.

Glad because of the word of God. These things I have spoken to you that your joy might be full. And I direct you down paths or the ways of God.

That's what this sermon is going to do. It's going to direct you down a way of God and all the ways of God. Listen to this.

This is Psalm 25:10. All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness for those who keep his covenant and his testimony. So whether I'm pointing you to the work of God in the gospel, good news, or the word of God spoken for the fullness of your joy, or the ways of God, all of which are steadfast love and faithfulness, I'm targeting your joy.

Not your ease, not your prosperity, not even your health. Those are way down on the priority list in my ministry. Getting you to heaven with infinite joy forever at God's right hand.

That's at the top. Because God is most glorified in you when you're most satisfied in him. And I'm all into the glory of God.

And I love it that he set up the world that your joy magnifies his worth. So that's what I'm about in this sermon as in every sermon. Now the way, the way of God in this message is the way of giving.

I'm going to talk about the pathway of giving. And I don't mean giving money, although parenthesis one minute on money. And then we leave it because last Sunday, I took a whole slew of you over to the convention center and the giving plummeted here because everybody was over there.

And so I'm just reminding you as your shepherd and pastor and father that you, that you between now and the end of the year, you really put out all the stops on loving to give. God loves a cheerful giver. And so may God do that for us at Bethlehem, all the campuses.

May we get on board and end this year amazingly like you always do. And I thank God. Now close that sermon on giving.

That's not what I'm talking about tonight. I'm talking about the giving of yourself. Because that's what this text is about.

And I think that's what small groups are about. That's where we're going to go. This is a message that is intended indirectly to entice you into believing in and participating in the Bethlehem system of small groups.

Let me say a word about that structure or that system. The elders of this church, as you know, you've been taught, the elders of this church are charged by God in His Word with the spiritual oversight and the equipping. Oversight, care, and equipping of the saints.

That's our job. We are to do that, to give an account. We do it in three ways.

One, with a whole cluster of kinds of teaching, like preaching, classes, seminars, conferences. Secondly, we do it through the equipping of small group leaders who are like under-shepherds, who get their arms around a band of 10, 12, 15 people and help them shepherd each other. And thirdly, we do it through household discipleship where God has created natural family groupings for the equipping of those members in life-on-life discipleship.

So we have 180 small groups right now at Bethlehem. You have a direction for how you can go to tables and get connected about those. And we'll say more about that as we close the service.

But what you need to see and feel is, we, I think 38 or 39 elders right now, can't shepherd 3,000 members directly, not to mention regular attenders. And therefore, we have this system of training small group leaders and enticing you in this sermon into those small groups where you can be shepherded and cared for and equipped. Nothing is more beautiful to me, or let's say few things are more beautiful to me, than to watch small groups rise to care for their members in crisis.

It is a glorious thing to behold. You understand Biblical. I mean, we're not making up this structure.

Ephesians chapter 4, verse 11, Christ gave pastors and teachers to the church to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. You see how that works? Christ equippers saints ministry. If you blow off the ministry of your fellow saints in your small group, like that's not a pastor, you're blowing off God's will.

We're to equip you to love each other really effectively. That's what this sermon is about. To give your lives to each other.

We try to help with systems of groupings. Now I'm going to approach this. I don't remember approaching like this before.

Maybe I have, but I usually don't. The way I usually approach this in all the years I've taken this fall challenge and tried to help us believe in it and move into it is to say we are needy people. Don't run away from those who have spiritual gifts who can meet your needs.

That's the way I've always talked and that's absolutely right and true. And I'm not going to say it that way in this sermon. I'm going to say it exactly the other way around.

We need to move towards small groups not because of our need to get, but our calling to give. That's the thesis of this sermon. The pathway that leads to deeper, stronger, more intense, longer joy is not the pathway of get, get, get, get, get, get, get.

But give, give, give, give, give, give, give. Because Jesus said, and you all know the verse I'm going to quote now, Acts 20, 35. Remember that the Lord Jesus said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

That is an amazing statement and you know it from experience and you know it from the Bible that the days in which you've poured yourself out, even if it was hard, even if it was stressful, even if you feel drained at the end of the day, your heart sings as you lay your head on the pillow rather than in all the days where it was just all about you. You know that. He made you that way.

So that's what I mean when I say this sermon is directing you to paths for your deepest, longest, and most intense joy. I'm directing you towards giving. And I don't mean money, I mean yourself.

That's where we're heading. And you're all probably experienced enough to know that that's a risky life. It's a painful life.

It's much easier not to give yourself. Way more easy. Not as joyful, but easier just to retreat into your house.

Don't expose yourself or give yourself to anyone. Protect yourself from all the risks that is. That's easy.

