

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Generosity

Image Church // Abide and Abound Week 6

Introduction

Good morning Image Family, I hope you're doing well!

Well, listen, we're coming to the back end of our **Abide and Abound Series** this morning, and next weekend we're going to do something really special to commemorate where we're headed as a church...

We're going to come together around the table, literally sharing a meal together, and taking communion... One of the things that we see all through scripture is a theme of tabling together...

Meals served a significant purpose all throughout the Bible...

Almost every milestone moment, every point of reembrace culminated in coming to the table together...

So, next week is going to be really special as we come to the table together to celebrate and remember the goodness of God and as we mark a moment in the life of our church...

Alright, well each week during this series, I've been putting two goals in front of you that we want to center around as a church...

1. Abide: We want to abide in the riches of the gospel in order to take us deeper in our knowledge and love of God.

2. Abound: We want to abound in the gospel by bearing fruit that expands our impact locally, nationally, and internationally.

In addition to that, one of the things I've been asking you to consider is financially contributing **above and beyond** your normal giving in order to specifically fuel these goals.

I've put in front of you what we're calling the **Abide and Abound Initiative**, where every dollar that you give to this initiative will go toward and enhance, our missional efforts locally, nationally, and internationally... *See page 6...*

Well, today *I'm going to give you the opportunity to respond to that...*

You should have by now received a commitment card- hang on to that and at the end of our time together this morning, you'll get the chance to turn in your commitment...

Alright, if you have your Bibles today, go ahead and turn to **2 Corinthians 9**...

We're going to be talking about generosity... And how as a church we want to be abounding in this together...

See, **generosity's** not only the **fruit** of the gospel at work in you, but it's also **fuel** that continues to feed the fire of your faith as it keeps your heart oriented around Jesus...

Now, to understand where we're going to be in **2 Corinthians 9**, we need to get the context that's laid out in **chapter 8**... *So let's look there first...*

There were some massive ministry needs for a sister church of Corinth... So, Paul a year ago has essentially launched a **giving campaign** to raise funds to help meet their needs...

Well now a year later Paul is circling back around telling the church in Corinth to make sure **to fulfil their commitment**...

And I love this, as he kicks off his reminder, he says this is **2 Cor. 8:7**
Now as you excel in everything—in faith, speech, knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love for us—**excel also in this act of grace.**

Paul grounds his appeal to them to give in grace... Calling it an act of grace... And then He reminds them of the grace they had received...

verse 9... For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: Though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

Jesus was the epitome of generous... He gave it all so that we could have it all...

- Grace to us and through us...
- Not an act of duty... It's the natural overflow of the gospel at work in you...

And then we move into chapter 9... Where Paul says in verse 3 that he's sending the brothers to get you guys moving on this so that when it comes time for your gift you actually have it and you don't look shameful...

And then, classic Paul begins to **motivate them in their generosity** by reminding them of **why** they give, **how** they should give and what God does in and through their giving as he motivates them

Which leads us to where we're going to key in today, let's pick up in **verse 6...**

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Paul says: 6 The point is this: The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously.

Paul leads in here with a farming analogy that make a lot of sense... If you're not generous with the amount of seed you put out then you will not see a large... On the other hand, if you're generous with the amount of seed you put out, then you will have a generous crop.

Notice this, and Paul's going to continue to build on it... **Giving is compared to a seed that's sown...**

Paul's point... Give generously and experience a bountiful blessings of generosity... Here in a min. he's going to flesh out what this looks like... But first he's going to instruct us on our attitude when it comes to giving...

Verse 7 Each person should do as he has decided in his heart—not reluctantly or out of compulsion, since God loves a cheerful giver.

A couple of things to see here:

Generosity is not done out of duty, it's done out of delight...

The only way you get there is by remembering and reflecting on how generous God's been with you... Jesus came and gave it all... **Life, death, resurrection...**

Gospel motivated, not guilt motivated...

- Not in response to a sermon, in response to the gospel.

Paul's says something else here that I want to point out:
Each person should do as he has decided in his heart...

Have a giving plan

Where do I start? Great question!

Proverbs 3:9 says: **9** Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first produce of your entire harvest

So, a way you could ask this is: **are you honoring the Lord with your possessions with your first and your best...**

First and best... **First** meaning it is preplanned and not evaluated at the end of the month based on what you have left, and **best** meaning it is the best that you can give and not the minimal that you can give...

- One of the ways you can tell if it's your best is by if you *feel* it or not... We want to give until we feel it...

