



## LESSON

# 4

### SHARED STORY

gospel mission

#### 1. SERMON NOTES

#### 2. OPENING QUESTION

Who first shared the gospel with you?

#### 3. BIG IDEA

The greatest story ever told must not be kept to oneself but shared.

#### 4. SCRIPTURE MEMORY

*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*

## 5. BIBLE CONVERSATION

SHARED STORY: gospel mission. The greatest story ever told must not be kept to oneself but shared. This compels us to engage in God's great redemptive mission. The love of Christ drives us. We value gospel mission (Matthew 28:18-20).

**READ:** 2 Corinthians 8:1-12

Let me ask you a question that gets to the heart of the matter: Why do you go to church? Now, if you answered that question in terms of what the church does for you, you may have missed something crucial—something very clear in the New Testament. The biblical answer to “Why church?” does not revolve around what the church does for you, but rather what it does for God. When we begin to understand this, we shift our perspective from self-centered involvement in the church to a fully God-centered life together, which God calls us to for His own purposes.

Once we grasp this concept, the church becomes much more than a place we go to seek inspiration or improve our lives. It becomes a place of profound transformation that reorients us toward something greater than ourselves. When we truly comprehend this, the Christian life begins to undergo a significant change.

Nobody ever asks me to talk about money. People would rather hear about sex, the end times, or whether there is sex in the end times. So why talk about money? The Bible talks about money 10–20 times more than it talks about sex, and more than it talks about hell. Why? Because money has more power than we realize. If we are not careful, money—or the desire for it—can shape our lives instead of the Gospel. And the big problem is that we are often blind to the power money has over us.

Do you realize that people spend 50 percent of their waking time thinking about money—how to get it, how to spend it, how to save it, how to invest it, or how to borrow it? We all think about money, so why would I not talk about something that the Bible addresses more than any other topic—and a topic that we all think about a lot?

Really, what we are talking about is generosity. It's about more than money. Do you live a generous life? What does that look like? The Apostle Paul describes for us what a generous person and a generous church look like in 2 Corinthians 8.

The church of Macedonia is one of my favorite churches in the New Testament. I love the heart of this church. I think, in many ways, New River Fellowship—even though we are a young church and the majority of you have joined us in the past year or so—can grow into becoming a church like the Macedonian church. We exist as a church because other churches have given sacrificially, like the Macedonian church.

So why are giving and serving so important? 2 Corinthians 8 answers this question beautifully in six ways. We are going to move quickly through them, so track with me in your Bibles.

### **1. Generosity reveals God's Grace (vs. 1-6)**

The Church of Macedonia was facing two things: 1) severe affliction, and 2) extreme poverty. If you have a car and a flushing toilet, then you are richer than two-thirds of the world.

The Church of Macedonia responded in two ways: 1) with an abundance of joy, and 2) with overflowing generosity—they gave according to their means and even beyond their means.

How? How could they respond in such a way? How could you and I respond in such a way? The answer is found in verse 5: *They gave themselves first to the Lord, and then by the will of God to us.*

What determines our response in financial crisis is who our God truly is. If money is our god, then we panic and worry about the future. But if Jesus is our God, then we respond with joy and generosity. They gave themselves first to the Lord, and that led to lives marked by generosity.

Confessionally, many of us say we trust in Jesus Christ, but functionally money becomes our savior, and spending it or saving it becomes our heaven. We have not given ourselves first to the Lord—and that keeps us from giving ourselves to one another.

### **2. Generosity is an act of grace (v. 7)**

Giving is an act of grace in response to God's grace. It involves offering ourselves and our resources to one another. Sadly, Christians are not always known for their generosity—just ask servers at any restaurant. Often times "christians" will leave a gospel track and a meager tip. So, tip generously: leave a tract, but also leave a tip greater than 20%.

### **3. Generosity reminds us of the Cross (vv. 8-9)**

The greatest demonstration of love the world has ever seen is the cross. The difference between Jesus and every other false god in this world is that Jesus gives and forgives, while every other god demands that you give first.

Generosity reflects what you truly believe about God. You may say, "I have a faith problem!" But you don't have a faith problem—you have a misplaced faith problem. You have put your faith in created things rather than in the Creator, and your very soul is crying out to you, "Fool!" That is why you are filled with fear and anxiety regarding money. Deep down, you know you are trusting in the created things of this world—temporary and fleeting—instead of the Creator, who is eternal and faithful.