And that's not the path of joy. This is who you are. Christian.

Christian. And who you could be un-Christian if you would believe and become a Christian. Christian, this is who you are.

You are, by nature, a giver. You don't have any choice in this. That's who you are.

Listen to this. This is Jesus talking. Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him, that's what it means to be a Christian.

You've been thirsty all your life. You find Jesus as the fountain of living water. You say, yes, I will receive all that God is for me.

And you and your death and resurrection, you start drinking from Jesus. This is what happens. Whoever drinks of this water that I will give him, will never thirst again.

That water will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. That's who you are. You choose to be that.

If you have Christ, that's who you are. You can't choose to be otherwise except a non-Christian. Or, that was chapter 4, verse 14 of John.

Here's chapter 7, verse 38. Jesus says, out of his heart, out of the Christian's heart, will flow rivers of living water. You are a fountain.

You are a spring. This message is a plea in the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God that you become what you are. That's what Christian life is.

Becoming what you are. Not get your arm behind your back. Not give, give, give.

You are a giver. Wake up. Don't clog it.

Don't resist it. Don't deny it. We prayed downstairs for the hundreds across these campuses that in response to this message are going to whisper in their hearts, I don't have anything to give.

This church is just crawling with competent people, and I don't have anything to give. That's a lie. It's a dishonoring of the Lord.

You have Christ. You have the Holy Spirit. You have the forgiveness of sins.

You have perfect righteousness in Christ. You have spiritual gifts. You have the Word of God.

If you say, I don't have anything, this is blasphemy. Not to overstate it. When I prayed at the beginning, God grant the miracle of people becoming what they are.

I really mean that. So many Christians just keep running the tape in their heads. I'm nobody.

I don't have anything. I can't make any contribution. I'm on zero when it comes to my small group.

I'm just a sponge. It's all coming my way. That's not God talking in your head.

So, don't stop up the streams of your spring. Fountains are meant to be happy in stream making. You are a fountain.

Let it flow. And of course, there are many of you who are right at the beginning of your Christian life and very immature. I should own that.

Just relax in that. Okay? My small group has, you know, college graduates and seminary guys. And I'm just, I think I know where the gospel of John is in the Bible.

The most beautiful thing in the world is when everybody just is who you are. Where you are, when you are. And that's what this sermon is going to be about.

So, I want you to lean into small groups not because of your need to get, which is true, but because of your calling. Not because of your need to get, but your calling to give. Okay, 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 1 to 12.

All that's introduction. This paragraph is Paul's defense of himself against the charge of flattery, covetousness, and glory seeking. And in the making of his defense to the Thessalonians, where evidently detractors are putting him down, trying to undo his ministry, his defense is not to defend any doctrines.

But to call attention to what he became and what he gave them of himself. That's what all 12 verses are about. And they are amazing.

And you will find them to be so, I believe. Six times, verse 1, 2, 5, 9, 10, and 11. He says, you know, you remember, you are my witnesses.

Because his only hope was that God would cause them to remember he wasn't what they said he was. You ever been attacked like this? You ever had people describe you like this? I wasn't that way, was I? I mean, you were there. You were there, was I? So six times he says, you know this, you've seen this, you remember this, you're God's witness, I mean, you're my witness, God is my witness.

He says that twice. The aim of this paragraph, according to verse 1, I think is to preserve his coming as not in vain. I don't want my coming to you not to be in vain.

Look at verse 1. For you yourselves know, brothers, there it is, you know, you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. And he has in mind there what happened. And what happened, you know it from chapter 1, they received the word in much affliction, they had joy in the Holy Spirit even through affliction, and they turned from idols to serve the living God.

And he's saying, I didn't do that in vain. That didn't happen in vain, did it? And then he spends 12 verses reminding them of how much of himself he gave them. No doctrine to be defended here.

I believe in doctrine. It's all over the Bible. We talk about it a lot.

Here, it's not the point. The point is the deed's not the doctrine. The man, not the message.

That's what this chapter is about. It's huge, really huge for elders like me and for everybody. The main point that I chose the title of this message from is in verse 8. Why don't you go there with me? Verse 8. So, being affectionately desirous of you, so that his emotions show here, I have some really strong affections for you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel, of course that's central, but also our own selves, literally souls, because you had become very dear to us.

Now, that is magnificent. That made a huge impression on me years ago at the beginning of my ministry. And I'll come back and make a comment on that in just a minute.

Every young man here who's moving toward the ministry should just rivet on that. I share not only the gospel, but my own self. Literally, Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus, the we here, they're mentioned in verse 1 of the book, were pleased to share our own souls with you.

