

11/13/22

“Giving: It’s All about your Heart”

2 Corinthians 8:1-7, 9:7-8

Pastor David Pranga, Brewster Baptist Church

Good morning, my name is Pastor David Pranga, and I’m one of the pastors here at Brewster Baptist Church. I would like to welcome you to our service, whether you are watching online or are here in the sanctuary. We are glad that you have joined us today.

Pastor Doug and Jill are away for Nate Ryan’s ordination. Nate Ryan grew up at BBC and is now pastoring his first church in Pennsylvania. Yesterday, Nate had his ordination where Doug spoke. Doug, Jill, Sharon, and Tim Kautz all went to support Nate this weekend.

Currently, we are in a series entitled “Be Engaged: Share Your Heart, Do Your Part.” The focus of this series is simply what are essential aspects of our Christian faith? What are things that make a difference in our walk with God?

The first week, Pastor Joe spoke about the importance of being engaged in Worship, our number one priority. Worship happens when we focus our entire being--heart, mind, soul, and strength--on glorifying God. We can worship God in all places and at all times.

In week two, Pastor Doug shared about the importance of being engaged in Service. He shared that we are called to serve others. We all have a place to serve. There are lots of opportunities to serve at BBC. Here is a key thought: when we serve other people, our service glorifies God.

Last week in week three, I shared about the importance of being engaged in Community. God has made us relational beings. As relational beings, we need to continue to meet together and share life. We are to encourage and spur one another on to do good deeds.

Which leads us to week four of the engaged series: the importance of being engaged in Giving generously. Let me begin by asking you a question. When you think of generosity, who comes to mind?

When I think of a person being over the top and generous, I think of a former basketball player named Shaquille O’Neal who was 7 feet tall, weighed 350+ pounds, and played a center in the NBA. There are countless stories of Shaq being generous. Here’s a story that I read recently about Shaq: Shaq was in a jewelry store named Zale’s one day looking at some jewelry. Shaq hears the associate from behind the counter talking to a customer about an engagement ring. The man asked the salesperson, “How much do I still owe to pay off the engagement ring?” Shaq was captivated by the conversation and walked over to the man and asked him, “How much do you still owe?” Then Shaq told the guy, “I got this for you.” Shaq paid off the man’s debt. The man was speechless. There are countless stories of how Shaq has been generous with complete strangers in multiple stores like Best Buy and Walmart when he buys things for children and adults. Shaq was being interviewed, and they asked him, “Why do you do it?” Shaq shared how much joy and happiness it brings him to help other people, and how he loved seeing the joy in the people’s faces.

Often, we think of celebrities, professional athletes, and successful businessmen as people who can be generous. We assume that they have lots of money, so they can afford to be generous. So often we think to ourselves, if we were rich like them, then we would be generous. If we only won the lottery. We may even rationalize to ourselves all the reasons why we cannot be a generous person, especially now. We go to the grocery store and every item seems to be going up by 50 cents or a dollar. The price of gasoline is near \$4.00/gallon. We must heat our house and the price of energy and electricity continues to climb. Some of us have car repair bills, doctor and dentist bills. The list goes on and on as

to why we cannot be more generous. We live in a time where the price of everything is skyrocketing, and we are all feeling the pain. Yet, I believe each of us wants to be generous.

This week, I was reminded about a biblical story about the Macedonian Christians, a group of believers that really had very little. They were in poverty, and yet they understood what it meant to give and be generous. Paul used this church as an example to us today. I would like to read to you *2 Corinthians 8:1-7*:

And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people.

And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

I want to share with you some of the background and history of what is happening. The Apostle Paul had been traveling around, sharing Jesus with people all over. He visited churches that he planted, and he was encouraging the followers of Jesus and sharing the gospel. Paul shared with these churches in the Gentile world about how their Jewish brothers and sisters in Jerusalem were struggling with a major famine in the land which led to poverty, along with persecution for being a Christian. Paul took up an offering to take back to Jerusalem to help these brothers and sisters, who were in desperate need. What do we learn about this Macedonian church?

In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own.... 2 Corinthians 8:2-3

What made this church different, far different than any other church? They excelled in giving and being generous. Even though they had very little, they saw themselves as rich and wanted to give it away.

Let me ask you a question: What is generosity? Gordon McDonald's definition of generosity: *Generosity is sacrificing something of value to us for the good of another, because we love them.*

The Macedonian Christians were poor, they were going through severe trials and suffering. Yet, this group of Christians had something special about them: their hearts were overflowing with joy, they were rich where it counted the most, and they were generous in what they had and could give away.

