

Series: Side by Side
Message Title: **Developing Generosity**
Date: Sunday, June 10, 2018
Scripture: Philippians 4:10-11, 14-18
Speaker: David H. McKinley
Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

Introduction

Most people have favorites: Music (style or group)? Movie? Food or Restaurant? Outfit or Shoes? Sports or Team? Chair or Couch? Person or Child?—Now I'm meddling!

I think the case can be made that Philippi may have been the Apostle Paul's favorite church. He loved many/all, but while Philippi was not the most prominent or prestigious, it was a generous church.

The letter to the Philippians we have studied over these weeks and months was written in gratitude for financial help the church provided to Paul in Rome, and it was delivered by Epaphroditus. (See Philippians 2:25, 30). So through this faithful servant, Paul received from the hearts of a generous church.

See Philippians 4:10-11.

“And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:15-19 ESV).

Generous people are gracious and likable people. It's difficult to resist kindness.

Here Paul is thinking about the heart and response of the church at Philippi. Generosity seeks and seizes an opportunity to act. Generosity reaches for the check!

Generosity is one of the biggest memories and best qualities I saw and learned from my dad. He was big on picking up the check. Even till the final days, I could not pick up the meal. That's what I call “Fine Dining!”

Nothing is more becoming of a heart for Christ in the church than a church that has a heart and an impulse to give.

Where have we been? Where are we going as we near the end of this series in Philippians?

- We are Better Together in Worship
- We are Better Together in Service
- We are Better Together Through Struggles
- We are Better Together With Prayer
- We are Better Together Through Generosity

I know, you're probably thinking a sermon on money! Ugh! But the truth is, this is not a sermon on money; it is a call and challenge to seize opportunity to develop and express generosity. I don't know how to fulfill my role as your pastor from this passage without you wondering about fund raising, but I love what Paul says in Philippians 4:17, "I seek the fruit."

Money is something you hold in your hand, but generosity is something that holds your heart. I yearn as your pastor, shepherd, as a brother, to know and share all the Scripture says regarding our pursuit of generosity.

"Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can." —John Wesley, Founder of Methodism

Here are three insights on generosity for us to consider and pursue today.



1. See Generosity as a Response to Grace

“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel” (Philippians 1:3-5, 7 ESV).

The message Paul delivered to this people changed their lives.

To know Christ is to experience the grace of God in a way that transforms the motivations of your life.

This church never quit reflecting and remembering the impact of Paul and this message in their lives. Though time passed,

the appreciation and affection did not wane. They were bound to Paul in a partnership of grace.

Just as business partnerships are formed, they open a common account, draw from the same resources, share the same risks and review their debits and credits. They do this to achieve products and profits. So it is with the church. We are gathered as partners, partakers of grace and this grace reshapes the purpose and priorities of our lives. It's all about a great exchange!

What God did at the beginning was having continuing results in them, and they were investing and involving themselves in God's grace measured through Paul and his ministry.

One of life's greatest moments is experiencing and receiving the generous impulse of another. Maybe you are aware that each year in the spring, there is a global day called, *Pay it Forward Day*. It is a special day when people take and make the opportunity to do deeds of kindness through generosity toward others.

Giving is an expectation in the life of every recipient of grace. If you are not giving, you are not partnering. You are a consumer, but not a co-laborer.

Grace is the operational word of the entire Christian life:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10 ESV).

We are captured by grace, we share a partnership of grace, and we remember that grace prompts generosity in us. Grace is the motivation and the first action that calls us to pay it forward.

2. Practice Generosity as a Means of Protection and Provision

See Philippians 4:17.

Paul makes the point that he was not demanding of a gift, but he delighted in the

fact that this gift reflected selfless care and concern—freedom from selfish indulgence and self-centered preoccupation.

“We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints” (2 Corinthians 8:1-4 ESV).

“Count me in!”

We all wrestle with the potential bondage of greed in life—subtle wants can become enslaving masters in your life. For this reason, it is rare to have anyone admit to greed! We will admit to lying and stealing, right? ... but greed?

We need the protection of generosity to deliver us from the deep pit of greed.

"And he said to them, 'Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions'" (Luke 12:15 ESV).

...followed by parable of the rich fool.

There are two distortions in the realm of giving: Poverty Theology (God favors the poor) and Prosperity Theology (God favors the rich).

"Prosperity cannot be a proof of God's favor since it is what the devil promises those who worship him." See Matthew 4:9.

Having discussed the distortions and deceptions we see and hear today, let's make clear there is "fruit" that comes through giving. Paul says, *"I'm not nearly as excited about your interest in me as I am God's interest being evident in your life."*

"Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit" (Philippians 4:17 ESV).