Not just the message, but the messenger. Not just the words, but the lives. Not just the doctrines, but the hearts behind the doctrine.

So that's what I mean now. That's where I'm getting the point of this message, that as we lean toward small groups and lean into relationships, and don't lean into solitude and lean into your house, you're leaning into people, it's not primarily in this message, because of what you need to get, but because of your calling to be like this, to give. Not only the gospel, but yourselves.

Small groups are not just about giving words, they're about giving yourself. This is what the ministry, everybody desperately needs, and we need to give it. The path of joy is to give yourself.

Very risky. So walk with me through this paragraph, and watch Paul do this. Watch him remind them of the ways he gave himself, and be amazed.

Ask the Lord to make you amazed and inspired by this path of joy, this hard road, this joyful road of risky self-giving. Watch Paul do this with me here. And remember this, Paul was very powerful.

Perhaps, maybe running neck and neck with Peter, the most powerful man in all of Christendom, who could compete. This was the most powerful Christian on the planet, talking here. And the reason I point that out is its application to pastors.

When I said this text moved me years ago, it has moved me over and over again. God has given me significant influence. And with influence comes power.

And power is dangerous, very dangerous. And what this text has done is to speak into my life over and over again. I hope it speaks this to you.

I hope it speaks this to you. Don't you ever think, John Piper, that you can live a hidden, isolated, unaccountable, unknown life. Don't you ever think that you can share your message and not your soul.

Life, husbandhood, fatherhood, sinnerhood. Don't ever think that. Don't ever go in that direction.

Powerful people can do that. They can go in that direction. Can build whole systems of isolation and freedom to do their sin in private.

This text says to me, be authentic, be real, be what you are, hide nothing. No posing, no posturing, no affectation, no pretense. Share with your people the gospel and your own soul.

So, God will be the final judge of me in this. You don't know, but I commend myself to every man's conscience. I have nothing to hide.

Ask me. That's what this text does for me. Now, seven ways that Paul gave them himself.

I want to be like this. If you want, I want to start right here. I want to be this way.

Hold me accountable to pursue this. And then you join me. This is what the elders lead by example.

If they don't lead by example, they're not worthy of your trust. Number one, Paul took a risk in sharing himself in the gospel at Thessalonica. Verse two, though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, so he could have just said, I'm not going to do this anymore.

This is too painful. He was thrown in jail in Philippi. We had boldness in our God to declare the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.

So from the get-go, there was conflict in Thessalonica. People were putting him down. They probably followed him from Macedonia.

There's people on his trail lying about him and distorting his message and trying to make everything happen in vain. And he just could throw up his hands and say, like you small, go into a small group and you try to be yourself and somebody nails you. It's like, I'm out of here.

Paul so easily could have said, I'm out of here. What an amazing, amazing risk taker he was for Jesus. So I'm not calling you to an easy life.

Not in your small group. Not in your school. Not in your church, your office.

I just don't have any promises about ease, except it gets worse. I have huge promises about joy. Huge promises about I'm there for you every moment on your side with grace and glory, sun and shield.

Just be you, be you for me. That's number one. It's risky.

I wrote in the margin here, bloodlines. So I've just published this book on race. I published the book knowing exactly what's going to happen and bang! First email I get from overseas tears into me.

This is not going to influence me in the least. Because I'm walking into this issue eyes wide open. I've been here for 20 years, eyes wide open.

You can't please anybody on race. So what? Don't tell the truth as you see it in the Bible. I'm not an ideal pastor.

Look at this church. We're not an ideal church on this. So go ahead, give yourself to the arrows.

Right. Just get ready. You don't quit.

You don't throw it away because somebody doesn't like what you say or you didn't say it right. You didn't say it often enough or you... Join me. Join me.

Number two, he did not mislead them or get sexually involved in anyone or try to deceive them in any way. See those words in verse three? For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity. That word impurity in Paul always is referring to sexual impurity.

You can track it down and see the context. Or any attempt to deceive. So he gave them the truth and he kept himself pure.

God help us in the ministry, right? No pornography. No sleeping around. No dilly-dallying at night in the office.

Pure. Before God and man, no offense given to anyone. Oh God, help us.

Because that's the way Paul set it up. I gave myself to you purely. I took advantage of no woman.

I took advantage of no man. I didn't mislead you in any way. I spoke the truth.

I laid my life on the line. That's number two. Number three, he did not try to please men, but God.

Look at the end of verse four. We speak not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. Verse six, nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others.

Man-pleasing makes people phony. Man-pleasing makes you into a second-hander. A second-hander is a person who's always looking.

