

RPM's of GENEROSITY

1 Cor. 16, 2 Cor. 9

INTRODUCTION: By June of this year two of our kids will have transferred to the University of Florida. Cole, our second born will graduate and make his transition from the Island Life to the Swamp Life.

One of the things we've done as parents is to help them upgrade cars when they go off to school. At 16 they got something that could basically get them back and forth to Fernandina, but at 18 we want to feel good about them being a couple of hours away and traveling more and more.

- Now with my daughter, the primary value that drove the decision about which vehicle we were to purchase was safety, predictability, reliability.
- But with our son, it's different. I wanted him to get something BOLDER. He's only young once.

For Carly, I was concerned about gas milage.
For Cole, I was concerned about Horsepower.

For Carly, I was concerned about the NCAP Safety Rating.
For Cole, I was concerned about RPM's.

There are those among us to like to play it safe, be understated, fly under the radar. Then there are those who want to go big or go home. I am of the second category and many of your are as well.

It's one thing to wake up in the morning and SURVIVE, it's an entirely different thing to really LIVE.

Some of us get so caught up with having more **days in our life** that we fail to have more **life in our days**.

According to scripture - one of the keys to living BOLD in every area of your life is to live BOLD in your GIVING.

To LIVE BOLD, you must GIVE BOLD

I want to talk to you today about going big and bold when it comes to generosity. Becoming a HILARIOUS giver.

CONTEXT: At the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, a famine has hit the land of Israel. Many of the Early Christians had been scattered throughout the Roman Empire following the martyrdom of Stephen. Some of those likely landed here in Corinth.

Those who remained in Jerusalem were the earliest followers of Jesus. James, who served as the lead Pastor of the Jerusalem church. As well as many of those who visibly saw Jesus alive from the dead.

So persecution was strong and the famine was severe. So Paul, started to take collections for the relief of the Jerusalem Church. Here at the end of 1st and 2nd Corinthians he begins to address the offering he would collect when he arrived in Corinth.

In doing so he conveyed **3 principles of Bold Giving** that churches have practiced for the last 2000 years.

The first is...

1. The Principle of Rhythm -

1 Corinthians 16:2a

² On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up...

So give on Sunday - why? Well this is when the Church gathered, the Lord's day - the first day of the week, Sunday.

Now he is not creating a legalistic requirement so that, let's say you get paid monthly... you are not required to parcel out your money so that you have something to contribute every week.

Income was a daily thing for most of the people in Corinth - this was a sea port town, their income fluctuated daily. But Paul says, do the math and bring the appropriate amount with you to the gathering of the church on Sunday.

But notice, there is a measure of planning involved. They are not to give on the whim of emotion, if their favorite hymn was sung, or if the preacher preached a particularly great sermon. It was normative and predictable.

Notice also, that they didn't give based on the fact that everything was RIGHT at the Church. No church on the planet was more messed up that the Church at Corinth. Paul said - GIVE! I've heard people say, "well I don't like this or that about the Southern Baptist Convention, so I'm not going to give". Friend, there were people at Corinth in an affair with their stepmom. Paul said deal with the problem, but keep giving as you do.

Listen, God says, the tithe belongs to Him. It's not your's to decide about.

So, generosity is the planned rhythm. This stops us from only giving when we feel good and it stops us from giving at the mercy of a compelling communicator.

ILLUSTRATION; *Benjamin Franklin used to go and listen to George Whitfield preach and without fail, God would motivate him to give all he had. But he figured it out, he knew how to beat this God anointed preacher, Next time he went, he left his wallet at home. But he got under the preaching of God's Word, the Spirit of God started moving and he told the man beside him, "Loan me some money that I might give it to the Lord!"*

Listen if you don't have a PLAN for giving you will end up broke and it will be you we are taking a collection for.

Have a plan, a Rhythm that is sustainable and predictable. And might I say, HONEST. Some of you approach giving like you approach the IRS. You cut your income in such a way that you don't have to give much of anything to God.

If you drive a \$50,000 vehicle, live in a \$500,000 home and say your tithe is \$100, you are either the best money manager on planet earth, or you are robbing God.

Get honest and give your fair share.

The principal of rhythm...

2. The Principle of Proportion -

There are two thoughts here - you are to give AS you have Received, the AS YOU WISH to Receive. Let's look at each one...

a. As you have Received -

1 Corinthians 16:2b

each of you is to put something aside and store it up, **as he may prosper....**

Some translations say, "In keeping with your income". The idea is simple, God does not expect equal gifts, but He does expect equal sacrifice.

We have got some faithful attenders of this church who are homeless. They come on a bike, and hope nothing was stolen while they were in worship. Listen, for you giving may be sharing part of the meal you receive with a friend in need. You have our blessing to do that, we don't want you put at tenth of it on the blue boxes.

But for others of you, if you would just get honest and generous - there would be very few needs we could not meet.

According to Relevant Magazine - only 10-20% of American Christians actually tithe. If American Christians would just tithe, there is enough wealth Among American Christians to solve the world's Poverty Crisis, Early Diseases, Sanitation Diseases, fully fund mission work and at the end of the day have 100 Billion left over. So do you see, it's not so much about the White House getting its act together. It's mostly about the Church house getting its act together.

