

Imagine...Being a Cheerful Giver
November 5, 2017
Lynn Haven UMC

Introduction

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give. You shouldn’t give if you don’t want to. You shouldn’t give because you are forced to. God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to shower all kinds of blessings on you. So in all things and at all times you will have everything you need. You will do more and more good works.” (2 Corinthians 9:7-8 NIRV)

If you are participating in (or familiar with) our Imagine campaign, you know that we have been exploring the topic of what it would be like to manage our financial resources in a godly manner. Many people in our congregation have participated in Financial Peace University (FPU) classes in which they have learned how to operate from a budget, get out of debt, and save for emergencies and retirement. Throughout the course, money management guru Dave Ramsey is often quoted as saying: “Live like no one else now, so later you can live and give like no one else.” That’s ultimately why we want to be wise managers of what God has entrusted into our care. So today let’s imagine being a cheerful giver. What does that involve? In his letters to the Corinthians, Paul outlines several characteristics that might help give us a better idea.

Digging Deeper

A cheerful giver...

Gives CONSISTENTLY.

- “Now about the collection for the Lord’s people: On the 1st day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money... “(1 Corinthians 16:1-2a NIV) Specificity was placed on these key points: the first day, every week. For some, giving may start off by dropping a \$20 in the offering plate when they are able to make it to church. However, the natural progression of your tithes, service and attendance (if you are applying what you read in the Bible and hear from the pulpit) should be consistency. As time passes, you start to realize not only can you afford more, you want to give more because you appreciate the magnitude of the many gifts given so freely to you by your God who loves you with an everlasting love. What are some other motivators for developing a practice of habitual giving? How would you explain the importance of giving back to God to a new believer?
- Regular giving meets the needs of not only the recipient (God and His Church), but also the giver. Great joy can be found in surrendering to the Lord what is rightfully His. This is a joy that emanates from the heart of a person who knows that our faithful giving establishes His Lordship over our lives. Further, our offerings, especially the tithe of 10%, indicates an inherent trust placed in God to provide for our every need from the remainder of our income. Do you think it makes a difference in establishing a habit of giving to put forth your tithe first every pay day, before allocating any funds elsewhere? Why do you think the concept of tithing is a struggle for some Christians? Have you noticed a change in your giving patterns as your understanding of why you should do so has evolved and matured?

Gives PROPORTIONATELY.

- Every Sunday each of you must put aside some money, in proportion to what you have earned... (1 Corinthians 16:2 GNB) The tithe is that tenth of our income we give to God, which enables Him to move on our behalf to bless others. God holds the deed to everything in this world. It is helpful to always bear in mind that we are just managing His property. If we can mentally establish proper ownership of all that we possess, it becomes easier to relinquish what isn't really ours in the first place. How can a godly perspective on giving proportionately open our eyes to where we might be failing to properly manage what we've been given? Do you allow emotions to control how attached you are to your possessions or finances?
- If you do not currently tithe, do you think it would cause great disruption in your life to move toward doing so? Do you think it's possible that kind of disruption might strengthen your trust in God's sovereignty over your life? How so?

Gives GENEROUSLY.

- As we read in 2 Corinthians 9: 8-10, God rewards generosity. The more we give, the more good can be done for His people. If you think your offering won't make a difference, remember that no gift given willingly is too small for God to use. How have you personally been impacted by the generosity of others? Do you have a story to tell about how being generous yielded tangible blessings in your life?
- "Good will come to him who is generous" (Psalm 112:5) Generosity is the byproduct of a life lived in relationship with the Lord. Paying for someone else's food at the drive through, placing a few dollars in the hands of a stranger in need, donating to a victim of a tragic event, etc. These sort of things happen every day through the actions of God's people who realize the good fortune He has bestowed upon them and are called to reciprocate. These random acts of kindness tend to create a ripple effect of goodness that can stretch for miles and touch countless lives. Have you ever witnessed a "pay it forward" act of generosity and how did it affect you?

Gives THANKFULLY.

- So two good things will result from this ministry of giving – the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God. (2 Corinthians 9:12 NLT) Jesus is far more interested in what lies in our hearts and prompts us to behave a certain way than if we go through the motions of doing what we think others will deem as "good". Make no mistake about it, giving is a heart issue. If we are fully surrendering to God as Lord of our lives we will not consider our money ours alone to govern as we see fit. A heart that has been reconciled with giving proportionately from a place of thankfulness is able to realize the blessing it is to be able to give. Do you know many people who consider it pure joy to give away their hard earned money? They are probably some of the happiest people you will ever meet (and usually the most peaceful). Why do you think that is? One might argue that having an eternal perspective can make clinging to the things of this world seem trivial. Whether you make \$1,000, \$100 or \$10 a week, what you give back is obviously between you and God. But even if you have very little, you still have much, and we know Who to thank for every bit of it.

Conclusion

Whether we are giving of our time, energy, or material possessions, let us do so of our own free will and because we find genuine pleasure in being generous to others, especially those in need. Such giving will not only make us happy but also put a smile on God's face, because after all, He "loves a cheerful giver."