

MORE THAN ENOUGH – 2 of 4
Three Qualities of Generous People
November 10, 2024

INTRODUCTION Let me start by asking you a question. What are you good at when it comes to your money? I'll give you some options.

How many of you would say I'm really good at **① spending**? Some of you have got the spiritual gift of spending.

I'll ask you another question. How many of you would say you're actually good at **② bargain hunting**? You think if you find something for 50% off and buy it, you saved money, right?

So, we have spending, we have bargaining.

How many of you are good at **③ saving**? Some of you have so much cash under your mattress, you could buy a small country. You're really good at saving.

What's interesting is not a single Bible verse says we should be great at **① shopping**. Not a single Bible verse says we should be great at **② bargain hunting**. And there's not a single Bible verse that says we should be great at **③ saving** for ourselves treasures on earth.

But there are plenty of verses in God's Word that said, "**We should be great at giving.**"

We're in a message series called **More Than Enough** and we are studying 2 Corinthians 8 and 9.

I want to give you the context if you missed last week. Paul was writing to the Christians in Corinth, and he was encouraging them to be generous like Jesus.

Now, previously, the Corinthians have said, "**We want to give, we're going to give, and we plan to give,**" and they started, but they stopped. They had good intentions, but they didn't follow through.

In 2 Corinthians 8:6, Paul said, *‘So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving.*

Then Paul says, **"finish the ministry of giving."** And I want you to realize this, that giving is spiritual. It's actually a ministry when you give, like praying.

Everybody says, **“Well, praying and fasting are spiritual. Reading your Bible is spiritual, going on a mission trip is spiritual, and serving is spiritual.”**

And serving in the two-year-old room may be the most spiritual thing that you ever do! Giving is very spiritual. It's actually a ministry. And Paul said, **"Why don't you finish the ministry of giving?"**

And he continues in Verse 7, *‘Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving.*

Paul said, **"You've got big faith to believe God for ①miracles, and you've got ②gifted communicators, and you're great at seeking ③biblical knowledge, and you're great with ④spiritual enthusiasm, and you're great at ⑤showing love.**

I also want you to be great at ⑥giving." I want you to be world class givers. And I'm guessing most of you want to be great at giving. You've got good intentions, you want to be great at it, but sometimes, we don't follow through.

How many of you would say you've ever thought about giving something, but you didn't?

ILLUSTRATION One summer Laura and I went with extended family to an amusement park in Chattanooga, Tennessee. After everyone left, Laura and I went to dinner at a restaurant.

Our waitress was really hustling trying to take care of everybody and yet she was pleasant. After our meal, it slowed down a little bit and she had time to talk.

She told us she was starting a ministry in the area and was excited about what God was doing there. Her enthusiasm was contagious. Laura and I both felt a prompting to contribute to her ministry.

When she brought the check, it wasn't very much. Someone had given me a \$100 bill as a gift, and I took it out and gave it to her. I said, **"We want to help you with your ministry."**

She was stunned and said, **"Are you sure?"** And we said, **"Yes we are sure that the Holy Spirit is prompting us to help you in this way."** She was so encouraged and grateful!

We paid the bill and left a tip, but the \$100 bill was a gift to her. What if we hadn't been obedient to the Holy Spirit?

We would have missed out on contributing to the Lord's work and she would have missed out on the encouragement and the blessing of the gift.

Let me ask you a question: **❶ How can you be sure the Holy Spirit is prompting you to give?** Let me answer that with another question: **❷ When has the devil ever tempted you to be generous?**

We want to be generous. And Paul was talking to the Corinthians who had the same issue that many of us have. We want to be generous, but we're not necessarily great at being generous. So if we want to be great at anything, what do we know?

We know that nobody ever becomes great at anything by accident, right? I don't know anybody who said, **"I just walked up to the piano, and I was a concert pianist."** I mean, I don't know how it happened, no one says that.

No one ever says, **"I just did open heart surgery for the first time. I didn't even know what to do. I just took out a kitchen knife, and man, I was good at it,"** right? You just don't do that.

The way you get great at something is you actually plan to work at it. You strategically decide, I want to be good at something. No one ever just accidentally became irrationally generous.

And the reason that we don't accidentally become irrationally generous is because we are naturally selfish, and I can prove this to you. If you have ever been around any two-year-old, you never have to have selfish lessons.

You never say, "Hey, kid, today, I'm gonna teach you to be selfish. I'm gonna hand you a toy. And then when I try to take it back, I want you to scream as loud as humanly possible."

A blood curdling fingernails on a chalkboard scream. I want you to scream, "Nah!" You never have to teach a two-year-old to do that, because we're naturally selfish.

