

9/28/25

The Generous Life

2 Corinthians 8:1-7

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Good morning and welcome to Brewster Baptist Church. My name is Pastor David Pranga, and I am the Executive Pastor. It is my great pleasure to welcome you, whether you are watching online or if you are here in our Sanctuary — I am glad you have chosen to worship with us.

Today, we are finishing our six-week series called “Leave Something Beautiful Behind”. Each week, we have looked at something we can do, a choice we can make, that can help us to create a beautiful and enduring legacy — one that has an impact on our church, our community, and our world.

This week, I get to share with you about being generous and supporting the Lord’s work. I already know that this is one of your favorite topics, and you couldn’t wait to get to church this morning and hear a sermon about money.

Did you know that Biblical stewardship is a topic that affects every single one of us? Money and stewardship are major themes throughout the Bible. Did you know that prayer and faith are mentioned a little over 500 times in the Bible? Yet, there are over 2,000 verses that deal with money, wealth, possessions, and stewardship. Jesus talked about money in 16 of 38 parables. One in ten verses in the gospels are related to money and material wealth.

God uses stewardship and giving to teach us some important spiritual truths. God wants us to learn to not rely upon ourselves, but to rely upon Him. God wants us to have a heart that is generous.

Let me ask you a question: do you consider yourself a generous person towards God's work? Would God say that you are a generous person?

One of the things that I appreciate about my parents is that they shared with me the importance of giving to the Lord’s work. I can remember being quite young and going to church. When the offering plate came by, one of the four children in our family would drop a check in the offering plate. When a missionary came to church and spoke, I saw my parents give money to support missionary work.

When I was young, my parents made sure to teach me that some of my allowance money was supposed to go to savings, some to church, and the rest for me — which I spent mostly on baseball cards, as a kid.

I was blessed that my parents had a different mindset than most people. What my parents did was model for us — and teach us — the importance of being a good steward. They understood that everything belongs to God, that we are only stewards of the things God has given us. This includes both money and possessions.

There are many of us who come to church and we have never been taught the importance and value of giving to the Lord's work. We know that we should give and be generous. It is hard and can be painful. There are so many competing voices that are driving us in different directions — and away from God.

I can remember, back when I was in college, I was listening to a speaker talk about the importance of tithing. The speaker gave us a piece of paper that listed the reasons “Why now is not a good time to give to God”. The paper listed reasons why each age was not a good time to give to the Lord's work.

- Age 10: God, I am currently saving for my Lego set.
- Age 15: God, I am saving for a car.
- Age 20: God, right now money is very tight with all my college bills.
- Age 25: God, you must understand that I have little money. I am renting and barely scraping by. I have so many college loans and car repairs.
- Age 30: God, I just got into my first house. I am cash poor.
- Age 35: God, I have two young children. They take all of my extra money.
- Age 45: God, I need to replace my appliances. Kids' sports and clothing are so costly.
- Age 55: God, I need to save for retirement.
- Age 70: God, I've lived a good life, but I need to make sure my savings lasts.

The paper listed reasons and excuses as to why people could not give. For me, this paper with all the excuses made such a significant impact.

The reality is that there is never a good age to start giving to God. We can all find a reason for why this is not a suitable time. There is never a magic age that makes it easier and less stressful. The truth is, when we give to God's work, it will always be a sacrifice.

God often uses stewardship to grow us in our faith. Deep down, we want to be generous people. We want to support God's work. Yet, many of us struggle with being generous and giving to the Lord.

This morning, we are going to unpack what it means to live "The Generous Life" through the lens of *2 Corinthians 8:1-7*. Before we begin, I need to give you the context and history for what is happening.

This letter was written to the Corinthians. Paul was taking a collection for the poor believers in Jerusalem. They were in great need. In this letter, Paul was challenging the church of Corinth. They had an abundance of gifts. They were not facing any major struggles. They even made a promise to help those Christians who were in need. Yet, they failed to keep their promise. They had not done their part.

Paul tells them about a generous church from Macedonia. Paul uses this church as an example of what it means to be generous. This passage is a fitting example of how we are to be generous people. *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."

