

# Reclaiming Generosity: Grace Takes You Further!

## 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Ben Deaver at New Hope Church on April 19, 2015

***Get the five \$20 bills under the chairs!***

Mindi gives her KidsLIFE announcement before kids are dismissed.

Announcements—Refer to our updated program. It'll just get better from here hopefully!

- Next week we'll hear from Austin and Jenni in the Central Gathering and we'll also pray for the FOCUS teams that are heading overseas *AND* we'll wrap up our *Reclaiming Spiritual Disciplines* sermon series. Come ready to share if God has used this series in your life.
- The following Sunday, May 3, is our Baptism Celebration (#5). Then it's Mother's Day! After that we are going to jump in the book of Galatians for the summer.
- Revisit Dave's sermon on *Reclaiming Joy: The Art of Celebration*—#4 Sing, Dance, Laugh—The Swivel
- Refer to announcement #2 Student/Family Connections and #4 Women's and Men's Events signups.

Intro Maris, the most beautiful woman in here!

## Maris reads 2 Corinthians 9:6-15<sup>ESV</sup>

### Pray

### Reclaiming Generosity: Grace takes you further!

We were going to cover a different discipline this morning but a couple weeks ago a new NHer asked me if we ever taught on giving. I said, "Yes, at times." She said, "Good, you should." I thought perhaps it was a good time to hit this topic that is throughout the Scriptures all over the place.

**2 Corinthians 8:1-4** <sup>1</sup>We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, <sup>4</sup>begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints...

- The Macedonian church problem was that they gave too much. Crazy! What if that was the New Hope problem? Slow down with your crazy giving, y'all!

The Macedonian Formula: Grace of God + Severe Test of Affliction + Abundance of Joy + Extreme Poverty = Wealth of Generosity

- We want to *Reclaim Generosity*. The Macedonians were on to something awesome that has been lost. Let's reclaim this crazy gracious generosity.
- *How does a community of believers become like the Macedonians with their zeal to give?*

## Principles from 2 Corinthians 8 and 9

### Give yourself to God first.

**2 Corinthians 8:5** ...and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

- True generosity begins when we give our whole heart to God. (8:5)
- We're having a Baptism Celebration on Sunday, May 3...here! If you want to make a public profession of how you have chosen to give yourself to God first then let us know.

### Giving is a spiritual discipline. Actually give. Mere intention isn't enough.

**2 Corinthians 8:6-7, 10-11** <sup>6</sup> Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. <sup>7</sup> 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... <sup>10</sup> And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. <sup>11</sup> So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have.

- Good intentions are completely different from actual generosity. It's not the thought that counts contrary to popular belief. Actually do it.
- Generosity is important for spiritual growth, just like faith, witnessing, learning the Word and Christian love.

**Quote:** There are three conversions necessary: the conversion of the heart, mind, and the purse. The last thing to be converted is a man's purse. —Martin Luther

- In fact, the Bible says more about money than faith and prayer combined. Jesus says more about money than heaven and hell. How we deal with money says a great deal about our heart.
- Gracious generosity is a mark of spiritual maturity.

*Where does the fuel for this action come from? What's the impetus? What's the driving force? Is it a command, like the tithe?*

**2 Corinthians 8:7** 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.

**2 Corinthians 8:8-9** <sup>8</sup> Don't you remember the tithe in the Old Testament? You should give because God commanded that you give way back in the beginning. <sup>9</sup> In fact, you better give or else you will be cursed. Furthermore, you may be forced to eat the fruit of your womb for your disobedience. You don't believe me? Please refer to Deuteronomy 28:53-58.

*How far does law take us?*

- Using the tithe as your motivator can easily result in compulsion and giving the minimum required...plus it's arbitrary. It's not the New Testament teaching.
  - *Did anyone go way above and beyond when paying your taxes this last Wednesday?* Nope. We're trying to pay the minimum required under law. *Did you pay your taxes cheerfully?* Maybe, if you listened to Dave Geldart's message last Sunday.
  - If you add up all that the Israelites were required to give it would amount to more like 23%.