It's the same thing with looking at a group photo. When you look at a group photo, who do you look at first in the photo? No one tells you to look at yourself. And no one tells you that if it's a good picture of you and is bad of everybody else.

But if everybody else looks amazing, and your eyes are shut, it's a bad picture, because naturally, we're selfish.

And nobody becomes irrationally generous. Nobody becomes great at generosity. Nobody excels at generosity by accident. We actually have to plan for it.

In fact, Isaiah 32:8 tells us, ***8But generous people plan to do what is generous, and they stand firm in their generosity.***

If you really want to be like God, some people have said, you may never be more like God than when you give. If you want to be great, if you want to be like God, be great at being generous, plan to be generous, and then you stand firm in your generosity.

What's interesting is most of us don't plan to be generous. I didn't plan to be generous. We plan a lot of things - **① a vacation, ② to remodel the kitchen, ③ a party, ④ a date, but ⑤ most people don't plan their giving.**

How do most of us give? We give spontaneously. It's not wrong to give spontaneously. You want to occasionally give spontaneously.

But please, listen. If you only give spontaneously, you'll never be great at generosity, because there is a massive difference between giving and being generous. There's a big difference.

What do we know? **GIVING IS WHAT WE DO, BUT GENEROUS IS WHO WE ARE.**

Giving is actually an action, but generosity is a mindset.

And so, to be generous, we have to change our mindset, and we have to plan to overcome our selfish tendency, to be generous, and stand firm in our generosity.

So today as we look at God's Word, I want to show you three qualities of generous people and pray that God helps us grow into these qualities. What are the qualities?

① **GENEROUS PEOPLE GIVE WILLINGLY.**

In 2 Corinthians 8:10, Paul says to the Corinthians, ¹⁰... *Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so.*

¹¹*Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means.*

¹²*For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.*

Generous people give willingly. In other words, God isn't just concerned with the amount, but He's also very concerned with the heart.

In other words, somebody could give a bigger gift with the wrong motives, and that's not really generous. Or somebody could give a smaller gift with the right heart, and the right motives, and that's more generous.

So, whenever you give, give with the right heart. This isn't like to relieve your guilt. **"Oh, pastor talked about giving, I better do something today."**

It's not to make you feel better. It's certainly not to impress people. It's not to show on social media how generous I am. It is to honor God and to bless people. When you give from your heart, it's not a I have to, it's I want to.

After all God has done for me, I want to be a blessing to others. Generous people, give willingly.

② GENEROUS PEOPLE GIVE PROPORTIONATELY.

They give in proportion to what they have. And what's crazy is one person could give \$10 and that is incredibly generous, because that's all they have. And another person might give \$1,000 and you think, "Wow, that's generous."

God might say, "That's not generous at all. They're rich, they would not even notice that." Generous people give in proportion to what they have.

And maybe that's one reason Paul said this in 2 Corinthians 8:11, ¹¹... Give in proportion to what you have. ¹²*Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have.*

Paul teaches in the New Testament, a very similar principle to what we see all over the Old Testament.

Essentially, he's going to teach us to prioritize your portion, set aside a portion in order to give, and you see it all over the Old Testament. We looked at some verses last week.

Leviticus 27:30 mentions the word tithe. ³⁰*"A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD."*

A tithe, the Hebrew word is maaser, means 1/10. It's a portion, 1/10th of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord.

Scripture says in multiple different places that we return the tithe to God, 10% of what He trusts us with, we give back to Him. And many of you are thinking the very same thing that I thought the first time I heard that. No way.

I mean; to give 10% to God, I would have to rearrange my entire life around God. I'd have to make some changes to do that. I'd have to actually prioritize God over all the things that I'm already doing in my life. That's crazy.

And Paul said essentially the same thing, prioritize your portion.

In 1 Corinthians 16:2, he says, ²*On the first day of each week, you should each put aside a portion of the money you have earned. ...*

Generous people are going to give in proportion to what they have. And the very first time I had the faith to tithe, I was 21 years old, and I was working in my first church job. I said, **"Okay, God, I'm gonna trust You."**

I wrote the biggest check of my life as a tithe, and said, **"God, I trust You,"** and put it in in the offering plate. And I was repeatedly blessed by God through other people, materially, etc.

God said, **"Test me."** That's what He said in the Bible. Test me and see if I won't prove myself faithful. God will provide. He'll bless it may be ① **materially**, ② **financially**, ③ **spiritually**, or ④ **relationally**.

And scripture says the tithe belongs to the Lord.

If you don't do anything, you're never going to be more generous by doing nothing. Let me just say, when you do nothing, you train yourself to be not generous. You're training yourself not to trust God with your finances.