They're always calculating and sifting what they are and say by, how are they going to respond? How are they going to respond? How are they going to like me? That's a second-hander. They're the second. I speak to please.

I speak to please. That's a sad person. You can see them.

You can smell them. They're so sad. The reason they're sad and not just bad is because they're insecure.

They're so scared. They don't have a core of identity where they can just say, I'm me. I'm me.

What God is making me in all my sin and all my imperfections, I'm just me and I'm going to say what I think and if they don't like it, I'm still me and God loves me and I'm accepted. Oh, sweet fellowship where you

can be like that. Instead of always calculating.

No poses. No angles. I hope they approve me.

Man-pleasers desperately need approval. They desperately need people to like them and approve them. If somebody doesn't like them or speaks, they just cave.

Their inner being caves and they'll leave that church in a minute or leave that group in a minute or leave life if it's bad enough. So sad. Christ came to you to give you himself at the core of your being, which can't be any more solid.

Just can't be any more solid. You in Christ rock solid. Let them say what they will.

Be yourself. I wrote here, relax in Jesus. Be who you are.

Warts, wrinkles, scratches and all. I put scratches in there because I was shaving a few days, a few weeks ago. You may remember.

I cut myself right here. Man, it was nasty. I said, oh shoot, because I got to make a video tomorrow.

I'm holding this thing. And lo and behold, it's just, it was dark. Big black boom right there.

And I thought, now I got to make this video tomorrow morning at nine. So maybe Noel and Talitha, they probably don't, but maybe I could borrow something. So this is the old man talking.

And then this verse or this truth. What? Like pastors don't cut themselves. Just go on the video with a cut.

But what is that? I did. And I preached two weekends it was there. That's really sad.

When we are worked up about cutting ourselves and not wanting anybody to see it. What kind of human being am I? That I still incline a little bit. So that's number three.

He did not try to please men but God. Number four. Paul did not flatter or position himself for money.

It's interesting that we're going to have power, money, and sex in here. Those are the three great temptations of leaders and humans. Verse five.

We never came with words of flattery. As you know, there it is again. You know.

Nor with a pretext for greed. God is witness. So what is flattery? Flattery is using language manipulatively.

It doesn't even have to be false. It's just got an angle to it trying to get something. Get approval or get money.

In this case, money. You butter these Thessalonians up enough. Maybe remind them of how you got beat up in Philippi and how you work late at night and maybe somebody will come up with a free will offering.

Bigger than anybody ever expected. And he said, I didn't have any of that. You didn't taste that when I was there.

Look at verse nine. You remember, brothers. There it is again.

You remember. Our labor and toil. We worked night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you.

I just labored so that you wouldn't think this is about money. This is not about money. I just think as a church, as Bethlehem Colleges and Seminaries, desiring God, we should bend over backward, do everything possible to say this is not about money.

That's what Paul did here. I didn't flatter. I didn't put up any pretense.

I stayed up late after we preached to make some tents so that I could not have to ask anybody for any money, lest you would think, even though I have a right, the labor is worthy of his wage. Don't muzzle the ox when he's treading out the grain. I have a right and I'm not taking it.

Number five. Paul put aside his position of power and let himself feel mother-like tender affection for the Thessalonians and opened his heart to them. Verse six at the end through eight.

We could have made demands as apostles of Christ, meaning I didn't, but we were gentle among you like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you, not only the gospel, but our own selves because you had become very dear to us. In other words, Paul exchanged a position of power for a relationship of affection.

There's a lot of powerful people in this church, okay? I'm a powerful person. Elders are powerful. All kinds of powerful.

Power comes with knowledge. Got a lot of knowledgeable people. The kind of people, you know, who wear suits during the week instead of on the weekend.

Then they dress down for Sunday and dress up for work because they got power. That's the power suit. That's what you're supposed to do.

And he's saying to all of you who have very powerful positions in education or business or finance, when you approach people, don't wield that power. Be like a mom. Somebody hurting, be like a mom.

Be like a mom. Paul said, I was like a mom towards you. I loved you like my children, like a mom loves her children.

Wasn't even afraid as a man to use that imagery about himself and his own ministry. It's very vulnerable, isn't it? For a powerful person to kneel down, maybe by somebody, put their arm around them and weep with them and say, I don't know the answer to your question. I just know I care about you.

Let's pray and ask God he knows. Isn't that easy? No, it's hard, but it's easy. You have to have a theological degree to do that.

I don't know is an answer. Everybody can give. It's very helpful if it's followed by God knows and I care.

So watch out for your sophistication, your money, your role. Number six, Paul's was, Paul's ministry there was holy. Paul was holy and righteous and blameless among them.