Give AS you Receive...

b. As you wish to Receive -

2 Corinthians 9:6

⁶ The point is this: whoever **sows** sparingly will also **reap** sparingly, and whoever **sows** bountifully will also **reap** bountifully.

You see the word sow, refers to what you give.
The word reap, refers to what you get.

If I sow a tomato seed into good soil and carefully water and fertilize it - it will produce a lifetime of tomatoes. Enough for my whole family and many neighbors. Some will likely spoil before I can give them all away. That's how sowing and reaping works.

Now in an over-reaction to the prosperity Gospel in the last 50 years, we have almost acted as if these verses were not in the Bible. Now, I'm not telling you can you get anything you want by twisting God's arm with generosity.

But I am telling you - I've never in my life been able to out give God. The more faithful I am to give, the more abundantly He provides.

2 Corinthians 9:8-12

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." 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,...

Now that's pretty straightforward.

Someone will say - Pastor do I tithe on the gross or the net? In other words, what is the bare minimum I can do and not feel guilty. Friend, your generosity is the latch that opens the windows of heaven. Open it as far as you wish.

Luke 6:38 (ESV)

³⁸ **give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.**

The Principle of Rhythm, The principle of Proportion...

3. The Principle of Mood -

2 Corinthians 9:7

⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

ILLUSTRATION: God loves everybody, but he loves the church on a different level... but then there are some people in the church HE REALLY LOVES.

I love children, I don't trust someone who doesn't like kids, but I really love my kids. Now, I have to tell you, I have my favorites. You know which one is my favorite? The one who is closest to me in the moment. That's my favorite. That's God's favorite to.

Don't you want to live with the FAVOR of God on your life? Well this verse holds the key - God loves and I mean really loves... a cheerful giver.

The Greek word is Hilarion, from which we get our word, "hilarious".

The word "cheerful" is not a verb it is a noun. You know the difference. A verb is what you do, a noun is who you are. It's your state of being - noun.

ILLUSTRATION: When I was a kid, my mom liked to watch, "I love Lucy". My dad liked to watch the comedian, "George Wallace". You know the difference? **Lucile Ball** was funny, **George Wallace** was Hilarious.

God wants you to be George Wallace Hilarious on the main stage of Generosity.

Is that your mood toward giving? Do you come to church hunting for the blue boxes? Or do you try to slip by with no one noticing.

The way you know that you are really getting close to the Heart of God is when this becomes you favorite sermon. The way you know you are far from God's heart is you hate for a preacher to ever mention generosity.

Your emotions in giving reveal your spiritual maturity for better or worse.

LET ME GIVE YOU A FEW PRACTICAL THINGS TO CONSIDER:

1. **Talk about this as a family** - If you are very generous and you love giving, your wife and kids should know. They should know what you as a family are doing for the Lord. If you struggle with this, your wife and kids should know, so that they can pray for you. So sit down and talk about it - as one another what are we doing? Open up the check statements and show them - this is what our family is

doing in the area of giving.

2. **Ask yourself, “what is the next level of my maturity in generosity?”**

- For example, if you’ve never given before - maybe giving today should be your next step of obedience.
- Maybe if you give sporadically, you should commit to giving regularly.
- If you give pretty regularly maybe consider automating your giving. You know what that does? It frees you up to see other areas you can be generous.
- If you are giving faithfully and regularly, perhaps it’s time you learn to be a sacrificial giver and trust God to give seed to the sower.
- Some of you need to pray about Legacy Giving and thinking about how to structure your estate so that your biggest gift is after you are in Glory.

What is the next right thing to do for you?

3. **Decide How much is Enough.**

ILLUSTRATION: The Orthodox Jews have a tradition at the end of certain Sabbath Days called the **Havdalah Service**. It is to mark the transition from a day of worship to a day of work. It’s how they invite God to bless the work of the upcoming week.

Here’s what they do: They prepare a large saucer and put a cup in the center of it. Then they pour wine into the cup until it overflows into the saucer. The idea is - Lord if you will bless us to meet the needs in our family - we will give the excess to meet the needs of others. The trick to it is - you have to get with God and decide how big your family’s cup is going to be.

Have you ever sat down and decided how much is enough for you to accumulate? Until you do that - when you have an excess things will always arise demanding that they receive it. But once you say - this is my families portion - you are free to give richly and abundantly, spontaneously - and God is pleased to pour out generously.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION:

Basil - Early Church Father. Basil was grieved because there was an outbreak of leprosy. If that day if you acquired leprosy you were a social pariah, no one wanted to be near you. But here you had this godly, spirit filled man named Basil who said, “these people with leprosy are they not still bearers of God’s image? Are they not still worthy of love and dignity?”

So he called on several churches and asked, “what would it look like if we took the extra that God blessed us with and created places for the lepers to be loved on and cared for with dignity. It is said, that wherever a Cathedral was built one of the homes of refuge were built as well.

And that my friend was the start of institutions that today we call hospitals. Because one man believed in being a hilarious giver and caring for the least of these.