

**Intro:** One of the worst pieces of Spiritual counsel I ever got was in the area of Giving. When Darlene and I moved to Dallas to go to Bible College we were typical college students...we didn't have two nickels to rub together! We were married on our own, so both college tuition and living expenses were all on us. Because of that I didn't feel like I could give...I didn't see any way possible! Do the budget...simply wasn't available.

Went to Assoc Pastor: I can't give...But I can paint...He looked and said OK! Struggled financially entire time!  
For the next two weeks I want to talk with you about Giving: Titled Generous: Take Bibles 2 Cor 8:

- This week: Biblical Principles of Giving
- Next Week: Practical Process of Giving

**Background:**

- 2 Cor 8-9 Most Extensive and Comprehensive passage on Giving in the NT
- History: Jerusalem was in Famine/Paul taking offering/Cor promised.../After a year...not done/Paul coming Writes to tell them "Get Ready" and in doing so teaching them about Giving: Example: Macedonian Church

**Principle # 1: Giving Is An Act Of God's Grace In Your Life!**

2 Cor 8:1;

- Grace: God's Unmerited Favor in Your life:
- As God offers you the opportunity to Give...He is offering YOU His Favor!  
He doesn't NEED your money...or YOU!
- He is inviting you to participate with Him...as you do that....YOU are blessed!
- Biggest secret of giving...YOU ARE BLESSED MORE THAN THE ONES WHO RECEIVE!  
Acts 20:35 Paul is quoting Jesus! Often called the forgotten beatitude!

Giving is NOT an obligation, it is NOT a Duty, It is NOT necessary to "keep doors of church open"

Giving is an opportunity to experience God's grace in your life!

Paul uses 9 words to describe the gift he is talking to the Cor church about. One used most often? GRACE!

- Vs 2: Grace God gave the Macedonian church
- Vs 6: This act of grace on your part
- Vs 7: this grace of giving!

**Principle 1:** "If you practice GRACE GIVING the way Paul describes, you open yourself up to God's grace in YOUR life  
The ONLY time in the bible where God challenges us to TEST Him is in the area of Giving! Mal 3:10 Tithe next week  
But the point is: We practice Grace Giving...and it is more about us and OUR heart than our gift!!

**Principle # 2: Generous Giving Is the Biblical Standard.**

2 Cor 8:2-3

Now, don't be confused. Generous is not about AMOUNT....But Rather about ATTITUDE!

Look at how Jesus taught us that: Mark 12:41-44 Who was the generous giver?

- We can be generous regardless of circumstances:  
~Very Severe Trial: Incredible situation around them: Famine there too!  
~Extreme Poverty: Words used to describe a destitute beggar with absolutely nothing!
- Generosity comes from the HEART!  
~Welled Up from within: Generosity is not a matter of WHAT you have, but of WHO you ARE!  
~Crazy Formula: Severe Trial + Joy of Christ + Extreme Poverty = Overflowing Generosity!

**Illus:** Lunch in Cuba with my friend Abdiel: New Church...Awful: Showed up unexpectedly: Offered what he had  
Crackers and Soda: 5 or 6 of us: Eating: Son came home from school...lunch: I realized: His lunch  
When it sank in I started to say something...through my translator...He refused...Don't take His blessing  
Generosity...to me: Soda and Crackers....When you are feeding your sons lunch to guests!

**Principle # 3: The Priority In Giving Is YOU...Then YOUR "Stuff".**

2 Cor 8:3b-5

Vs 5: They gave themselves...FIRST! LONG BEFORE THEY GAVE their offering...they gave their HEART!

This is an area that has been lost for most people when they think about giving. If you have heard me speak on giving before you have heard me express it this way. "God doesn't want your MONEY...He wants your HEART!" Because this is the reality. You can give Him your money and NEVER give Him your heart. But if He has your HEART...then He has your money...and everything else you own!

So, if you are here today...and you have NEVER made the decision to give your heart and life to Jesus Christ, the single very best thing you can do with your money today is fold it back up, put it in your pocket and go on vacation, or buy that car, or that boat, or that whatever you want...because I promise you...you aren't impressing God with your gift! What He WANTS...What He desires...What He is Jealous for...is your heart...your life...your commitment to Him!

>Admit you are a sinner                    >Recognize your sin offends The Holy God                    >Go to Him...Confess  
>Believe that Jesus, His perfect Son, Died on the Cross for YOUR sin...                    >Trust in Jesus, Accept Him  
Until you do THAT...you don't need to consider giving financially. You have MUCH more important issues deal with

**Applic:** At the end of the service today I'm going to give you an opportunity to do that. I'm going to be right down front, and if you KNOW you need to give your heart to Him...today is the day. Most important thing you can give Him is YOU!

**Principle # 4: We Should Always Be Growing In Our Giving!**                    2 Cor 8:6

Ever heard the old saying...Give until it hurts. Absolutely wrong: Give until it feels GOOD!

There is a place beyond the initial shock of giving substantially where the Grace of God kicks in...and it feels good!

Remember that Story of Abdiel and His son? When I travel in Cuba, every single time I give some of YOUR money to EVERY Pastor I visit...Money, Medicine, Special item I know they might need if I know them... Let me tell you what I mean by giving until it feels good. Not only do I take YOUR money...I also take some of MY money...Personal funds. I cannot describe to the you the joy in my heart...when I gave Abdiel 35 40, 50 of yours: And 100 of MINE! I don't say that to brag...I just lost my blessing in heaven...but I'm trying to help you understand...That's what it means to GROW!

My wife and practice tithing...and I'll cover that next week...In addition, we seek to Excel in our giving  
Excel: Lit = *to increase; to grow; to have in excess, to super abound* "Word used to talk about flower bud to bloom!"  
To start with tithing...but then...to grow, to excel to go beyond...so that your giving is like God's Grace!  
Does that make sense? God is pouring His blessing out in my life...I can't even measure it...I should grow too!

Look at how Paul Describes it: He says this is just one of many spiritual disciplines we want to grow in!

>Faith: >Speech:                    >Knowledge                    >Earnestness/Sincerity                    >Love for others                    >GIVING!

**Applic:** For some people...they picked a number of convenience to give...never changes....Paul is teaching opposite  
Grow, develop, mature...Move from the Bud...to full bloom!

**5. Your Giving To Jesus Should Look Like Jesus Giving To You!**                    2 Cor 8:8-9

Notice what Paul says: I'm not commanding you! Lit = I'm not making this a MUST...but I'm putting your sincerity to the test to see if what you SAY..."I love Jesus" is true!

When HE said "I love you" it cost Him EVERYTHING! How could it be possible that YOU say, I love Jesus and it costs you NOTHING? I don't think Paul is saying...I'm going to compare your giving to the Macedonian churches...Not for a minute...I think he is saying...I'm going to compare your giving to Jesus with His giving to YOU!

Taken in THAT light...whatever I think I have given...suddenly becomes very small doesn't it? All of a sudden the "Sacrifice" that I think I am making becomes insignificant in light of the Cross!

**Concl:** Today, I want to challenge you with your giving. Esp with How, What and Why you give!

- Grace, not Burden
- Generous, not Stingy
- Give self FIRST...If you have never Given Jesus your heart....START THERE!
- Grow....don't stay stagnant
- Ask yourself...Does my giving to Jesus look ANYTHING at all like His giving to me.  
If not...Fix it!