OFFER

What's in Your Hand? | Generosity Series — Week 2

PRIMARY TEXT: Exodus 35:20–29 (NIV) • BIG IDEA: God has given everyone something to offer.

INTRODUCTION — WHAT'S IN YOUR HAND?

Church, have you ever caught yourself saying, “When things settle down, I'll have more to give”? Maybe it's when the kids get older, when the bills ease up, when work slows down, or when you feel a little more confident. I get it. Life gets full. But sometimes we spend so much time thinking about what we'll do someday that we miss what God is inviting us to do today.

I love a question God asks Moses in Exodus 4. Moses has every reason he can think of for why he's the wrong guy to lead Israel. He's worried people won't believe him. He's looking at his limitations. And the Lord asks, “What is that in your hand?” Moses says, “A staff” (Exodus 4:2). That was his everyday shepherd's staff. God would use it as a sign of His power. The staff wasn't magic; the Lord was the One acting. But Moses had to pay attention to what was already there.

Last week we remembered the faithfulness of God. And I hope we never get tired of telling those stories. We've inherited so much because somebody prayed, somebody served, somebody sacrificed, somebody said yes to Jesus. Gratitude should lead to generosity. So here's the question I want to put in front of every one of us today: What's in your hand? God has given everyone something to offer.

SCRIPTURE — EXODUS 35:20–29

Let me set the scene before we read. God has rescued Israel out of Egypt and made a covenant with them. Then comes one of the most painful moments in their story. While Moses is on the mountain, the people take their gold and make a calf to worship (Exodus 32:2–4). They take something good and give it the place that belongs to God. Moses intercedes, God judges their sin, and the Lord reveals Himself as compassionate and gracious as He renews His covenant (Exodus 34:6–10).

Now in Exodus 35, God invites this same community to contribute toward the tabernacle, the place of His presence among them. Watch the movement of the story. In Exodus 32, their gold became an idol. In Exodus 35, their gifts became an offering. That is what happens when worship gets redirected toward the Lord. They are responding to God's mercy and God's invitation.

[READ EXODUS 35:20–29 IN FULL FROM THE NIV BIBLE.]

Did you hear how many different people are involved? There are materials, skills, leaders, craftsmen, women working with their hands, and people whose hearts are moved. There's room for a whole community to participate. I want to show you three things.

POINT 1 — EVERYONE HAS SOMETHING

Look at the gifts in Exodus 35:21–24. Gold, silver, bronze, fabric, leather. Different people bring different things. And that makes sense, because they didn't all have the same resources. Comparison can quietly rob us of the joy of generosity. You see somebody else doing something impressive and think, “Well, I can't do that.” And pretty soon you talk yourself out of doing anything.

But listen to Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 8:12: “For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.” I love that. God knows what has been entrusted to you. He sees your responsibilities and your season of life. Faithfulness isn't measured by whether you can match somebody else's gift.

Peter says, “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others” (1 Peter 4:10). Each of you. That includes the teenager, the single parent, the retiree, the person working long hours, the person who feels like they have very little to spare. It may be your ability to listen, your patience with a child, your wisdom, your practical skills, your encouragement, your resources, or a relationship through which you can bless someone.

Jesus notices a widow giving two small coins in Mark 12:41–44. He sees the sacrifice that others would overlook. We need to handle that passage carefully: Jesus is not handing religious leaders permission to pressure vulnerable people. He sees the person. He sees the cost. And He sees the heart. God isn't asking you to give what you don't have. He's asking you to be faithful with what you do. So what has God placed in your hands?

POINT 2 — EVERYTHING HAS A PURPOSE

Exodus 35 gets even more interesting when it talks about the skilled women who spun yarn and brought what they made. Their contribution came through their work. Back in Exodus 31:1–6, the Lord equips Bezalel and Oholiab with wisdom, knowledge, and craftsmanship for this project. I love that the Bible makes room for this. God equipped Moses to lead, and He equipped other people to build. The Spirit's work wasn't confined to someone speaking on a platform.

Some of you know how to fix things. Some of you can make a meal that makes somebody feel at home. Some of you are great at budgets, mentoring, designing, organizing, teaching, or showing up when life gets hard. Those are meaningful ways to love people. Paul describes one body with different gifts in Romans 12:4–8. We need each other. Your gifts weren't given just for you.

Ephesians 2:10 says we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works that God prepared for us. We are saved by grace, and grace forms us into people who live differently. Your ordinary work, your family responsibilities, your rest, your generosity, and your service all belong under the lordship of Jesus. That doesn't mean you have to turn every hobby into a church assignment. It means you can ask the Lord how to be faithful wherever He has placed you.

I see this all the time at Light & Life. People care for kids and teenagers. People pray with somebody who is hurting. Families open their homes. Someone quietly helps another family through a hard month. Others have shared skills, resources, and time through Building for the Future. I thank God for every one of those expressions. And I love knowing that the same generosity goes with you into your neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces.

We call ourselves a river church because of that picture in Ezekiel 47: the river flows out and brings life. That's what I want for us. We receive the grace of God and let His goodness flow through our lives into the lives of others. What God has given you is meant to flow through you. So where is the Lord inviting you to be a blessing?

POINT 3 — OFFER IT WILLINGLY

Go back to the language of Exodus 35. Verse 21 describes those who were willing and whose hearts moved them. Verse 29 speaks of men and women bringing freewill offerings. You can almost feel the joy in that scene. People saw what God was doing and wanted to take part. And that matters because you can do something generous on the outside while your heart is somewhere else entirely.