When I read this passage, there are four truths I see about being generous.

1. Generosity Begins with Grace and Our Relationship with Jesus.

I find it encouraging that Paul does not begin by talking about money or wealth. He does not talk about how much money was given. Instead, Paul begins by talking about the "grace" in verse 1.

"We want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches" (2 Corinthians 8:1).

The Macedonian Christians understood God's grace. They were filled with gratitude in their hearts. They were thankful for God being in their lives. True generosity begins with having a healthy understanding of what God has done in our lives. They counted it a privilege to be connected to God. This relationship with God was the foundation for their giving. It led them to be generous people.

2 Corinthians 8:9 says, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor."

Jesus is the supreme example of one who showed eagerness and generosity. Jesus, who was with God in the beginning, left His heavenly riches in heaven. Jesus came to earth in the form of a human and lived among us. He taught us the truth, how we are to live and to be a servant. Jesus then took on the greatest punishment of all. He took our sins and placed them on his back. Jesus died on the cross for our sake.

Why did Jesus do it? Jesus loved us very much. He wanted to restore our relationship to the Father that was broken because of our sin. Without Jesus' death on the cross, we are bankrupt. Jesus forgave our sins. As long as we have accepted Jesus in our heart, we are children of God and joint heirs.

The Macedonian Christians understood the importance and the significance of Jesus. They understood that Jesus had paid the price, on the cross, for their sins. They realized the gift of salvation that was given to them. True generosity starts with understanding God's grace in our lives.

The Macedonians did not give because they were wealthy. They gave because they understood, and were eternally grateful for, God's grace in their lives. They had been transformed by the gospel. That grace stirred something inside of them, so that they wanted to give to the Lord's work.

Generosity starts with an understanding of grace and what Jesus has done in one's life. That is the foundation for why we should give.

Let us move on to verse 2. "*In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity*" (*2 Corinthians 8:2*).

2. Generosity Starts with Our Attitude and Willingness.

The Macedonian Christians were facing trials and extreme poverty. They were not in a good place, themselves. They could have given valid excuses for why they could not give. Yet, they chose not to. Instead, the scriptures tell us they gave with

“overflowing joy” and “rich generosity”. They counted it a pleasure to help those who needed it.

Generosity is not about the amount in your wallet or how much you give. It is about the attitude and willingness to give. Wealth is not a requirement for generosity, but having a willing heart is. That is something these Christians believed in.

We see more about their attitude in verse 3. *“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” (2 Corinthians 8:3-5).*

When I read this passage, I see an attitude and willingness of these Christians:

- (1) They gave as much as they were able.
- (2) Even beyond their ability
- (3) Entirely on their own
- (4) They urgently pleaded.
- (5) Counted it a privilege
- (6) Exceed our expectations

When I read this list, I see that they gave enthusiastically. They had an attitude of joy, not because of wealth, but because of their willingness to trust God and to be a blessing to others. They wanted to give, and they saw it as a privilege, not a pain — a gift of joy, not obligation or duty.

Generosity gives us the opportunity to:

- (1) Partner with what God is doing.
- (2) Meet the needs of others.
- (3) Reflect the heart of God.
- (4) Break the grip of greed in our lives.

The Macedonians were not waiting for ideal circumstances to come their way. It would never happen. They chose to have an attitude of joy. They lived out faith over fear. They had the belief that it was their responsibility to help. They believed that God would watch over them and meet their needs, too.

God cares about our attitude and willingness to be generous.

3. Generosity is Fueled by Devotion to God.

Point three: generosity is fueled by the overflow of our devotion to God.

“They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us” (2 Corinthians 8:5).

A long time ago, I worked at a YMCA camp in Michigan. It was an outdoor Christian camp for elementary, middle, and high school students. The kids came for a week, and we stayed in cabins along a lake. It was a wonderful experience for the campers, and for us, as staff.

The motto of the camp was: “God First, and Others Second”. It was something that we repeated to our campers often. Why? Usually, we all want our own way. Kids are no different than adults. When arguments and struggles happened, it was a good reminder for everyone to think back to the motto of the camp: God first, and others second. This motto helped so very much in the way we lived with each other.