I would just encourage you to start somewhere, because you will never accidentally be great at being generous. Generous people have a plan, and they stand firm in their generosity.

Generous people give willingly. We want to be like God, we want to be a blessing to others. They give proportionately, and then this one's actually difficult.

③ **GENEROUS PEOPLE GIVE SACRIFICIALLY.**

They give sacrificially. They don't just give when it's easy, or comfortable, but they'll actually give in a way they often feel it. In fact, Jesus told a very powerful story about a poor widow who gave sacrificially.

And he says this in Mark 12:41-44, ⁴¹*Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money.*

May I pause for a moment and say that's a sobering thought that Jesus is actually watching and looking at the amount that people put in.

Many rich people put in large amounts. ⁴²Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins.

⁴³Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions.

⁴⁴For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on."

Some of you are like that widow. You are so generous with your financial resources, your time, your faithfulness, your service, but others, not so much.

So, I would ask you just to think about when is the last time you gave sacrificially? When is the last time that you gave, and you felt it? And let's just call it what it is.

When is the last time you've given your time, your part, your faithfulness, your resources in a way that you actually felt it? I'll tell you about a time that we felt it, and God showed up in a very special way.

CONCLUSION Laura and I were tithing when we were going through infertility. We were paying for counseling and medicine for Laura to help her get pregnant.

We were writing checks to specialists for \$700 and \$500, and we really didn't have that kind of money. We paid for Laura to have surgery but kept tithing. We were struggling emotionally and financially.

But we kept faithfully tithing. It was a really hard time in our lives. Then 2 things happened in January of 1999. 1998 had been a rough year, but in 1999 God turned the page on a new chapter!

First, the church realized they had made a mistake with my salary the last 6 months of the year, and they wrote us a check for \$2,400. That was a lot of money to us.

Second, Laura's Aunt Emma wrote us a check for \$10,000! And that was a huge check to us! It was as if God was saying, **"I'm paying attention and I see you!"**

It was such a humbling experience! We felt like God was saying, **“Take your shoes off, you’re on holy ground!”**

We used that money to pay bills and take a little much needed vacation. And our faith in God was dramatically increased!

I want to promise you, you just can't outgive God. So when it comes to your money, just remember, God never said to be great at **① spending on yourself.**

The Bible never said be great at finding the **② best bargains.** And the Bible said never said to be great at **③ storing up for yourself treasures on earth** where moth and rust destroy but be great at storing up treasures in heaven.

Be great, excel at the ministry of giving, because giving is spiritual. It is a ministry. So, let's not be like the Corinthians.

But let's give **① willingly, ② joyfully, ③ hilariously, ④ thankfully.** And let's give **⑤ proportionately.** Let's start with the tithe, 10% back to God, then we're going to give offerings above that.

Let's be givers. And then every now and then, when God prompts you, let's give sacrificially. And what you will find is you just can't outgive God. Because when you give, you may never be more like God. For God so loved the world that He gave.

PRAYER Father, thank You for an amazing church of people who are growing in generosity. Thank You that You enable our church to give, to give to people in need, to give to ministries to give people time, to make a difference.

God, help us to excel at generosity. I hope this is all of you. Every one of you who's a believer, I hope this is you. But how many would say, **“I want to be like God, I want to be generous.”**

Father, stir our hearts. Give us faith. Give us an abundant mindset. God give us the barn mindset, blessings to give first and to trust You. And God, give us eyes to see, opportunities to give, to be a blessing, to empower Your church, to bless people in need, to occasionally give spontaneously, but to often give strategically.

God so loved you that He gave His one and only Son Jesus. God planned to send His son. God gave His son willingly. God gave His first.

And God gave sacrificially the most sacrificial gift ever, Jesus, the Son of God who never sinned, the lamb of God who is slain for the forgiveness of our sins.

And God raised Him from the dead, so that anyone who calls on that name, the name that is above every name, the name of Jesus, your sins would all be forgiven.

You're not here by accident. You're here, because God is loving you toward Him, what do you do? You just step away from your old life, step away from your sin, and say, **"Yes, Jesus, I receive your gift, the gift of eternal life, the gift of salvation."** He gave His gift, and you receive it.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of sending Your son. I give my life to Him. Jesus, forgive me. Save me from all of my sins.

Make me brand new. Fill me with your spirit, so I could know you and serve you. And follow you. Make me like you, full of love, full of compassion, and full of generosity, to show your love to a world who needs you.

Thank you for new life. I give you all of mine, in Jesus' name, I pray. And all God's children said, Amen!

THE END