

Continue our Series titled: "The Path" The Path of Discipleship:

Worship Weekly, Gather in a Group, Serve On A Ministry Team, Give Generously, Share Near and Far

Last week: Serving On A Ministry Team. Today: Giving Generously

When we think of giving we almost always think of money...but when the Bible talks about giving to God it includes so much more! The word the Bible uses for giving is comprehensive. It is a whole life word: Steward
Steward: Someone who manages another person's goods, estate, business, finances...EVERYTHING

So, with that in mind, when we talk about "Giving Generously" we are talking about more than just money!

When the Bible uses the term "Steward" it speak to you and I being managers of all God gives us:

A steward is a "caretaker" of something that belongs to someone else...Accountable at end of day for how it is used!

When we think of Giving Generously, we should be thinking about more than money: We are to be Stewards of our:

- Time: *Limited and precious. Everyone gets same amount.*
- Talent: *The abilities and gifts God has put in your hands*
- Treasure: *Money and finances we have been given*
- Gospel! *Message of God's Grace: Entrusted to our care. If we don't share, no one hears!*

(Money is the LEAST important of all!)

Today I want to look with you at the PRINCIPLES that support Giving Generously...whatever you give!

2 Cor 8:1-7 Pg 820

1. Giving Generously Is About An Attitude of Overflow Not A Calculation of Amount. 2Cor 8:1-2

For most of us when we start a conversation about generosity we immediately go to a calculation of amount.

Illus: *If I am tipping a server...is generous 15%, 20%, 25%? Calculation*

If I am going to give you some of my time to help you...am I giving you an hour...or two...or four?

If I am going to share some of my abilities with you...am I doing to do that all out, everything I have, just tip hat?

When the Apostle Paul initiates a conversation about generosity, notice what he does. Says nothing about Amount!

Now, in this instance he is talking specifically about finances...but notice he never once touched on amount. Never mentioned
He never gives us a percentage, He never stipulates an amount, He never identifies a total.

Instead he talks about the ATTITUDE that underlies and empowers generosity.

Why? Because Paul knows that if we get the ATTITUDE right...the ACTIONS will fall in place.

Look at the different ways Paul describes their attitude and how it comes together

- Grace: Undeserved favor: God gave the eyes beyond themselves; See other's needs, Where does that come from? When you understand what God has done for YOU Then you want to share that amazing gift with others.
- Overflowing Joy: Abundance of joy, happiness, delight
Overflowing happiness,
- Regardless of circumstance: Severe trial: Abundant trial of affliction and trouble
Extreme poverty: Deep need, emptiness of supply
- Rich Generosity: Overflowing Liberality, Open handedness; to have an abundance...and MORE!

Illus: Remember in HS math when you had to learn how to solve a mathematical equation?

You had all the parentheses, Ellipses, Brackets...All done in right order...sometimes you had representative letters not numbers
That's kind of what Paul is doing here!

$(AG + OJ) \times (ST + EP) = \text{Rich Generosity!}$

Applic: Here is what Paul is aiming at in these few verses. He is teaching us about how we give. Regardless of WHAT it is
We need to get the attitude right...and Paul says, look at the Macedonian churches...they have the formula right!
Is YOURS?

2. Giving Generously Is An Attitude Of Exceeding My Ability And Tapping Into God's Supply. Vs 3

Notice Paul says here, "They gave as much as they were able...and beyond their ability!"

It's a play on words...He uses the same term: Ability (Power they had within themselves) But changes preposition
Here is the way we would translate it:

- They gave UP to their ability
- Then, they gave BEYOND their ability

Here he is incorporating the Overflow idea. The church in Macedonia evidently learned the right lesson.

When we are talking about blessing others...

The question is NOT: What is MY ability? What can I do? How far can I go?

Rather: What is GOD'S ability in and through me? What can HE through me if I am available?

Applic: Whenever we are talking about giving: Time, Talent, Treasure, Gospel: What can GOD DO THROUGH ME? (hold)

Eph 3:20: "Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we could ever ask or imagine..."

3. Giving Generously IS An Internal Motivation, NOT An External Manipulation.

Vs 3b - 7

When we stop to think about the motivation to give, many of us get flashbacks of TV and Radio preachers, Give and I'll send you a prayer cloth, Give and God will give back to you MORE, Give and God will bless you (Manipulation) Paul doesn't go there at all. In fact, he is very clear. Paul says, look at the motivations of the Macedonians

- **Origin: Entirely on their own:** Lit = *Of their own initiative, voluntarily:* This was their idea! I didn't tell them
- **Desire: Urgently Pleaded to do it:** Lit = *they came to me and begged to be able to give!* (Paul knew poverty didn't go!)
Illus: Early on in my ministry, I learned something: Never take away someone's opportunity to give, serve, say no
When we do that, we are being disrespectful of who they are, how value them, what God can do through them
- **Action: First gave themselves:** This is an amazing turn of phrase. Entirely different from the world WE live in!
Illus: For most of us...in our world: I'll give you my money, I'll give you talents, maybe some time: HEART?

Applic: Here is what I know. God isn't after your MONEY < YOUR TALENT, YOUR TIME: HE wants YOU
Because if He has you...He has all the rest of those things!

And if you give Him those others things...and you DON'T give Him YOU, Wasted, time, talent treasure
Because here is the reality: You can't buy God off...no matter WHAT price you pay!

Rom 12:1-2 *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your reasonable act of worship."*

Second Half: Let's APPLY this equation...these principles to different areas of stewardship we talked about earlier!

Time: Col 4:5 *"Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity."*

My Way: After I do all the things I must do...I only have so much time to give to spiritual things!

I have time for worship, maybe Bible study or group, occasionally I have time for ministry limited ways...all I have!

BUT: If I take the Equation: (AG + OJ) x (Severe pressure + Limited Availability) + Giving Generously looks like?

Talent: 1Co 12:18 *"But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be."*

My Way: I have limited skills and abilities. When I look at the spiritual needs around me, no way I can meet them!

BUT: If I take the Equation: (AG + OJ) x (Severe demands + Limited abilities) = Giving Generously looks like?

Treasure: 1Co 16:2 *On the first day of every week, each of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income"*

My Way: I have so little money...and there are so many needs! After I do all I think I HAVE to do, all I want to do...None

BUT: If I take the Equation: (AG + OJ) x (Overwhelming needs + Limited Funds) = Giving Generously looks like?

Gospel: 1Th 2:4 *"On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel."*

My Way: There is no way I can share my faith with others! I never feel adequate, don't know what to say, answer questions.

BUT: If I take the Equation: (AG x OJ) + (My Limitations + Lack of Knowledge/Confidence) + Giving Generously looks like!

CONCL: You see, Here is the key: Giving Generously is about an Attitude you have toward God and circumstances
Not the Ability you have...Or your circumstances.

I want to challenge you today...Whether you are Giving: Time, Talent, Treasure, Gospel

Do this...Look at the entire equation:

(AG x OJ) and leverage that against your (Severe Trials and Limitations) = Giving Generously always be the outcome