

“Multiplying in Every Way” // 2 Cor. 9:6–15 // *The Whole Story* #41

Election:

Well, not sure if you heard, but there was an election Tuesday...

Like many Americans, the next morning, I woke up a little dazed and confused. I sat down to read my Bible, as I try to do first thing every morning, and the assigned passage for the day was 1 Peter 3, and I read this verse: “Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.” (1 Peter 3:8 ESV).

That verse spoke 3 words to me, that I want to pass on to you that ought to shape our posture in the days ahead:

- **The first word is EMPATHY:** Regardless of which way you voted, we need to feel empathy for those who are worried or fearful right now.
 - **Even if you agree with certain other** of his policies, you have to acknowledge that our **President-elect has throughout his life** said some repulsive and indefensible things.
 - And if we are filled with sympathy, brotherly love and a tender heart, we are going to feel the pain and concern that causes to our brothers and sisters in Christ, and stand **with them** against those things.
 - **To our African American brothers and sisters**, I want to say that we will continue to fight with you against racism, discrimination and injustice wherever we encounter it—whether on the personal or systemic levels.
 - **To women**, I want to say that you are treasured and honored, not every to be defined as or treated like sexual objects, but rather as beloved sisters.
 - **To our Hispanic brothers and sisters**, we recognize that you are made in the image of God just like we are, and we

will insist that you be treated with the same dignity and respect that any of us would want to receive.

- **To Muslims**, I want to say, we believe you are full and free citizens of the United States, just like we the rest of us, and deserving of all the same rights and privileges as every last one of us.
- *Empathy...*
- The second word is **CHARITY**. We need to assume the best, wherever we can, about those who are on the opposite sides of the aisle from us.
 - **We tend to assume the best** about our own intentions, and the worst about those who disagree with us.
 - I have heard the most awful motives attributed this week—by people on both sides—to those who voted differently than they did.
 - ***Give to brothers and sisters in Christ the same benefit of the doubt that you want them to give you on your motives.***
 - Isn’t that the Golden Rule—Do unto others... give unto others...
 - Sure, you can challenge some of their conclusions, just as they can challenge yours. But you can do so while giving them the benefit of the doubt.
 - We have an irresponsible **media that thrives on creating controversy** and division through inflammatory rhetoric and sensational, exaggerated caricatures. **Reject that narrative.**
 - When a sibling in Christ votes a different way than you, choose to believe the better narrative about why they might have done so.
 - **Above all, this means listening** to each other during this time. That has to be what Peter means by “brotherly love and a humble mind.”
- Finally, for all you—the Summit Church, the word **FOCUS:**
 - When Peter tells us to possess “unity of mind,” he is pointing to the fact that we have a mission greater and more unifying than politics: Our **mission didn’t change**

- with the outcome** of the election. It wouldn't have changed had Secretary Clinton been elected.
- Whoever sits on the throne in Washington, our focus is on the King who sits on the throne in heaven, and our commission is to preach his **gospel to the ends of the earth**.
 - Our unity is found in something we have in common in Jesus that **runs deeper** than any of our divisions in politics, and
 - Our shared **gospel mission is far more significant** than any political realignment.
 - **10,000 years from now**, when American and all her presidents are an obscure footnote in the annals of history, the kingdom of Jesus and the souls he saved will go on forever.
 - **Listen**, as a friend of mine said recently, "If you are **more concerned with who won or lost this election** than you are souls being saved, you're probably a citizen of the wrong kingdom."

Can we pray? Holy Spirit, help us to bless, not curse; respond, not react; offer hope, not hype; show up to understand, not to fix.¹

(Transition to Sermon)

We are in a series called *The Whole Story*, in which we're taking a year to go through the whole story of the whole Bible.

- For **the first half of the year** we walked through the OT to tell the story of the **coming of Jesus**—how **God had promised to send a Savior** to reverse the curse of man's sin and restore what we had destroyed.
 - We saw how in story after story, picture after picture, and prophecy after prophecy—more than 300 in all—God foretold the coming of Jesus.