**2 Corinthians 8:8-9** <sup>8</sup> I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. <sup>9</sup> 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.

### The Gospel empowers us to give.

Paul always links our behavior to the Gospel, not Old Testament law. We're under the law of Christ. Grace takes us much further than the OT law ever could. Love excludes compulsion and takes us beyond the minimum requirement. Love always issues in action that is rooted in the Gospel.

#### Gospel Circles

- Gospel = yet for your sake he became poor
  - Gospel Truth = so that you by his poverty might become rich
- GRACE = God's riches at Christ's expense
- Gospel Conduct = see that you excel in this act of grace also

*How far does grace take us?*

Gospel, Christ died for our sins, leads to Gospel Truth, we are rich, leads to Gospel Conduct, GENEROSITY!

**Pop Quiz:** *Would you expect that those on this side of the cross who live in the most affluent society in history would give a) less b) the same or c) more than the Israelites were commanded to give?*

### Big Idea: Grace takes your generosity way further than the law could ever dream of.

We are under grace and it is powerful! Some are concerned that we won't be moved to action unless we continue to preach the law. I assure you, for those who are gripped by grace they will go way further towards spiritual maturity than the law could ever dream of taking them.

**Illus:** Consider Olympic weightlifting—compare and contrast the power to lift by my son, Maddox, vs. that of Aaron Armstrong, the strongest man in our church. Maddox is the law. Aaron is grace.

*Cool, so how much do I give?*

## 1. Give according to your means.

**2 Corinthians 8:12** For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

- God calls on us to sacrifice what we do have. He doesn't expect us to give something we don't have.
- Our standard of living has gone up but our standard of giving has gone down. That ain't cool!
- Giving according to your means suggests a graduated tithe would be appropriate. Why not make a plan as a family to increase your percentage of giving as your wealth grows while keeping your standard of living relatively stable?

*Illus:* Family of four making \$55,000 giving 10% lives off of \$49,500. Same family making \$100,000 giving 10% lives off of \$90,000. Same family could live off of \$49,500 by giving just over 50%. Wouldn't that be cool?

*Why do we give according to our means?*

## Equality is the ideal...but not the law.

**2 Corinthians 8:13-15** <sup>13</sup> For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness <sup>14</sup> your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. <sup>15</sup> As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."

- This isn't communism/socialism because people give of their own accord, not because of law.
- **Manna illustration:** What if all your money disappeared every night?
- It will all work out great with an economy of grace.

*So we are to give according to our means for the sake of equality. There is help along the way.*

## 2. Find generosity models...and be a model.

- It is good to model giving and to study other groups and individuals who are successful givers. The Macedonian church is an amazing model to follow.
- Paul also used the Corinthian church as a model.

**2 Corinthians 9:1-2** <sup>1</sup> Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints, <sup>2</sup> for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them.

Paul wants to make sure that the Corinthians aren't all talk and no game.

**2 Corinthians 9:3-4** <sup>3</sup> But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be. <sup>4</sup> Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident.

Generosity begets generosity! Generosity is contagious/infectious. It's like a generosity vortex!

*So is it most spiritual to give spontaneously?*

### 3. Give deliberately. Impulse giving is weak (weak sauce!).

**2 Corinthians 9:5, 7a** <sup>5</sup> So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction... <sup>7a</sup> Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion...

- Spontaneous and sporadic go hand in hand...neither is good.
- Organization and orderly arrangements and deliberate intentionality lead to success and reduced pressure in the local church.
- Electronic Fund Transfer can be very helpful in this regard.

