

THE BIG IDEA: For the child of God, giving is second nature.

The Take-Off

Quick recap: we are His and we are family!

This morning, let's talk about how we are generous.

Some highlights from our 2020 Annual Report:

- We spent more money on missions and outreach than we did on the building
- Just about 1 out of every 5 dollars that we spent went to missions and outreach
- Those stats are amazing in any year, but in 2020 during a global pandemic when we weren't in this building for 20 straight Sundays? Truly MIND-BLOWING!!
- We gave just over \$51,000 in missions and outreach, and about \$30,000 of that was local
- I mention that because we take loving this city as seriously as we do reaching the world. Jesus said to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and then the ends of the earth. We honor that order. In other words, we aren't stepping over needs locally in order to feel needed globally.
- Included in that 30k is:
 - o Over 4k in COVID relief
 - o Almost 8k in The Big Give
 - o We supplied food for 40 families each month at East Albemarle Elementary School
 - o Once a month we prepared and served 100+ people at the Community Table
 - o We've provided alms and continued our ongoing monthly support of Care Cafe, Homes of Hope, the PRC, Esther House, Stanly Christian Ministries, Teen Challenge, and Will's Place
 - o And this doesn't include the 47 children being rescued through Compassion by members of The Gathering (that's \$1,786/mo and just over \$21k/year that will never show on our report!)

There are 2 reasons why I'm sharing these stats with you and neither have to do with bragging.

I'll tell you the first now and save the second for the end.

The #1 reason? We're going to spend our time this morning in **2 Corinthians 9:1-11 (NIV)** and I want you to see that this passage is literally coming alive in our church, especially verse 11.

So let's read it, and then I'll break it down.

1. Generosity is contagious (vv. 1-2)

- a. The Corinthians had pledged - along with the poorer Macedonians - to send an offering for other believers.
- b. First, Paul says he doesn't need to remind them (even though he's reminding them)
- c. I believe this is related to the Big Idea I want to give you: **for the child of God, giving is second nature**
- d. John 3:16 / God gave, so we'll give. It's in our DNA as believers but also at The Gathering
- e. Of course, developing that second nature takes practice - that's why Paul's reminding them not just of their promise, but of the effects of their promise
- f. Hearing about the willingness of the church in Corinth to give had inspired the church in Macedonia to act
- g. **Generosity is contagious**

2. Generosity is planned (vv. 3-5)

- a. All of you bullet journalers and calendar completers will love this one: Paul gives them a heads up that he's sending people to pick up the offering
- b. That's a second truth about generosity: **generosity is planned.**
- c. There are times when we are all moved in the moment and give - but giving is more than emotional
- d. The practical side of giving is setting ourselves up to be able to give generously
- e. Paul is giving them time to plan - to set aside what they promised - to budget generosity - so that they won't feel pressured or resentful about what they give

3. Generosity is proportional (vv. 6-9)

- a. #3: **generosity is proportional**
- b. That's a big word that can make us feel like we're in math class, but it basically means "corresponding in size or amount to something else"

- c. Sow a little, reap a little. Sow a lot, reap a lot. What we reap is proportional to what we sow.
- d. Basically, God is saying that the more generous we are, the more opportunities we'll have to be generous and the more we'll have to be generous with
- e. Why? Verse 8 - because GOD IS ABLE TO BLESS YOU ABUNDANTLY - to make sure you have all you need
- f. Real talk: living for our wants can waste what God intended for our needs
- g. That may be why so many never see this verse realized in their personal finances (and this passage is about money, y'all)
- h. What does it look like when our generosity grows?
- i. Verse 9 - "You get a gift and YOU get a gift and YOU get a gift!" - it looks like Oprah giving away cars!
- j. What I want you to see in this third truth is that whether you sow a little or a lot, God still brings the harvest. The reason many of us don't have a harvest is because we've never planted seed. Any seed.

4. Generosity points to God

- a. Last one: **generosity points to God**
- b. When we live generously, at some point people will ask how
- c. "How are you able to be so generous?" - v. 10 has the answer - the Father supplies it
- d. When we live generously, at some point people will ask why
- e. "Why are you willing to be so generous?" - v. 11 has that answer - the Father is glorified by it
- f. Generosity is a miracle of grace - Paul encouraged the Corinthians in chapter 8, verse 7 to "excel in this **grace** of giving"
- g. We can't take credit for it, but we must take part in it because generosity is who we are
- h. For the child of God, giving is second nature

The Landing

I told you there were 2 reasons why I shared how generous we've been in 2020. The second reason is to see **Hebrews 10:24 (NIV)** come to life

Some of you had little to do with those blessings - you've been along for the ride but haven't chipped in gas money
I'm praying that our generosity will be contagious - that it will provoke you to good works

Some practical ways to do this:

- The Big Give happens ever December - start setting aside a few dollars here and there in anticipation
- Develop the habit of giving by using your paycheck as a reminder, give to God at first, not what's left
- Determine where you'll start: I believe you'll find tremendous blessing in the tithe (10%), but you have to decide that, so if you need to learn the faithfulness of God, start somewhere and learn the proportional part of sowing and reaping. My guess is you'll increase as you go so you can be even more generous.

Prov. 11:24 / "One gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds what is right, only to become poor."

Let's pray.