Listen carefully, your church doesn't need you to give as much as you need to give.

There are some amazing joys and benefits to partnering with God—you can't out give God!

One of the foundational teachings regarding money has to do with the Old Testament practice of tithing. It was present and practiced in the New Testament too.

Are you familiar with the word, *tithe*? Do you know what it means? Many think a "tip"—something you give because you came. There are plenty of tippers at church, but far fewer tithers.

Tithe simply means 10%. Tithe = 10%. It is based on a percentage of your earnings. God uses percentages, not decimal points. It's based on what you have received from God—not a service rendered at a particular gathering.

If you've grown up in a church like Warren (Baptist background and tradition), you have probably been taught the importance of tithing—bringing the first 10% of your income to God. If you've been around long enough, you may have even heard the

reference to what was called, *storehouse tithing*. Storehouse tithing meant bringing your tithe each Sunday to the church (storehouse).

“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house. And thereby put Me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need” (Malachi 3:10 ESV).

Old Testament/temple; New Testament/church.

“Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come” (1 Corinthians 16:1-2 ESV).

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 = closest association with a local church.

The strength of our church and ministry is the commitment of those who tithe to support the work and witness of Warren.

I practice this personally, although I know not everyone shares my view theologically. Some try to downplay tithing as an Old Testament law while we are under grace in the New Testament. But I have never found anywhere in the New Testament where Jesus lowered Old Testament standards. He did not come to “repeal” the Law, but to “fulfill” the law.

Jesus challenged the Pharisees for being meticulous in tithing while ignoring justice, mercy and faith, but then He said, “These things you ought to have done and not left the other [tithing] undone” (Matthew 23:23).

Here’s what I know for sure: God doesn’t just want 10% of what you make; He wants 100% of who you are!

Grace. God’s kind, gracious, generous action of love toward us compels us to become gracious and generous in life.

Arthur Berry was a charming man who loved only the finest things life had to offer. During the Roaring ‘20s, he was a master thief who stole from only the wealthiest people. Berry was eventually caught and spent the next 18

years in prison. After serving his sentence, he moved to a small town in New England where he led a quiet life.

Some years later, word got out who he was and his true identity was revealed. A horde of reporters came to interview the notorious thief. One reporter asked him, "Do you remember who it was that you stole the most from?"

Berry replied, "The person that I stole the most from was Arthur Berry. I could have made a contribution to society. I could have been a teacher. I could have been a businessman. I could have done anything worthwhile, but instead I spent two-thirds of my adult life in prison. I have spent a lifetime robbing myself."

I want to issue a challenge to you: Quit robbing God and robbing yourself! Start giving! I'm not going to set the standard; I'm simply going to exhort you and challenge you to start giving. I believe if you do this, you will soon see fruit you did not expect. It will show protection and provision.

“Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you” (Luke 6:38 ESV).

“The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:6-7 ESV).

“And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19 ESV).

I don't understand all this because it doesn't make financial sense, but it does affirm providential grace in all times and places. Here is an answer to the prayer Paul prayed in Philippians 1:11—filled with the fruit of righteousness, generous giving!

Notice that this “fruit” is not just greater material gain, but eternal credit. You are building it up for the future. (See 1 Timothy 6:17-19).

Alistar Begg says that while it is good financial stewardship to have an IRA (Individual Retirement Account), every believer needs to think and plan toward an IEA (Individual Eternal Account).

3. Know Generosity Pleases God

"I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God" (Philippians 4:18 ESV).

Does this matter to you? Pleasing God? My observation through many years of ministry is that there are two undeniable and indisputable evidences of authentic Christianity: (1) hunger for God's Word and (2) desire for God's pleasure in life.

Here the image of sacrifice being offered is that of a priest who stands before God in reverence, awe and wonder. You can't fully separate this from another text found in Romans 12:1-2.

God is pleased in a generous people and every act of generosity is an act of worship offered to God.

Giving for us is not obligatory; it is an opportunity to please God. (See Philippians 4:10). They acted on it and there was a wonderful, glorious aroma of praise to God.

One of my favorite things about Spring in Augusta is the return of the jasmine and honeysuckle. As I walk, I suddenly pass this wonderful, fragrant, delightful and sweet scents.

God hates the stench of stingy, but He loves the fragrance of generosity!

The last recorded words of Jesus are those repeated by Paul to a local church:

“In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35 ESV).

We can't delete or deny the call to generosity in our lives. I exhort you as Paul commended those in 2 Corinthians:

“But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also... For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:7, 9 ESV).

The gospel is all about the generosity of God for us. Do you think we can overlook the appeal to generosity as recipients of this grace?