Paul tells the church in 2 Corinthians 9:7 to decide in their hearts what to give, without reluctance or compulsion, because God loves a cheerful giver. I want us to be that kind of church. A church where people listen to the Holy Spirit and respond with joy. There may be a genuine sacrifice involved. There may be a hard conversation with your spouse about your budget or a change in how you use your calendar. Those decisions deserve prayer and wisdom.

Sometimes we're holding tightly because we're scared. Maybe the money feels like security. Maybe our time is already stretched. Maybe saying yes once led to being taken advantage of. Those things are real. God is not calling us to abandon healthy boundaries or neglect our families. He is inviting us to trust Him with our whole lives. And here's a question worth sitting with: Has something God gave me become something I can't imagine surrendering to Him?

In 1 Chronicles 29:14, David asks, “But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this?” He goes on to acknowledge that everything comes from God. That's the posture I want us to have. Open hands, grateful hearts, and a willingness to follow. God wants your heart before He wants what's in your hands.

THE SURPRISING ENDING — MORE THAN ENOUGH

Now you've got to hear how this story ends. Exodus 36:2–7 tells us that people kept bringing their gifts until the workers reported that they had more than enough for the work. Moses actually told the people to stop bringing offerings. Now that's a church announcement you don't hear every Sunday! But what moves me is the picture of an entire community taking part. Their gifts were different, their work was different, and together they answered God's invitation.

I dream of a church where generosity is simply who we are. Where people know they can call on us in a crisis. Where children grow up watching adults serve with joy. Where our neighbors experience the love of Jesus through the way we live. God is forming a people who reflect His character. And every willing response matters.

GOSPEL CONNECTION — JESUS GAVE HIMSELF FOR US

Church, all of this begins with grace. Remember Israel's story. They had failed terribly, and God met them with both holy judgment and astonishing mercy. Their offerings came after God's gracious initiative. That's the order of the Gospel too. The Lord comes toward us in love before we have anything to bring Him.

In 2 Corinthians 8:9, Paul reminds believers of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: though He was rich, He became poor for our sake, so that through His poverty we might become rich. He's speaking about the generosity of Jesus—His self-giving, His humiliation, His saving work. Jesus came into our world, lived faithfully, gave Himself on the cross, and rose from the dead. In Him we receive forgiveness, reconciliation, and the riches of God's grace. That verse is not a promise that following

Jesus will make us financially wealthy. It's a declaration of how much Christ has given for our salvation.

And now listen to Romans 12:1: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.” In view of God's mercy. That's where Paul starts. Ephesians 2:8–10 makes the same movement: we are saved by grace through faith, and we are created in Christ Jesus for good works. Grace comes first, and grace teaches us how to live.

I want you to hear this personally today. You are loved by God. Jesus has made a way for you to come home to the Father. You can repent, trust Him, receive His forgiveness, and begin a new life by the power of the Holy Spirit. And as we follow Him, our lives become an offering of worship. We don't offer ourselves to earn God's mercy. We offer ourselves because we've received it.

CHALLENGE — WHAT'S IN YOUR HAND? PUT IT IN HIS.

So let's bring this all the way home. What's in your hand? Think about your week as it actually is. Your calendar. Your abilities. Your resources. The people God has placed around you. Maybe there's a neighbor who needs your attention, a young person who needs your encouragement, someone who needs practical help, or a need you could meet with a gift. Hebrews 13:16 reminds us to do good and share with others, because these are sacrifices that please God.

Here's what I'm asking you to do before next Sunday: one intentional act of generosity. Pray about it, choose it, and follow through. Maybe it costs you an hour. Maybe it costs you money. Maybe it asks you to use

a skill you haven't offered in a while. Do it with joy, as worship to the Lord. You don't have to have everything to offer something.

ALTAR RESPONSE — OPEN HANDS

Would you open your hands in front of you for a moment? Just look at them. Think of the work they've done, the people they've held, the things they've carried. Think about what God has entrusted to you. And ask Him, “Lord, what have You placed in my hands that You're asking me to offer back to You?” [PAUSE FOR SILENT PRAYER.]

For some of you, this begins with surrendering your life to Jesus. You've been carrying everything on your own, and today the Lord is inviting you to trust Him. For others, you've walked with Jesus for years, and there's a part of your life He's gently bringing back to your attention. Let's respond to Him together.

Father, thank You for every good gift and for the mercy that has carried us this far. Lord Jesus, thank You for giving Yourself for us and opening the way to new life. Holy Spirit, show us what You have entrusted to us and give us the courage and joy to offer it freely. Form us into people who love our neighbors, care for the hurting, and make Your goodness known. We surrender our lives to You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

BENEDICTION

May the Father remind you that every good gift comes from Him. May Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for you, lead you in generous love. And may the Holy Spirit fill you with wisdom and willing hearts as you serve the people around you. Go in peace, church. What's in your hand? Put it in His. Amen.

PREACHING REFERENCE — SCRIPTURE CROSS-REFERENCES

Primary reading: Exodus 35:20–29. Introduction: Exodus 4:2; James 1:17. Background: Exodus 32:2–4; 34:6–10. Point 1: 2 Corinthians 8:12; 1 Peter 4:10; Mark 12:41–44. Point 2: Exodus 31:1–6; Romans 12:4–8; Ephesians 2:10; Ezekiel 47:1–12. Point 3: Exodus 35:21, 29; 2 Corinthians 9:7; 1 Chronicles 29:14. Ending: Exodus 36:2–7. Gospel: 2 Corinthians 8:9; Romans 12:1; Ephesians 2:8–10. Challenge: Hebrews 13:15–16.