Chicken and the Pig in a town full of hungry people: for one it is a donation, for the other it's a sacrifice...

Some of you are like I need more... how much should I give??

I don't like that question... I think a better question is **how much should we keep?** This move giving to the front and not the back of our lives...

- **Here is a principal to help: Give, Save, Live**

That said if you want me to give you the biblical framework that my family uses... And I will hold it to you as a good guide for you to consider... And that is a **tithe**...

In the **OT** the **tithe** was established, tithe means a tenth- **10%**... They actually gave more than that they gave around 23%...

But the **tithe** was something that was consistent throughout, it was pre-law (Abraham); law (Moses); post-exile (Malachi)...¹

- Tithing in the **OT** was connected to the law, but it was also a principal for how God sustains ministry that stands outside the law...²

And it's a principal that Jesus affirms in **Matthew 23:23**... Jesus also affirms the **widow who gave 2 coins** (Luke 21:1-4) which was everything she had...

He also affirmed **Zacchaeus** (Luke 19:1-10) who gave away **50%** of all he had- saying that his generosity showed his heart was changed... Jesus told the **rich young ruler** (Luke 18:18-23) to sell **everything** and follow Jesus...

I say that because **what you see is not grace for less but grace for more!** If anything, the gospel raises our level of response when it comes to giving...

*Jesus showed this not just as it relates to money but even as it related to the other **OT laws**... Jesus said that the law said do not commit adultery, but I say don't even look at a woman with lust...*

So, if the law called for 10%, what does the gospel call for?

One pastor says it like this: *If the people who saw God's generosity in the Exodus responded with giving 10%, how much more should people who have seen the cross [respond]?³*

The **NT Church** models this in **Acts 2** and **Acts 4** as they give substantially above **10%**...

We are not under the law, we are under grace, but a great place to **start grace-centered giving** is 10% - The starting line, not the finish line...

Each year we evaluate our giving- we come to the table with **10% being the baseline** that is going to our local church because that's the model we see in the NT...

- So, the conversation for us consists of how much over 10% are we giving and where do we want to give it...
 - I want to up the percentage another point... Wife calls me out on pride...
 - My wife: hospitality line... some years we add more there...
 - This year she came up with the idea to set a sum of money aside for needs of the hour...

You need to develop a giving plan...

¹ JD Greear, Article, *Some Questions I get about Tithing*. June 7, 2012.

² John Piper, sermon. *Toward the tithe and beyond*. Sept. 10, 1995.

³ JD Greear, Article, *Some Questions I get about Tithing*. June 7, 2012.

- For some of you 10% is not feasible right now because you're barley making it... that's ok... 10% is not the goal a generous heart is the goal...

And here's the deal: once you decide what it is that you're going to give, don't do it **reluctantly** or out of **compulsion**...

I know this can feel like a lot when we start to open up our hearts to sowing generously and sacrificially... Don't worry, Paul's going to continue to help us through this...

Look at what he says next in **verse 8**... After he says decided in your heart what your going to give...

8 And God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work.

Take heart when it comes to being generous... **God gives you what you need in order to do what He's called you to do...**

You can practice generosity cheerfully and freely because God's going to make sure you have what you **need**...

To back this up Paul's going to quote **Psalm 112:9** using it to show the character and nature of God... Allowing us to see His faithfulness and His watchful care over those who are His...

9 As it is written:

**He distributed freely;
he gave to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever.**

10 Now the one who provides seed for the sower and bread for food will also provide and multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your righteousness. **11** You will be enriched in every way for all generosity, which produces thanksgiving to God through us.

God multiplies gifts and increases the harvest for the sake of His own glory

Notice God is the provider... He's the one who gives your money and resources... Good thing to remember...

He's will multiply what he's given you... And He will enrich you in every way... What does that mean?

Finically? Yes!

Example: we have a couple in our church that was **134K in debt**- they started putting Jesus first in their finances and began to practice stewardship of what God had given then in a way that was honoring to Him and in a way that was wise according to scripture and the result was that they paid off their debt in **31 months**...

- Not necessarily more money, but there was a reaped result...

Example: Individual in our church was really struggling financially, continued to give even though it really didn't make sense...

- They had some HUGE needs- word got out and several people from the church stepped in and provided for them in some pretty incredible ways...

I have so many stories from my wife and I, money showing up at the front door etc...

You can't outgive God...

Malachi 3:10 Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way," says the Lord of Armies. "See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure.

Here's the thing though, that blessing, and that enrichment isn't only something that financial...