¹ Wording of that last prayer by Scotty Ward Smith

- **Then we walked through the New Testament, showing how this promised Messiah, Jesus, came, lived the sinless life** we should have lived and died the death we should have died—a sinner's death, our death, and now offers salvation to all who will receive it.
- **He then ascended to heaven** after forming us, the church, and **commissioning us** to carry this gospel to the whole world. He wants every tribe and tongue under heaven to hear and believe this gospel.

Now, we've come to that part of the story that talks about our role in the spread of the gospel.

- **Last week I showed you how to listen to the Spirit of God** and discover his specific purposes for your life.
- **This week, we're looking at an attitude Paul wants us to foster** in our lives—that applies to our finances, yes, but concerns much more than that. It's about how we should view our whole lives.

Check out this story. VIDEO: Mike and Sharon Freeman²

Sharon embodies a spirit that Paul calls the "cheerful giver."

- The word Paul actually uses is '*hilaros*.' We get our English word "hilarious" from that word.
 - Paul **probably doesn't mean that we snicker** and get the giggles when the offering plate goes by... but the word **does communicate** a person who just loves to give.
- I think, **deep down, that's a spirit** we all want.
- Haven't you been around someone before who was just so selfless, so kind, so generous without a thought—and you thought, "*I want to be like that!*"
- This **passage shows you how. 2 Cor 9**

² SUMMARY: They've seen God do amazing things through their generosity over the years. They started a long time ago when they had very little and have continued to be faithful and God has provided abundantly. Through All-In God brought them to a point of giving a number that they never thought they could do and it opened up this hilarious level of generosity where they literally were saying yes to every request. Sharon was concerned that giving so much away would limit how much she could pass on to her four kids in their inheritance and the Lord spoke to her and said just as you are proud of your kids for being generous, don't you think your kids will be proud of you!

Now, the **elephant in the room**.

I realize that whenever we talk about generosity, people get as **nervous**, as my grandpa used to say, as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs.

- It kind of reminds me of the **sex education talk** you got at school in the 8th grade. Remember that thing? I never wanted to talk about it but **Coach Yokely looked at me right in the eyes** and made sure I was aware of every little detail. Did I need to know it? yes. Were we all the better for it? Probably. Do I want it to happen again? Never.

People get nervous because they feel like this discussion leads to a guilt trip where I try to get your money. I **want to remove that fear**, if I can.

- **Like I told you last week, we start from the assumption** that God doesn't have needs.
 - He **uses our gifts as his means** to work in our lives and in the world, but he doesn't have needs.
 - He **deserves our first and our best**, and he calls us to use our resources for the world like Jesus used his for us.
 - That's **different than saying** he has needs.
 - Thus, this is **more of an issue of discipleship** than fundraising... this is about how you and I respond to the gospel.
 - Which is **why I often say** if you can't get over me talking about it, like I'm manipulating you—maybe you had a bad experience or something, I'd ask that you apply this truth by giving rather you apply it by giving somewhere else.
 - *I'd rather you learn to be generous and give somewhere* else than for you to use a bad experience or suspicion of us keep you from going down this path of discipleship.
 - **Our church is a group of people** who are very committed to the mission, we believe—one day we

hope you'll join us, but it is a purely voluntary thing.

- Which leads me to the second thing I want you emphasize as we get started: God tells us in 2 Cor 9 that what he loves is a cheerful giver. ****Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7)**
 - **Balloons story (use balloons)**
 - Paul wants people who feel like that. Who don't need a giving series or a commitment card or a special emphasis... not people who become generous for a **season in response to a sermon**, but generous for a **lifetime in response to the gospel**

That what **2 Cor 8–9** is about... so 2 Cor 8 if you have your Bible...

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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.

- He's talking about the **Corinthians completing an offering** they committed to a year ago. **So pretty apropos** to where we are.
- **A year ago we laid out where we thought the Holy Spirit was taking us as a church**, and 5000 households committed to be a part of it in this Multiply Initiative.
- **Things have gone EXTREMELY well**, and we are even ahead of where we had hoped we would be. We're **building new campuses** down in South-Cary/Apex, and a **new 1600 seat facility** in N. Raleigh.
- **At the same time, we have sensed God opening some new doors** for us—for example, building **permanent campus for N Durham**, and we have active leads on permanent cites for our Alamance County and Chapel Hill campuses... as well as the opportunity to open 2 new campuses in the prisons here...so we are renewing ourselves to this.