**1 Corinthians 16:1-3** <sup>1</sup> Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem.

### 4. Give cheerfully.

**2 Corinthians 9:7-8** <sup>7</sup> Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup> And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

- Giving is personal. It is a matter of personal conscience. Motivation is important. Not only giving, but our motivations for giving, is important.
- *Does the cheerfulness come before or after you give?* I think most assume that it should be before...but I'm not so sure. Perhaps the cheerfulness comes as you discipline yourself towards sacrificial generosity in light of the cross. *What do you do if you're not a cheerful giver? Should I not give?* NO! Remember, the crutch of duty can be helpful until the desire comes. Paul had to give these exhortations because they weren't cheerful enough yet.
- **Matthew 6:21** Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

**Quote:** What we do with our money doesn't simply *indicate* where our heart is. According to Jesus, it *determines* where our heart goes. This is an amazing and exciting truth. If I want my heart to be in one particular place and not in another, then I need to put my money in that place and not in the other. I've heard people say, "I want more of a heart for missions." I always respond, "Jesus tells you exactly how to get it. Put your money in missions, and your heart will follow." –Randy Alcorn in *Money, Possessions and Eternity*

### You reap what you sow!

**2 Corinthians 9:6** The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

- You reap what you sow is a principle that governs this world and it's no different spiritually. Jesus invested in the cross and reaped our eternal salvation. To mature spiritually we must invest...otherwise we will remain spiritual infants.
- Giving, like farming, involves investing in the future. Giving is sowing...and reaps a great harvest!
- See the Parable of the Talents in Matt 25 and Galatians 6 and Proverbs 20:4.
- Sowing and reaping is one analogy here. Another is that of stewardship.
- God owns it all. You are a steward of some of what God owns. Invest well and you will reap well so you can continue to invest well.

**Illus:** Beneath five chairs is a \$20 bill. You are now a steward of this \$20 to invest in the Kingdom of God. Come back next week ready to share when we wrap up this *Reclaiming Spiritual Disciplines* series or let me know how you invested it and I can share. We'll have time for testimonies about how you are reclaiming spiritual disciplines for the sake of godliness (i.e. good works to the glory of God and for the good of His people).

Dear Steward,

Here is your unmerited \$20 to invest in the Kingdom of God. Please come next Sunday and share how you sowed this money. If you're unable to share next Sunday morning then please email Ben at [bendeaver@newhopeks.org](mailto:bendeaver@newhopeks.org) with the story of how you stewarded this free gift. Perhaps your creativity will spur us all on! However, if you insist on treating yourself to Green Tea Sushi instead then that's on you.

Enjoy!

**2 Corinthians 9:10-12** <sup>10</sup>He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.<sup>11</sup> You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. <sup>12</sup>For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.

Three promises to good sowers:

1. Multiply your seed...for sowing. This is NOT the health, wealth and prosperity gospel.
2. Increase the harvest of your righteousness.
3. Thanksgiving to God.

*Do you want a good return on your money?*

## Questions?

## Bring up ushers and PRAY. RSD sharing next Sunday!

### Soli Deo Gloria...to the glory of God alone!

**2 Corinthians 9:13-15** <sup>13</sup>By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, <sup>14</sup>while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. <sup>15</sup>Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

Submission to God flows from the confession of the gospel of Christ! Remember the Gospel circles?

## Good stuff on the chopping block:

### Ministries should be transparent and accountable.

**2 Corinthians 8:20-21** <sup>20</sup> We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, <sup>21</sup> for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.

- There is no justification for giving to an organization that will not fully account for its money publicly.
- Churches can't be audited unless they choose to be according to U.S. law. 90% of all the crazy financial fiascos in ministry organizations would go out the window if audits were mandatory like they are for businesses. *Illus:* Creflo Dollar and Mark Driscoll
- We open our books to anyone and everyone who asks to see them. We invited an external audit of our books in 2012 and they had great things to say about our financial accountability systems.

### Re: New Hope Giving:

We addressed this on August 17, 2014 when we covered Luke 19:1-10, the story of Zacchaeus.