Paul says multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

The interesting thing about the imagery Paul uses with money being compared to a seed, is that what is sown and what is reaped is different...⁴

- **Greater contentment in life:** There is a unique **satisfaction that comes with being generous**, and seeing the fruit of your generosity when others are helped, when needs are met
- **You get a greater awareness of needs and sensitivity toward those in need:** I have watched first hand as people began giving, how it opened up their heart toward other opportunities to be generous...
- **Giving generously keeps your heart directed toward 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.⁵
- **A reminder that your ultimate reward is in heaven:** At the end of the day the greatest reward that we will receive is God forever... giving reminds us that we're not to store up for this life but for the next...

You will find that what you gain in giving is greater than what you gave away... This is why we say that generosity isn't something God wants from us, but it's something He wants for us...

And as you walk in generosity you can know that God is going to continue to multiply your righteousness and enrich you in every way...

But look why God does that- the big distinguished here... When you give ***God enriches you in every way...*** why? ***for the purpose of generosity...***

- God blesses you to be a blessing...
- You call is to be a ***fountain***, not a ***jar***... ***Jars*** collect, ***fountains*** pour out and give life to the people around it...⁶

Look at **verse 12** and watch how God uses our generosity...

12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. **13** Because of the proof provided by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedient confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone.

Here's what I want you to see:

Our generosity points other people to Jesus

This means that like the church in Corinth, we have to actually be generous for this to happen...

I have told you this before, but everyone has expectations of the church and how the church should meet needs and point people to Jesus...

There's things that people wish the church would do, and things they wish the church had to offer... And that's not a bad thing, we want to keep growing in what we can do and what we can offer...

Here is the disconnect ***Expectation without participation***- People want something but are not willing to give toward that end...

- ***Just from a logical standpoint...*** How can the needs of people both spiritually and physically be met by the church if people don't give to the church??

God has set it up for our sake and for our spiritual growth, that generosity provides the resources for ministry...

And when a church gives generously, the gospel is put on display, both through people in the church as they live, and through the church as a whole as they impact the city and beyond...

When you look at the church in **Acts**, one of the thing that clearly drew people to them, and one of the things that characterized them was their ***generosity...***

⁴ Tim Keller, "The Power of Generosity," 2 Corinthians 8:8-15, 9:6-12

⁵ JD Greear, sermon. *Multiply in every way*. Nov. 13, 2016.

⁶ Ryan Brooks, sermon. *We are Generous (Work it Out)*. Nov. 10, 2019.

Paul's showing us here in **v. 12 and 13** that our generosity has massive implications!

And here is my hope in all of this, that verse 14 and 15 would be true for us...

14 And as they pray on your behalf, they will have deep affection for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. **15** Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

The evidence of God's grace is seen through the generosity of the church in Corinth...

Let me ask you this: How many people will be thanking God for us; how many people will have a deep gratitude for us because of how the Gospel has been at work in us as evidence through our generosity???

Example: The first English Bible:

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.⁷ You have a Bible in your hands largely in part because of Humphrey...

⁷ Via, JD Greear but as told in the book, Gospel Patrons: People Whose Generosity Changed the World, by John Rinehart.

I wonder how many of us will be like **Humphrey Monmouth**, how many people will point back to our generosity as the means of gospel access??

And at the end of the day what will generosity show and say to others about who God is and what He has done for you?

Generous grace to you should result in generosity through you

Gospel appeal here...

As we abide in the reality of the gospel we want to be a church that abounds in generosity...

The Abide and Abound Initiative gives us the chance to fuel our impact locally nationally and internationally...

Response Time [VAMP]

I want to give you a chance to respond...

Go ahead and take out that card...

- I want to challenge you to go above and beyond this morning as we press in together on what it means to abound in generosity...
- For some of you this is the starting line for others of you this is pressing beyond where you have been...

And then you'll have the opportunity to give toward your above and beyond gift over the months of **November and December**... So this is not year long it only lasts through the end of December and you will be able to give toward that specifically online, or you can label your gift as you drop it in our giving box in the lobby...

Give space to fill out card...

[Band Vamps]

Explain next steps and the ***Baptism tank...***

We're going to stand and sing and you come...

For some of you this morning, it may be that you don't need to give a dollar but you need to surrender to the generosity of Jesus for the first time, or you need to reorient your heart and ask God to give you a hear of generosity... The alter is open for you and we will have people here to pray with you... You come and get on your face before God...

Let me **PRAY** and then Anna would you lead us and family as we sing you come!