If you don't have the freedom to give your time, talents, and treasures for the expansion of the Gospel and the needs of others, then something besides Jesus Christ has become your source of security and worth. That's idolatry.

When you see Him dying because you were His treasure, it will make Him the treasure of your heart. He will be your treasure, your security, and your identity, and you will finally be free from the power of money. You will be free to live a life of generosity.

#### **4. Generosity is measured proportionally (vs. 10-12)**

Paul is answering the question, *"How much should I give?"* C. S. Lewis once wrote, "I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc., is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities (or good works) do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we would like to do but cannot because our charitable expenditure excludes them."

**READ:** 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

#### **5. Generosity deepens faith (vs. 13-15)**

Paul quotes Exodus 16 when God supplied for the children of Israel in the desert in their journey from Egypt to the promise land. Generosity is rooted in an abundance mindset versus a scarcity mindset. An abundance mindset causes us to live with open hands. A scarcity mindset causes us to live with closed hands. If God our Father owns a cattle on a thousand hills then we can live with open hands of generosity.

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 9:10-15

**Our worship reflects what we have our faith in.** We lift our hands in worship as a sign of surrender, entrusting ourselves to our Father and Creator. Some worship with hands partially raised, or with only one hand raised—almost as if saying, "I don't mind singing to You, but You're not getting my money."

#### **6. Generosity requires godly stewardship (vs. 16-23)**

Paul is talking about how they faithfully stewarded the gift from the Macedonian church. Don't trust the church? - Every dime is leverage to the gospel. If you are a member of this church you can sit down with an Elder and we will show how every dime is spent. We are all required to steward what we have!

### **TIME | TALENT | TREASURES**

Generosity requires that we reorient our lives toward Christ and His mission-to have gospel priorities. The gospel calls us to give of our time, talent and treasures.

#### **TIME**

Every day, we are given 1,440 minutes. Sometimes, we know exactly how we need to spend them. But if we're honest, there are times when we're left wondering what the best use of our time really is.

Ephesians 5:15-17 says: "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

This takes wisdom. Tim Keller once commented that *"wisdom is knowing the right thing to do in the situations where the moral rules don't apply."* In other words, wisdom helps us not to settle merely for what is good, but to choose what is best. To consistently choose the best is to steward time well.

**Take a moment to answer the following questions:**

What are you giving your 1,440 minutes to each day?

Are you leveraging some of that time to serve your church family? How can you serve your church family?

Are you investing some of it in your neighbors? Remember, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

## **TALENT**

In Ephesians 2:10 we read: *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."*

The question we need to ask ourselves is: *What has God "prepared beforehand" for us to be and to do?* When we begin to discover how we were uniquely created to serve, we start to tap into God's original design. We catch a glimpse of heaven breaking into earth. As we steward our talents, Jesus' prayer—*"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"*—begins to take shape.

From a spiritual perspective, when we deny our talents and focus instead on our weaknesses, we are, in a sense, telling God that we know better and that He somehow made a mistake in giving us our unique mix of gifts. God has entrusted us with talents to serve our church family and community.

**Take a moment to answer the following questions:**

*Where has God gifted you to serve?*

*How are you using your TALENTS to make a difference in the lives of others?*

## TREASURE

We have all been blessed with different treasures, including finances, which we can use to benefit others. In 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9, Paul speaks at length about financial generosity. Rather than resorting to guilt tactics, he simply reminds the Corinthians of the Gospel. Concerning giving, he writes: "I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. 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." (2 Corinthians 8:8-9)

The VERTICAL response to the gospel is GRATITUDE.  
The HORIZONTAL response to the gospel is GENEROSITY.

Paul later continues: "Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

The first step is to dwell on the truth of the Gospel. As you do this, your love for Jesus and His Church will be stirred. From that place, prayerfully consider how God is leading you to give. According to Paul, it is the disposition of our hearts—not a set amount or percentage—that matters most. Yet, the act of giving itself is assumed. So the question becomes: How much? We should view 10% as a guideline. For some, that would require significant sacrifice and may take time to reach—and that's okay. If you've never given financially to a church before, start somewhere. The point is not the exact amount, but whether your giving is sacrificial.

