



KEY THOUGHTS

- How do you grow a faith community? How did the early followers of Jesus?
- Pillar #5 is today: sacrificial generosity, as described in Acts 2:44-45. Is this prescriptive (we're supposed to do it as well), or descriptive (lets us know what they did)?
- Our job is to find the principles here in Acts 2:44-45, and more detail is given in Acts 4:34-35, which are taught elsewhere in Scripture.
- **1. Giving is stewardship**, or management of what God has entrusted to us.
- Psalm 50:10-11 – God owns the cattle on 1,000 hills, but cattle aren't wild. They are livestock, in the possession of their owners. God is teaching He owns it all!
- **2. Giving was costly.** They were giving away their most high-priced possessions!
- NOTE: It wasn't that everyone sold everything, or even that everyone sold something, as we see from Acts 2:46 and John 19:26-27, where people owned houses.
- The point was that quite a few people gave very costly things!
- Where did they learn this? From the top! See 2 Cor. 8:9 – Jesus gave up His wealth to become poor, so that we could become spiritually rich!
- **3. Giving was Spirit-led.** People weren't commanded or coerced to give. No percentage was put forth that they had to give. The Spirit directed them.
- **4. Giving was merciful and just.** Giving was directed at caring for the needy. It arose from hearts that were driven by mercy (how can we compassionately care for people) and justice (how can we do this in a way that does more than meet emergency needs).
- **5. Giving was generous.** Generosity is over the top, extravagant, and abundant. The opposite of generous isn't stingy, but obligatory. I can give as a faithful steward, even in costly measures, and possibly still not be generous. Generosity has to do with a heart that gives joyfully. See 2 Cor. 9:7 – God loves a cheerful giver.
- **What the early church did with resources that were given:**
 - Care for the needy, such as widows (1 Timothy 5)
 - Care for clergy, or church workers (1 Timothy 5)
 - Care for people in other areas ((Acts 11:29; Romans 15:25-26; 1 Cor. 16:1-3)
 - Provide for work the church was doing (Philippians 4:14-16)
- **Some tips on being sacrificially generous:**
 - **Trust:** God will care for our needs.
 - **Give first:** don't wait til the end of the month – give off the top.
 - **At a minimal, give a percentage:** the tithe is a great principle. Start with a percentage and try to increase it.
 - **Don't put this on a checklist:** giving is not something we "check off". God may be leading you above where you are.
 - **Worship:** giving is an act done to the Lord. Don't let the fact that we don't "pass a plate" in our service keep you from seeing your generosity as a gift given to Jesus!

SCRIPTURES

- Acts 2:42-47
- Acts 4:34-35

- Psalm 50:10-11
- 2 Corinthians 8:9
- 2 Corinthians 9:7

PRACTICAL & REFLECTION

Going Old School to New School

- Do I live as a steward? (that my possessions are not my own, and if God asks me to do something with His possessions, I will follow)
- Do I give even if it costs my lifestyle?
- Do I regularly ask God to lead me in my giving? (then watch?)
- Do I live open-handed, with a heart to help the needy?
- Am I generous, and do I give while praying for a generous heart?