He says some stuff in chapter 8 we'll come back to, but let's go to chapter 9. 9:8, 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.

Again, notice, **when Paul starts his conversation about generosity**, he doesn't start with a need that God has, but with a grace God wants to give.

So I'll say it again: God is not short on money. He doesn't start this conversation from need.

- One of my favorite short stories in the NT is where **Peter is worried about a tax bill** and Jesus sends him fishing and he catches a fish with a gold coin in his mouth... this forever removes the idea that the ministry has financial needs Jesus can't fulfill. He can make us catch fish with gold grills for the completion of his mission.
- **So, God doesn't need money**, but the giving of his people is the *means by which* he pursues his mission on earth. It's the means by which he releases his abundance.
 - Best biblical example: **5 loaves and 2 fish**. God didn't "need" 5 loaves and 2 fish. What if he'd only had 1 fish and 2 loaves of bread? Same outcome. He could have done the same with a bread crumb and a fish fin.
 - **He didn't need it**. He multiplied it because it was offered in surrender and faith.
 - **That's why we say this is an issue of discipleship**. It has nothing to do with the amount of money you bring. The point is that you place all of it in the hands of Jesus.
 - **Our goal is that** 100% of people here participate—from the youngest to the oldest, the richest to the poorest, from those who are brand new in Christ to those who are most mature—**not because they meet the financial goals** of the church, but because they are **true disciples** of Jesus!

Obedience in this also **the means by which**, Paul says, **God multiplies grace in their lives**. It's how they can abound.

- Before I show you how, **let me make sure you see that**: Most of us think generosity is something God wants from us; according to Paul it is something he wants *for* us.
- We are worried about what we will have to give up, but Paul talks in terms of what God wants us to gain.

Here's how it works: (10) 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. [11] You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way...

A couple of things to note here from vs. 11. **First of all**, what does "*in every way*" mean?

- Does he **mean financial**? As in, if you give, God will increase you financially? Yes, that is included in the word "*every*." Every is a big, expansive word.
 - It's a promise repeated throughout Scripture: "**Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.**" Grapejuice for you Baptists. (Proverbs 3:9-10)
- *So does he mean financial?* Yes. But does he **only mean financial**, here, as if this is nothing but an investment program? No, "*in every way*."
 - The image of **sowing** here is a really illuminating one. What you harvest is sowing is often quite different in its look to what you plant.³ You ever seen a peach seed? **It's this hard**, ugly thing you'd never want to eat, it looks like a **rat brain**—from it comes this tree with luscious fruits.
- **Money is like a seed you plant** that harvests in multiple fruits much better than itself. What are those other things?
 - Sometimes it is **Greater contentment**

³ Tim Keller, "The Power of Generosity," 2 Corinthians 8:8-15, 9:6-12

- Many **have said that the secret to a happy life** is not having all you want, but wanting what you have
- Paul says, "**Godliness with contentment is great gain.**" 1 Tim 6:6 The greatest *gain* is contentment!
- One of the things **God does in your life as you give is work contentment** in your heart.
 - **My family has seen that.** When my wife and I give, we find that we grow really content with what we have left.
 - **On the contrary,** it's when we don't give generously we always find ourselves wanting more.
- **Increased love for the Kingdom of God**
 - **C. S. Lewis said,** "Wealth has a way of knitting a man's heart to this world." And that's a terrible curse. Giving is the way God creates a greater love for the kingdom of God in our hearts.
 - **Jesus said it this way:** "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:21
 - **Putting your treasure in a place** actually makes you begin to love that more!
 - That's not hard to understand. I once knew **a guy who loved UNC**, but then his daughter went to Duke—70K a year. After a while, he started cheering for them Devils. Why? Because when you are giving 70K a year to someone, your heart goes with it.
 - So if you want to love heaven more, if you want to love the gospel more, give sacrificially and watch how it transforms your heart!
- **I've heard people say that giving can really Clarify your purpose.** I talked to one guy the other day, in his 50's, who said that he spent the first part of his life trying to gather and save—he was already a Christian, and he always thought he was doing it for his kids—but he said it was

only as he gave sacrificially that he began to discover a real sense of purpose in life.