- Looking at our current records, we have 450 listed households (some single, some families) who consider themselves regular attenders. (updated as of last week) So, to be conservative for this illustration, let's use 400. If we apply the median MHK household income figure (\$46,053)
  - Our estimated earning potential in THIS church is \$18,421,200! STAGGERING!--and we so often say we're a poor church. Remember, this already accounts for MHK's distribution of college students.
  - We give, drumroll, 1.726% of our total earning potential!
  - That means that the average NHer gives less than 2%--even less than the national average (3%), Christian and non-Christian alike!
  - 104 of our estimated 450 listed households gave 0 the last year. That's ¼. Not too Macedonian of us, is it?
- 2014: Budgeted income \$319,000 (bare bones budget). Actually received: \$325,510 (\$6,510 surplus!)—Yay! Especially considering all of our transitions. This is a baby step. Which is great! Baby steps can lead to walking and running and jumping.
  - We've increased our giving to organizations beyond New Hope from 7.85% to 11% this year with the desire to see that increase in the future. Here's where those funds go:
    - KNCSB, Christian Challenge, HIS, The Homestead, Life Choice Ministries, Manhattan Emergency Shelter, Shepherd's Crossing, All Nations Church
- 2015: Budgeted income \$328,000 (bare bones budget). So we're behind \$3,088 thru March. Not so much "Yay!" but still plenty of time.
- If everyone at NH just gave 10%, even the richest among us – who could afford to give away MUCH MORE than 10% -- our annual budget would be \$1,842,120!

### Specific Generosity Ideas:

- Orphan Care
  - Compassion International – Minerva
  - Adoption funding
- Opening your home for true hospitality
- Overseas work - FOCUS teams, etc.
- Fasting and investing the money saved in the Kingdom
- Finish The Greenhouse basement right quick
- And so on and so forth...

## Jesus' Top Ten for Gracious Generosity

10. Consider Jesus...He submitted to the will of the Father.
9. Consider Jesus...He engaged in the spiritual disciplines for the sake of learning.
8. Consider Jesus...He never gave out of compulsion, always out of love. Compassion is love in action.
7. Consider Jesus...the Father called on Him to give according to His means...and He did and does!
6. Consider Jesus...He definitely distributes His wealth for the benefit of all in His kingdom.
5. Consider Jesus...full disclosure about how wealthy He is and how much He has given.
4. Consider Jesus...He is our ultimate model...our Christus Exemplar!
3. Consider Jesus...who planned His giving from before the foundation of the earth...who set His face like flint to go to Jerusalem to give His offering to God.
2. Consider Jesus...He gave willingly AND cheerfully, for the joy set before Him (Hebrews 12:2).
1. Consider Jesus...He invested everything and He reaps the souls of many to His glory. His Kingdom is ever-expanding!

### Revisit Dave's sermon on *Reclaiming Joy: The Art of Celebration*:

Point #4 under *How to Discipline Toward Joy*—Sing, dance, and laugh!

- Sing—Sing *Ode to Joy* together. Really. Let's sing it.
- Dance—Demonstrate my dance move—The Swivel.
- Laugh
  - Watch the dog who can't catch anything clip—  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dD9NgzLhbBM>
  - Watch Kid Snippets "Salesman"—<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsRk0TXyXUA>

### What do we do with our excess?

**Isaiah 44:14-17** <sup>14</sup>He cuts down cedars, or he chooses a cypress tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. <sup>15</sup>Then it becomes fuel for a man. He takes a part of it and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Also he makes a god and worships it; he makes it an idol and falls down before it. <sup>16</sup>Half of it he burns in the fire. Over the half he eats meat; he roasts it and is satisfied. Also he warms himself and says, "Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire!" <sup>17</sup>And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it and worships it. He prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!"

### Resources:

- *Money, Possessions and Eternity* by Randy Alcorn
- *The Happy Christian*
- *The Celebration of Discipline*
- *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Donald Whitney