

LIFE ON MISSION



GIVE GENEROUSLY
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The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

This week we are finishing our series called Life on Mission where we are talking about the mission that God has given us, both individually and as a church. Our hope is that it will help us out of our faith funk and get us back on mission after a year and a half of lethargy and possibly apathy. This week helps us do that by understanding what Giving Generously means.

SCRIPTURE¹

Acts 4:36-37 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means “Son of Encouragement”), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet.

Acts 5:1-11 Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back a part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet. Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not just lied to human beings but to God.” When Ananias heard this he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter asked her, “Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?” “Yes,” she said, “that is the price.” Peter said to her, “How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.” At that moment, she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

2 Corinthians 9:7-10 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: “They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever. Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.”

Matt. 14:15-17 As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.” Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.” “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,”

2 Corinthians 9:11 You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture referenced here is NIV

OBSERVATION

Five spiritual practices are found and lived out in the Book of Acts which is the story of the very first Christians and churches. What we will see is that they lived their lives on mission – the mission that Jesus gave to them. We find it beginning in Acts Chapter 4. The Church in Jerusalem at this point was legitimate. They were not only living life on mission, but they were modeling a Church on mission. They were marked by things like gladness, everything being shared, they were marked by praise, by unity and definitely marked by their generosity. In fact, their generosity was so over the top, that we read about a man named Barnabas. His generosity and faithfulness was to be admired. But there were and are no perfect churches. If we would have pointed at the Church in Jerusalem and said, “It looks like they were nailing it.” But in a few months, we might say, “Yeah, they had a good couple months.” And here’s what we’ll also throw out for those who are new to The Crossing, give us a couple months. You won’t be too disappointed early on, but just hang out long enough we will fail you and let you down. The Church is God’s creation and is amazing, but our frailty is a constant challenge to keeping the church on mission.

QUESTION: What does generosity look like at The Crossing today?

APPLICATION

Here is what **generosity DOESN’T look like**. The story of Ananias and Sapphira describes that! You see, it’s not the amount of generosity that is crucial, but rather the intent behind the action. Ananias and Sapphira revealed the truth about themselves: They were needy. They had a need for recognition and affirmation – it had nothing to do with generosity. One of the “drifts” for all of us from a life on mission is the desire to look more mature, to look further along than we actually are, to seek the praise that other people experience as they are being obedient to God. This is called **hypocrisy**. A Hypocrite grabs hold of the action and doesn’t understand the heart of the matter. It’s fake. It’s contrived. It’s unhealthy. It’s dangerous.

QUESTION: When have you been tempted by hypocrisy, pretending to be someone you aren’t to in order impress others?

A generous heart always starts with the **WHY** and ends with the **WHAT**. Remember: God has no needs. God is self-sufficient. We have a wonderful church here at The Crossing: Wonderful music, coffee, teaching, training up of our kids, fellowship, etc. Yet, in a church like ours, we can begin to think we aren’t needed, but this is a lie from Satan. We need to contribute to what is happening in order to have our needs met, not just take from what is available. And if we come to God with an attitude like “God is so lucky to have us,” if we think we are somehow a gift to God just by our being connected to Him, we are getting it all wrong. Paul says in Corinthians, “I want to invite you to give to something bigger than yourselves - to give back and put your heart into it.” It’s what **generosity SHOULD look like**. Remember: if we sow sparingly, we reap sparingly and if we sow generously, we reap generously.

QUESTION: Whom do you know that is generous beyond all expectations?

QUESTION: When have you been the recipient of someone’s generosity? How did that experience make you feel?

QUESTION: When have you experienced giving generously and watched as God provided overwhelmingly?

So, what should **generosity LOOK LIKE ON US?** We can all get stuck in the **ME MODE**. There’s nothing wrong with bringing our needs before God, but the way He often responds to our **NEEDS** is to give us **SEEDS**. We want the harvest, but He often responds to our needs differently than we expect - with seeds. There are so many times where I have been discouraged in my own life only to find that when I focused on someone else, when I saw the needs all around me and sowed what God gave me, it became exactly what I needed. Jesus said, “Give and it will be given to you.” This is not just a financial scripture, it’s a scripture about anything and everything. It is simply speaking to our posture of making available everything we have for God’s purposes. Listen, we will never know what we truly have until God shows us a need that is bigger than we are. And we will never fully know that God is able until He puts us in a situation where we are not.

QUESTION: So, what kind of a sower are you? What does generosity look like on you today?

QUESTION: What situation are you coping with now where the need is more than the supply?

For some of us it is a physical need, for others it occupies some other place in our lives, perhaps relational or directional or a decision needs to be made. The disciples understood that gap. They looked around and said, “We have here **ONLY** five loaves of bread and two fish.” (**Matthew 14:17**) They did not have enough, but **GOD WAS ABLE**. Jesus enabled the disciples to feed the 5000. They did the feeding. He did the providing. They only had to bring what was available to them, be generous with it and then see what God was able to do with it. We find ourselves in situations where we are not able,

but God is. Even though our supply is limited, when we make it available; it becomes the seed that Jesus uses to meet an incredible need. What we saw as a gap only needed our generosity to bridge it.

QUESTION: What do you have to provide to others today that God can magnify into a miracle?

QUESTION: What changes would you have to make to increase your generosity today?

Paul tells the Church to be generous always. He wants us to have the opportunity to give to something bigger than ourselves - and notice: He never uses the word sacrifice. What we see in the character and the pattern of God is that He never really calls us to purely sacrifice anything – what we give to Him is not a sacrifice - it is something we sow.

QUESTION: In ten years, what will you be grateful for sowing now?

QUESTION: Tell us about a time when you generously planted seeds that grew into fulfillment of others' needs with God's provision?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help us to give to others generously and with pure hearts as we begin to understand that we are to be sowers with open hands and You are always able to provide. In Jesus' name, Amen.

QUESTIONS

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