- **Giving produces in you a More loving heart.**
 - Stinginess shrinks your heart. It breeds isolation. Giving opens you up, and an open heart is a much happier heart.

These are just some the things God enriches you with—makes you abound in—when you are generous. You **end up being like that little boy who gave** the 5 loaves and 2 fish.

- The story is that after it was all said and done they took back up **12 baskets full**. You can't tell me this little boy did not get to take home at least one of those baskets. Imagine being this little boy walking back into his house.
- He left with a Levite lunchable, a Hebrew hot pocket; he returned home with Tabernacle tailgate special that Jesus created through spontaneous generation!

Second observation from vs. 11. According to that verse, why does God increase you *financially? [11] You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way...

- Listen: God doesn't begrudge what he has given you...
 - But with his blessing comes an assignment.
 - With great power comes great responsibility (I don't think that is in the Bible. I think it is a quote from Spiderman, but it's still true.)
 - The Bible version: To whom much is given, much is required.
- There are basically **two ways to look at your resources**, that reveal a lot about your maturity.
 - One way is where you think, "My life belongs to me. I should give some of my stuff to God." *How much do I have to give to God? It's like a tax.*
 - That's very **immature**; it shows you have barely begun the process of discipleship.

- The mature Christian says, “Father, it **all belongs to you**. I’m not the owner of it; it’s yours and I’m the steward of it. Sure, I get to enjoy some of it. But my gifts and talents and time and resources were given to me for your kingdom.
 - I’ve heard it described like a financial advisor... you get a check for \$800,000)
- When that change occurs, you’ll stop asking, “How much do I have to give?” And you’ll start asking, “*What am I not giving and why?*”
- **Lots of dimensions of spiritual maturity occur** gradually; this change happens all at once. You suddenly realize you are not an owner of anything you have—your time, your talent, or your treasures.
- Let me **say something very serious**. Every single one of you listening to me right now are a part of the **richest 2% of people** in the world.
 - **With that prosperity** comes the responsibility to use it for his kingdom.
 - And when he blesses you throughout your life, he does so, *so that you can multiply it for his kingdom!*
 - Greater financial capacity ought not just to lead to an increase in your standard of living, but to increase your standard of *giving* as well. (Not merely the amount in your check, but I’d say the percentage as well.)
- **Is that what you are doing with the blessing God has given you?**
 - You say, “Well, I’m **not really that wealthy yet.**”
 - Well, let me ask you this question: “*Based on what you’re doing with what God has given you so far, if you were God, would you give **you** more money?*”

In fact, Paul shows us that when we don’t live this way, it actually has a negative effect on us. You have the choice of entering the blessing of multiplication, or a curse (no neutral ground). Let’s go back to chapter 8 now. 8:12, “...it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.”¹³ For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of

fairness¹⁴ your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.¹⁵ As it is written, “Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.”

- **This is a reference to the story of manna, Exodus 16:**
 - The children of Israel were in a place where they couldn’t provide food for themselves. So, every night, God miraculously rained down this stuff called “manna” from heaven. (Manna = man’hu, which means literally, in Hebrew, “What the heck is it?” – Based on the description, seems to be a like a mix between a Twinkie and a protein bar).
 - **One of the rules:** They could not take away from there more than what a family would need for one day, and if they did, the **next day it would rot and ruin** your tent.
 - **A symbol.** When you hoard the excess, it has rotting effect on your soul.
- **There is *nothing wrong with saving for the future*.**
 - But there comes a point in which that’s what you trust in. And that rots your soul.
 - How do you know you’ve gotten to that point? When you **save extravagantly** but don’t give extravagantly—when you save more extravagantly than you give.
- **There is nothing wrong with buying nice things.**
 - But there comes a point at which those nice things are what you most delight in, what you most find your identity in. (The new toy brings you the most pleasure in life; driving the nice car or wearing the nicest clothes establishes your identity.)
 - And that **rots your soul**.
 - How do you know you’ve gotten to that point? You spend extravagantly, but don’t give extravagantly. When you spend more extravagantly than you give.

Again, *you have the choice of the blessing of multiplication, or the curse of rotting!* No neutral ground.