The text in verse 3 says, *"they gave as much as they were able and even beyond their ability."* In fact, these Christians who had nothing, it goes to say in verse 4: *"they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people."*

What made these Christians who had so very little and were going through so much want to share in taking a collection for another church who is in desperate need? Why were these people not concerned about themselves?

We complain about food and gasoline prices, and we are dreading our winter fuel cost. Yet, these Christians were different: they “pleaded and counted it a privilege to help out.” What is it about these Christians that we are missing? I think the answer is in verse 1: *“brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches.”*

Point #1. God’s Grace

What made this church and these Christians different? It’s grace. These early Christians understood the grace of God in their lives, and that God promises to take care and provide for his children. As Christians, we have God’s grace upon us.

What is “grace”? Grace is getting something you don’t deserve, receiving the unmerited favor of God.

The Macedonian Christians understood that God gave them “grace” in their lives which included salvation, forgiveness of sin, and the hope of eternal life. These Christians understood their hearts were changed. Instead of focusing on their own needs, they were able to focus on the needs of others. They were being generous with what they had. True generosity is always initiated by love. Who is the author of love? Our Heavenly Father.

We can see God’s love in *John 3:16: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

We see that God is the first and most generous giver. What did God do? He gave his Son, Jesus. Jesus left his high position in Heaven. He came to earth and served other people. He walked with them. He taught them, and first and foremost, He gave His very life for us. Jesus modeled to us what it meant to be a Christian. Jesus put our needs before his own.

What I see in this passage is that “God’s grace” is upon these Macedonian Christians. The Christians understood what Jesus did in their life. Here is the key thought: The Macedonians’ hearts had been changed. They stepped forward in faith and obedience. When we accept Jesus into our lives, our hearts change to become more like him. I believe every single person can be a generous person, no matter where they are financially. I believe it starts with our heart where we need to have Jesus as our foundation.

Which leads to **Point #2. Joyful Heart**

I think it’s very important to God that our hearts are in the right place. We learned that these Christians were filled with “overflowing joy” by helping others, according to verse 2. I don’t believe that Paul was concerned about the size of the gift. Paul knew they did not have a lot. What Paul witnessed was the people’s hearts. They wanted to give because they knew and could relate to those in need and understood what the people were going through. They wanted to make a difference.

Cheerful givers are often overjoyed at the thought of helping others. When we give joyfully, we give to others, or we give to the church, because of what Jesus Christ has done in our lives. Our Father has set the standard for us. We want to honor God with our giving.

Let’s move on to point #3. Let me read verse 2 *Corinthians 8:7: But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.*

Point #3. Excel in Giving

God wants us to excel in our faith, in speech, knowledge, and in the grace of giving. How do we excel in the grace of giving? If you want to become better at anything, you must practice. That includes giving. We must do it often. In fact, we must look for opportunities to give. We need to make it a regular routine. To excel at anything, you must continue to do it, and eventually, it will be second nature.

When I think of people who excel in giving, I think of my parents. When I was young, I saw my parents weekly make a commitment to generously support their home church. If we visited another church growing up, they gave to that church as well. If a missionary came to share, they would give an offering. If someone needed help at Christmas time, I remember my mom would take us kids to the store to buy presents. I know my father would help financially people who needed some extra help. They did it with joy and cheerfulness, and they never want people to know they were helping out. When you are around people who excel in giving, it’s motivational. I often just marvel at their gift of giving. They just did it with so much joy and love. Honestly, I wish that I did a better job in my own life. Point #3 is simple – God wants each of us to “excel in giving.” When we give from the heart, we glorify God.

1) Application for us today

How do we give and share our resources and be generous with what God has given us? Brewster Baptist Church is a very mission-minded Church. I am very thankful to the generosity here at BBC. Every year I share with you that our church gives between 15-20% of every dollar back to missions. I just thought that I would share with you some financials. BBC has an annual budget of a little over \$1.2 million which is broken up into 5 categories:

2022 Budget

Payroll & Benefits	\$848,000
Operations	\$190,000
Ministry Budget	\$ 81,000
Outreach and Communications	\$ 40,000
<u>Missions</u>	<u>\$ 90,000</u>
Total	\$1,249,000