Verse 10, You are witnesses and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. Now, don't get freaked out by this. Like, whoa, that's sinless perfection.

It's not. He did not mean that. The word blameless does not mean sinless perfection.

It's used numerous times. It just doesn't mean that. Here's what this means.

Let's paraphrase it. This means when he says we were holy and righteous and blameless, he means we honored God. We were a reverent, sober, God honoring band of ministers.

Second, we treated people right. And third, we didn't give anybody a legitimate offense against us, to hold against us. That's what blameless means.

If there was anything we did wrong, we apologized immediately. We left nobody with an offense against us or the gospel. He was above reproach.

And I stand back and say, what a beautiful thing when somebody can be both real and good. Letting it all hang out. You stop being good, you know.

Say things and do things that you shouldn't do. And Paul was real and he was good. And I want to be real and I want to be good then for the group that I'm in with the other four pastor families.

We pastors are all in small groups. You need to know that. Number seven, this is the last one.

He felt a father-like. So first he was a mom with tender affection like a nursing mom. And now he's a father.

Well, he felt a father-like desire to encourage them and leave them a glorious legacy. Verse 11 and 12. You know how like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you.

So fathers exhort. Get their arms under their kids and say, we can do this. You can do this.

And exhort them towards something. Verse 10, no, where am I? 12, 11. For you know how like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encourage you and charge you to walk in a manner worthy of God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

That's what I mean by legacy. The legacy Paul wants to leave here is not himself. He wants to leave a legacy of the kingdom and the glory of God.

I want you to go to the kingdom. I want you to enter into glory. God has called you there.

That's the legacy I want to leave. So those are the seven ways that Paul did verse 8. Let me read verse 8 again. We were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God, the good news, but our own selves, our own souls.

And that's what I think God is calling Bethlehem to be and to do with each other, especially in our small groups. God is calling you into these relationships not primarily because of what you need to get from the group, but because of what you are called to give to the group. So here they are.

To take a risk of sharing your soul, number one. Number two, to put away all deceit and exploitation. Number three, to renounce man-pleasing.

Number four, to be done with flattery and covetousness, greed. Number five, to feel tender, mother-like affections for people. Ask for that gift.

Number six, to be holy and righteous and blameless. In other words, to be upright and above reproach, not to give any cause for offense and number seven, to feel father-like desires and encourage and lead people toward a legacy of God-centered kingdom and glory. Now, we end like this.

I prayed at the beginning. I said and I'll say again, I know that the natural response of many ordinary, good, real Christians is to say, I don't have anything to give. You feel it whether you say it or not.

Now, you're embarrassed to say it because I told you it's blasphemy to say it, but you got to be real. Okay, go ahead and blaspheme if you have to. God can manage that and forgive that.

I just want you to get over it. I want you to get beyond it, repent and stop saying it because the more you say it, the more you believe it. It's not true.

I'm telling you on the authority of God's word, it's not true when you say, I don't have anything to give. Christ is in you. The Holy Spirit is in you.

The Word of God, a little bit of it, is in you. A spiritual gift is in you. I've got verses for all these.

You want the verses? Christ is in you. Romans 8.10 The Holy Spirit is in you. 1 Corinthians 6.19 The Word of God is in you.

1 Corinthians 2.13 Spiritual gifts are in you. 1 Peter 4.10 The new creation in Christ that you are. 2 Corinthians 5.17 And you're a fountain, John 4.14 Don't say it anymore.

It's awesome what you are. And so, here's what life is. Life is an incremental series of becoming what you are in Christ.

Whatever your age, 15, 75, you can move. God is in you. You can move.

A little increment towards becoming the giver that you are, the fountain that you are. The others need you. This church needs you.

No one can say to another, I have no need of you. 1 Corinthians 12 So, I tell you this because I am a Christian hedonist, and I am coming alongside you to lead you down a path where your joy will be deep and strong and intense and long. Because Jesus said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

And Paul said, we gave you not only the gospel, but our own selves. Let's pray. Now, here we are again praying, Lord, for the miracle that the falsely humble, I have nothing to give, would be replaced by the truly humble courage, I will give the five loaves and two fish that I have myself.

My imperfect, sinful, struggling self. And Lord, I beg of you, make this church a safe place for that. I know I can't guarantee it.

But I ask for it. That our small groups would be really patient, really understanding, really slow to judge and condemn, really quick to listen, because the anger of man and the suspicion of man does not work the righteousness of God. So, I plead with you, build these small groups and grant that they would be the places of great joy that you designed for them to be.

I ask this in Jesus name. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/IN-fNkFHFQI.mp4>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-piper/we-were-eager-to-share-with-you-our-own-souls/>

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