In Matthew 6, where Jesus talks most extensively about money, he says, ***"You cannot love (love, trust or depend on) God and money."** **Matthew 6:24** (*Only place he puts two things in direct contrast like that! If you love the one, you will hate the other. Do you love money?*)

- He then says, "Consider the birds." "Consider the flowers."
- 2 personality types
- Then he ends that discussion this way: **"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**
 - **Give generosity the largest part of your life.** Your first and your best.
 - It's not that you don't also have room in your life for those other things—saving, some nice things—but the first and best go to God.
 - Last year: **Cain and Abel**
 - Debt. Needs. Retirement.
 - Everybody **gives their first and their best** to something. What does yours go to? Your lifestyle? Your savings? **Give your first and your best** to God.
- Then I love this: **Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."** (Matthew 6:33–34)
 - Don't worry about tomorrow. Why, Jesus? Because tomorrow has a lot of problems. But **that's exactly what I was worried about** with tomorrow!
 - Tomorrow has a lot of problems, but tomorrow also has the presence of the Savior. God, with his never-ending supply of manna, will be there tomorrow, too.

This understanding is how you become joyful in giving.

He continues... your generosity, **... which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.** (2 Cor 9:14)

- Paul says, "One of the ways you become a joyful giver is that you see the thanksgiving to God that your giving produces!

- I got a letter from a girl in our church this week: family has come, got really involved in giving. She wrote about the effect that their generosity is having on their kids: "A couple of weeks ago, our three-year old daughter, who had seen some of her older siblings get baptized, asked me, "When I get bath-tized (B-A-T-H), can I wear my floaties?"
 - She explained that as she and her husband gave gotten involved in the church, she's seen her kids getting baptized.
 - She is clear, God is not saving my kids because we gave, but our approach in life is reaping eternal dividends in them, and that makes her joyful.
- Recently, I got a letter from a guy who lived out on the West Coast **who talked about the impact our church's online ministry had** had on him. He said, I've struggled with SSA for many years, and I just didn't know where to turn. Some were telling me to forsake Jesus and pursue my lifestyle, and then I heard what you all taught at the Summit Church, and it was like water in the desert to my soul.
 - He said in the ministry I found grace and truth. The truth about what God's word said, the grace that he had never stopped loving me even as I struggled, and never would.
 - He wrote, "The Summit Church's ministry has **changed my life.** This is no understatement either. Through the mercy of Christ and the ministry of the Summit, I heard for the *first time* that I was *loved* and *accepted* by God. I was attempting to "Go and sin no more," so that I might be loved and accepted by God, *instead of* hearing God's tender voice speaking His *great love* over me when he said through Jesus, "Neither do I condemn you; *now go and sin no more...* Thank you, thank you, thank you! You have helped me—a man who has been

hiding underneath years of great shame and feelings of disqualification by the church because of my temptations—find *new life and hope* in the gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ.”

- Best part of the story, 3 weeks ago, he showed up at our Saturday night service. He had traveled all the way across country just to come to come and say “Thank you.”
- One of the prisoners we minister to...
 - **Committed murder** and multiple counts of robbery. In for life. **18 years**.
 - *Read from letter.*
 - “Oh yeah, you’re complaining. You can’t give that 10%.”
- **Since we re-launched as the Summit Church 15 years ago**, we have baptized over 5400 people. A lot of those were 1st time professions of faith, and people like these.
- Last year, through members of the Summit living overseas, **3,964** people heard the gospel, **562 people became believers**, and **386** were baptized.
 - This is the **JOY we give to**.
- *Sacrifice is giving up what you love for something you love even more!*
 - I used to teach people if you want to know how much to give, “Give until it hurts.” I heard Rick Warren say, “If you are only giving until it hurts, you’ve never found the joy in giving God wants you to have. Don’t give until it hurts; give until it feels good!”
 - Until the joy of what you are giving to replaces the pain of what you are giving up.

At some point I hope you realize the futility of all the other things you spend money on.

- Not long ago I was at this **retreat where I was asked to consider** who had the biggest impact on me in terms of generosity.