Our church uses a hybrid model dealing with missions. Our annual budget includes missions, but we also have special offerings, designated offerings, and we raise money to go towards missions:

Hybrid Model for Missions

Mission Budget	\$ 90,000
AFC, OGHs, WMO, RMMO,	\$ 60,000
Caring Cupboard, Deacons Fund	\$ 25,000
Sofia Church	\$ 20,000
<u>Holiday Fair</u>	<u>\$ 40,000</u>
Total Mission	\$235,000

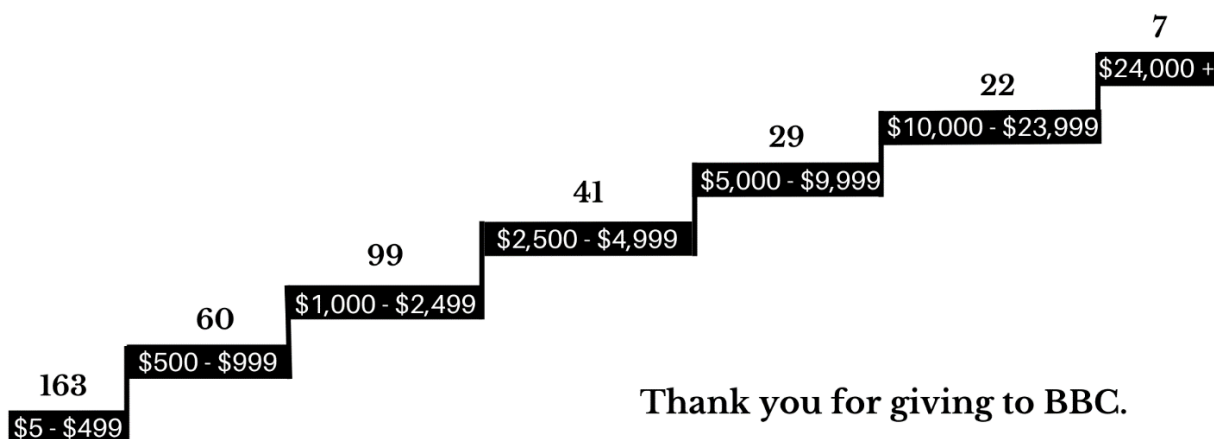
As you can see, Brewster Baptist Church is a very mission-minded church. Every year, BBC gives away between 15-20% of money that come in for missions. This money goes to local, regional, and global missions. BBC realizes that we cannot do everything, so we partner with many different organizations to help people and share the Gospel.

I also think it is very important for you to realize that the money you give also goes to the general budget. It's something we don't talk very much about. It's not as cool as missions though it's just as important. It's nice to have a church where we can meet, that has an unbelievable staff, and many ministries reaching and teaching people about Jesus Christ.

I want to let you know that this year, our general budget is falling roughly 8% behind budget. We could use some help in this area before we close out the year. Our Missions Offerings are strong once again as we're doing great in this area.

How do we meet our annual budget? It's up to the people in our congregation. I showed this graph at the Annual Meeting a few years ago, and people thought it was helpful. This chart is below. BBC has 421 family units that gave in 2021 which is amazing.

421 Current Family Giving Units



163	\$1 to \$499
60	\$500 to \$999
99	\$1,000 to \$2,499
41	\$2,500 to \$4,999
29	\$5,000 to \$9,999
22	\$10,000 to \$23,999
7	\$24,000
421	Family Units

First, I want to thank everyone for their financial support. We need everyone's support to accomplish what we feel God is calling us to do.

Challenge: I want you to be in prayer about how you can join with us in supporting our ministries at Brewster Baptist Church. As we learned from the Macedonian Christians, they gave from their heart and with joy. My challenge to you is this: spend some time in prayer this week as to what you can give to BBC.

- For some of us, we are giving all we can give to the church which is awesome. God knows that is all you can give because God knows your heart and that you're doing your very best. Thank you.
- There are some people here who when they see this step ladder, they say to themselves, I know that I can do more. I am willing to commit to take one step higher or two steps higher. I want to honor God with my finances.

I want to say that God recognizes the challenge that we all have. As I mentioned before, this is between you and God, and it needs to be from your heart.

I want to leave you another verse. It is from *2 Corinthians 9:7-8: Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*

I love this verse for two reasons: 1) God loves a cheerful giver; and 2) verse 8, God can bless you abundantly when we walk out in faith. God will and can meet our needs in every way.

Let us pray....