The Macedonian Christians put God first. They were devoted to God. They also looked for ways to support God’s work. Their giving was overflowing from their devotion to God.

I am reminded of *Proverbs 3:9*, which says, “Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of your crops.”

The Macedonian Christians wanted to honor God when they gave. It was an act of worship and trust. They did not give out of guilt or pressure; it was out of joy and love, their devotion to God and their desire to help others.

The most generous people I know are not the ones with the most money; they are the ones who have surrendered to God. They want to honor God by their giving. They want to be good stewards of God’s money. They are devoted to God first. And second, they want to help those in need.

4. Generosity is Something We Need to Excel in.

Let us go back to the passage and pick it up in verse 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” (2 Corinthians 8:7).

Paul knew that the people in the church of Corinth were rich in their spiritual gifts. He praises them for their faith, speech, knowledge, and love. Paul says that there is

one area that they needed to do a better job in. This area is important. What is the one area that they need to do some work in? It is giving to the Lord's work.

Many of us are like the Corinthians. We want to grow in our prayer life. We want to grow in our Bible knowledge. We want to grow in our faith. Paul says, "Don't forget to grow in your giving."

Paul is reminding and teaching them that giving is just as important as their focus on their faith, their speech, their knowledge, and love. God wants them to excel in giving! Our giving matters to God more than we realize.

Unfortunately, some people view giving as something optional and not particularly important. People make excuses for not doing it. God really wants us to have a heart like His. *Matthew 6:21* says, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." In other words, your giving often reveals your heart. I honestly believe this to be true.

An illustration: Hold out your fist and make it closed. Often, when we talk about money, many of us function as a person with a closed fist. We hold on to money very tightly. We do not want to give it away. We do not want to lose it. But, we are also missing God's joy and blessings.

God wants us to release and open our fist in the way we manage money. An open hand is both a hand that gives and a hand that can receive. We need to remember that we are stewards of God's money and possessions, that there is immense joy in giving to God's work and helping people in need.

I am reminded, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (*Acts 20:35*). Generosity is a spiritual discipline that helps us to grow and have a heart like God's. God wants us to excel, not only in our faith, speech, knowledge, and love, but also in the grace of giving and generosity.

Conclusion and Action Steps:

This morning, we talked about four important truths:

- 1. Generosity Begins with Grace and Our Relationship with Jesus.**
- 2. Generosity Starts with Our Attitude and Willingness.**
- 3. Generosity is Fueled by Devotion to God.**
- 4. Generosity is Something We Need to Excel in.**

For many of us here today, our faith means a lot to us. Paul reminds us that we need to excel in the grace of giving. He wants us to have an attitude and willingness to help. This looks different for every person here. For some, we need to start giving to God for the very first time. For others, we need to be more consistent. For a third group, we may need to look at the amount we are giving and match that with our faith in God — that amount may need to increase because we are devoted to God’s work.

Remember, our giving is a form of worship to God. We want to be people who give with the attitude of joy, because God loves a cheerful giver. It should be from our heart. Let us pray.

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. What is one lesson about money, and/or being generous, that you can recall learning from your parents? What examples of generosity have you seen recently?
2. What are the barriers that prevent people from being generous and giving money to the Lord’s work?
3. Paul is writing to the church of Corinth. He uses the example of the Macedonian Christians. Out of what circumstances did the Macedonian church give (verse 2)? What attitude did they exhibit in their giving (verses 2-4)? How is this different from most churches?
4. How did Jesus Christ’s example (verse 9) motivate Macedonian Christians to be generous? Verse 5 says, “They gave themselves first to the Lord.” How does our relationship with God impact our generosity toward the church?
5. How can joy lead to generosity, even when the person may not have very much? What motivates you to be a generous person?
6. Paul tells us that we are to excel in everything (verse 7). This includes our faith, speech, knowledge, and loving one another. Paul says that we are to excel in the grace of giving, as well. Why is it so important and put at the same level as the others?
7. How are you doing in the grace of giving? What steps can you take to be more generous?