- **Mom and Dad:** about 16 when I realized—*that could be mine!*
- But they gave me the **legacy of loving** the kingdom of God, a legacy more valuable than a hot new car that probably would have just spoiled me, and I probably would just have wrecked anyway.
- They would always tell me: Money, can’t take it with you. Only one life to live will soon be past
- **V and I think about how to pass this on to our kids.** We’re very public with them. We set aside a small amount each month just to be generous to people we know, and we discuss as a family who to give that to.

For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. Summit, lots of people have gotten saved because of your generosity. There are many more who will be affected by your future generosity. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ (There it is—2 elements Paul sums up giving as a response to the gospel, obedience to the Holy Spirit).

Vs. 15, Paul brings this section of his letter to a close: Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

- This is where the **balloon really fills to the point of popping**.
 - Recently I was with **Rick Warren**—maybe the most famous pastor of American. He said that every year Forbes put out a list of the 100 richest. Everyone was competing to get on the list. But they were abysmal at giving. He challenged the editors who publish a list alongside of it, the 100 most generous. He said that’s when all these guys started to try and outdo each other, because they wanted to be on both lists.
- Christians have a different, primary motivation—not to get on a list in a magazine, but because Jesus shed his blood to put us on the list of those included in the Lamb’s book of life.

- **I read a lot of leadership books that raise the question:** What's more powerful? The carrot or the stick?
 - I always think—there's something more powerful than both, and that is the **gospel**, which is that God took the stick, beat Jesus, and handed you the carrot.
- What's the **main way I can motivate you** in generosity?
 - Is it with the stick? Make you feel guilty? **Baptists.**
 - Is it with the **carrot**? God will make you rich! A lot of more Pentecostal churches do that.
 - Paul turns neither to guilt or greed as his primary motivator, but *grace*.
- *Where would we be without Jesus' generosity?* The same place millions of people in the world are without yours, since it wouldn't matter if Jesus died 1000 times if no one ever heard about it.
- *So remember 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 8:9)*

Where we are:

- The card: 3 groups

The question I send you out with: How has God prospered you? Are you using it for his glory?

- ***The English Bible - William Tyndale & Humphrey Monmouth:*** *In the 1500s an Englishman named William Tyndale wanted to translate the Bible from the original Greek and Hebrew into English. For 1,000 years the Bible had been locked in Latin, but most Englishmen couldn't read Latin and therefore did not know the Bible. Tyndale wanted to change that. He wanted his countrymen to meet the God of the Bible, a God they had heard about but never known. The problem was Bible translation was illegal; you could be killed for it. **But God intervened through a godly businessman** named Humphrey Monmouth. Monmouth protected Tyndale, he provided for him, and he even used his merchant ships to smuggle the first English New Testaments*

*throughout England. Very few people have ever heard of Monmouth, but his partnership with Tyndale changed the world.*⁴

- Not wealthy? God doesn't have needs. He wants obedience from all of us. 100% participation. Are you faithful to be a part?

⁴ As told in the book, *Gospel Patrons: People Whose Generosity Changed the World*, by John Rinehart.

Bullpen:

- Many of us, as we have started to age, have thought about retirement portfolios. Retirement. Eternity is a lot longer!

Every church, every Christian: *Multiply or die: Every church on the earth is living in one of 3 stages: risk taking, care-taking, or undertaking.*

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- There's a thing called the "Prosperity gospel." Give to God, and he'll give back to you. It's true. You can't out give God. What is gets wrong is the purpose for which God multiplies you. He multiplies you so you can multiply blessing in the world.
 - He multiplies you not so you can increase your standard of living, but so you can increase your standard of *giving*.
- Jesus talked a lot about money. Here's why. It shows who are you living for.

Lots of aspects of Christian maturity grow over time, but there is at least one I've seen that happens all at once, and that is the understanding of who your stuff belongs to and who or what it is for.

(1 Cor 5–8 is a compilation of what has to be the most awkward things to talk about in church—In 1 Cor 5, Paul encourages the church to get a guy stop sleeping with his mom (and some scholars say 'step-mom,' but still, when you call her mom and take her to the prom, it's bad); 1 Cor 6 is about why it's bad to mess around with prostitutes; 1 Cor 7 is about why singleness is better than marriage; and now in 1 Cor 8 Paul talks about an offering.) It's no wonder he wrote these in a letter. And those of you who think the early church was perfect and these were the "good old days," far from it.)