Don't ignore this opportunity for God to grow you in His grace. Every dime given to NRF is leveraged to point our community to Jesus Christ. We don't give in order for God to love us more; we give because He already loves us.

**Take a moment to answer the following questions:**

*So where are you in your generosity? Does it reflect the cross? Does it reflect the work of the gospel in your life?*

*What is the next step—the next "click on the dial"—for you when it comes to giving to your church family?*

Don't sit down with a calculator—sit before the cross. Give like Christ gave, love like Christ loved, and sacrifice like Christ sacrificed. Then, and only then, will you be set free from the power of money and free to truly live a life of gratitude to the great Savior we have. Ultimately, generosity is an act of worship. Generosity frees us up for gospel mission.

## GOSPEL MISSION

Have you ever wondered why God has you living in Fort Lauderdale—in Broward County? This is your mission field. It's where God has called you to make His name known. I want to help you answer that call. It's called the Great Commission, not the Great Suggestion. God is calling you.

Who's your PLUS one? Who is the one person God is calling you to share the good news of the gospel with? Write their name down now—and don't run from this assignment

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- \_\_\_\_\_
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Here are 3 simple steps of obedience to answer God's call to be on mission with Him:

- **Intercede** - Who is ONE person that you can be praying for that needs to know the saving grace of Jesus Christ?
- **Invest** - How can you invest in them relationally?
- **Invite** - Begin praying for courage to invite to them church.

Don't say, "But God, you don't know my neighbor." Answer God's call. Join Him in this great redemptive mission of rescuing sinners so that they may know the riches of God's grace, mercy, and salvation.

## CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Take a moment and read through the MEMBERSHIP COVENANT on page 9 of this lesson and answer the following questions:

Do you have any questions regarding our STATEMENT OF FAITH?

Do you have any questions regarding our VISION, MISSION and VALUES?

Do you have any questions regarding affirming "Christ and the leadership of His church"?

Are you ready to join Christ and his mission with my New River Fellowship church family?





## MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

As a follower of Jesus Christ and in response to His redemptive love for me, it is my desire, interest, and intention, by the power of His Spirit, to freely enter into covenant relationship with His Bride, the Church, as is expressed in this particular body of believers, known as New River Fellowship Church.

### I affirm the following statements of faith:

- I acknowledge myself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope, except through His sovereign mercy and grace.
- I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the gospel.
- I do now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that I will endeavor to live as a follower of Christ.
- I promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of my ability.
- I submit myself to the government and discipline of the Church and promise to study its purity and peace.

### I affirm and will participate in the vision, mission, and values of New River Fellowship:

- **Vision:** To see Fort Lauderdale and South Florida redeemed by the power of the gospel for the glory of God.
- **Mission:** To help people become so captivated by Jesus and what He accomplished for them on the cross that they reorient their entire lives toward Him and His mission.
- **Values:** We value story. We are story-formed people who worship a storytelling God.
  1. **GOD'S STORY:** gospel fluency - I will grow in my knowledge and understanding of the Word of God and apply it to every aspect of my life.
  2. **MY STORY:** gospel identity - I will seek to live out my identity in Christ.
  3. **OUR STORY:** gospel community - I will commit to be relationally connected to my church family on Sunday morning and in small groups.

4. SHARED STORY: gospel mission - I will serve Christ and His mission with my time, talent and treasures.

- **Commitment:** to give of my time, talent and treasures to my church family in serving the mission of Christ.

**I affirm the servant leadership of Christ and His church:**

Knowing that the pastors and elders of New River Fellowship have submitted themselves to the authority of Christ and have committed themselves to my spiritual care, I submit myself to Christ and to the leadership of His Church.

- I will pray for leadership even as they pray for me.
- I will encourage the unity and purity of the church. If I have a concern or question, believing the best, I will ask the appropriate leaders to seek to clarification.
- Should conflict arise between me and any other person in the church, I agree to follow biblical guidelines to restore and reconcile relationships (Matthew 18:15-20).

I acknowledge the call of God to pastors and elders to shepherd the flock and equip them for works of service.

I will expect a contact from my shepherding elder each quarter. I will engage with him to share any needs I have that I feel appropriate to share. I will pray for him even as he prays for me.

**By the grace of God, I joyfully enter this relationship with my New River Fellowship church family.**

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Member

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Date

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Interviewing Elder

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Date