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- *"We don't want the decision with the card to be an emotional and rash decision for you next week. That's why we're bringing this up again and again. It's so you can go on this journey with God, so you're coming in here prepared." So you don't do next week what you guys did with the election this Tuesday...you walked in there and made up your mind at the last minute.*

(Sometimes I have an outline I want to talk through. Sometimes, I just want to read the Bible with you. Today is that day.

8:8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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. ¹² For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. ¹³ For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness ¹⁴ your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. ¹⁵ As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."

⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ 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. ⁹ As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

Why give? Rick Warren on Forbes' list of richest people

Keller:

- “The one who gathered much did not have too much and the one who gathered little did not have too little” (8:15).
 - From Exodus 16: The children of Israel were not going to be able to support themselves and could not accrue enough food. So God did a miracle. **One of the rules:** They could not take away from there more than what a family would need for one day **because the next day it would rot.**
 - **By likening your money to manna,** Paul is telling you:
 - **You need to learn to look at all the money you’ve earned as a gift from God:** There was work involved in gathering manna, and it was crucial when you gathered it to share it so everyone had what they needed.
 - **Your health and your ability to “gather” are a gift from God.**
 - **If you keep too much money, it will rot your soul.**⁵
 - **So how does your money come back?** Paul quotes Psalm 112:9. **Righteousness means right relationships.** Because he’s scattering his gifts to the poor, right relationships are happening, poverty is being healed, and families are being put back together again. Your giving is healing the world—you are supposed to get really excited about that!

McDonald:⁶

- There are 2 kinds of giving

⁵ Tim Keller, “The Power of Generosity,” 2 Corinthians 8:8-15, 9:6-12

⁶ James MacDonald, “Exalting Christ Through Giving,” “God’s Only Agenda” Series

- Paul talking about the church of Macedonia and Corinth
 - **Giving according to my ability**
 - *I will give some money, but not the money I have another plan for.*
 - **Giving beyond my ability**
 - *Looking to what God has given to me, taking all I have, and some I have another plan for—I am trusting you with it, that you will replenish it and provide accordingly.*
- Some Christians think, “I might be a midget in giving, but I’m a giant in love!” We cultivate this notion that certain elements of the Christian faith can lag way behind, but we can still be mature Christians.
 - Don’t think giving isn’t part of spiritual growth. Where money become an idol, spiritual growth stops.
- **Thomas Aquinas:** “Summa Theologica”—he was touring the Vatican with Pope Innocent 4th, and the pope was showing him all the grand artifacts in the Vatican. The pope said, “*You know, we can’t say like Peter said, ‘silver and gold, have I none.’*” Thomas said to him, “*That’s right, and neither can we say, in the name of Jesus, stand up and walk.*” **Riches had come, and spiritual power had gone.** That is an indictment of the church of North America.

2 Corinthians 9:6–9

- **Principle: (verse 6)**
 - God is watching what you give, and God is not going to be in debt to anybody!
 - Those who sow sparingly, reap sparingly. Those who sow bountifully, reap bountifully.
- **Plan: (verse 7)**
 - Let each person give as he purposes in his heart. It’s a personal decision. Pray about it. Ask God what you should give. And do it.
- **Promise: (verse 8)**
 - He will make sure that he is never in debt to you.

- **Better Model: Jesus (verse 9 cp. 8:9)**
 - He who was rich for your sakes became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Joby Martin

- *As a pastor, I'm not going to be held accountable for how many dollars we raise, but how many disciples we make.*
- We see both provision and protection from the Lord here. This is how he loves us. *Something is getting your first and best. And that something cannot provide and protect you as God can.*
- *We bring to God our first and best because God first loved us by giving us his best.*

Livingstone

"People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of the great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own reward of healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter?"

Away with such a word, such a view, and such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering or danger now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause and cause the spirit to waver and sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed in and for us. I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not to talk when we remember the great sacrifice which He made who left His Father's throne on high to give Himself for us."
Livingstone's Private Journal: 1851-53, ed. I. Schapera. (Died May 1, 1873: buried his heart in Africa)