

Get in the Game-3
“Generosity”
Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)

Hey Newsong!

I want to take a second and welcome all of our first-time guests and those worshipping with us online!

We're in week three of our teaching series called "Get in the Game." What we've been learning is that following Jesus isn't about sitting on the sidelines and being entertained...

It's about getting in the game...Paul says the Christian life is like running in a race...

Series Verse

24 Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win!-1 Corinthians 9:24 (NLT)

In week one we talked about the importance of being part of a biblical community...Every Christian should be part of a local church...If you're not part of a local church then you're a player without a team...

So we said that you need to find a team and then show up consistently...What we learned from Acts 2, was that the first century church all gathered together for big church (we call that Sunday) and then they gathered in their homes for fellowship...(we call that life groups)

So we have a "home game" every single Sunday...It's our Sunday worship service...and we have "away games" throughout the week... bible studies, prayer, fun hangouts, life groups, etc...We need both if we want to grow!

Last week we talked about getting in the game with our serving...

Okay you've joined the team, but now you've got to play the game...you've got to find your position on the team. We learned that God has given us both natural and supernatural gifts that He expects us to use on game day...

So we have tables all around the room that represent a ministry that you could get involved with right away...

And I'm so proud of those of you who have taken your next step these past two weeks and either taken the 4 week challenge to come church every Sunday for four weeks...or have decided to join a dream team! Keep going!

Now today we're back in Acts chapter 2 and we're going to see how the early church got in the game with their generosity...

Christians should be generous because our God is generous! **(John 3:16)**

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.-Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)

Pray

Acts chapter 2 is an amazing chapter because you have the church (which was only about 120 people at the time) All waiting for the promised Holy Spirit...

Jesus had said that they were to go out into all the world and make disciples, but before they could do that they needed the power of the Holy Spirit...

The Holy Spirit is poured out, the 120 are baptized in the Holy Spirit...they now have the boldness to preach Jesus...

Peter preaches the gospel and 3,000 people get saved...the church goes from 120 to 3,000 people!

Then in verse 42 we see that generosity was a sign that the Holy Spirit was transforming their lives...changing their hearts...molding them into the image of Jesus...Helping them to get in the game...

So this morning I want you to see three areas where the Holy Spirit wants to help us grow in our generosity

Our TIME

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,

When we think of generosity, most of us automatically think about money...but being generous isn't just about giving money...it's also about giving your time...

When you arrange your schedule in such a way so that you are able to invest your time in and for the Kingdom...you're growing!

Just this weekend we had about 10 couples invest time into enriching their marriage...

We have a team going to India this summer...they're investing their vacation time to go on a mission trip...

When you show up to the outreach, you're donating your time to love and serve our community...

You give your time to be on a dream team...You're an usher or a greeter, you're on the set up team, discipleship team, you serve in Kidsong...all of this is being generous with your time...

"Giving isn't something we do, giving is something we are"-Warren Wiersbe

The early church was full of believers who were moved by the Holy Spirit to arrange their schedules around God's agenda!

Now I know that some of you are going...yeah time, I wish I had the time...How can I be generous with my time when I have no time to be generous with?

And it's true! We're all busy...yet it's interesting that some are able to find time and others are not...

Take for example Jesus...Everybody wanted time with Jesus...People wanted to hear Him preach, they wanted healing, they wanted a miracle, they wanted to argue with Him...

As we read the scriptures we see that Jesus was always busy but He was also generous with His time...How did He do it?

35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

36 Simon and his companions went to look for him, 37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!” 38 Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” 39 So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.-Mark 1:35-39 (NIV)

Mark gives us a few hints as to how Jesus was so busy and yet was generous with His time... He was generous with time because He was generous with His time with God first!

When we take time to spend time with our Heavenly Father, it sets the tone for our day...it helps us keep everything in perspective...It prepares us for what's coming...it helps us put His agenda first...

The other thing we see is that Jesus said no to certain things so that He could say yes to other things...

We need to learn how to do that! Some of us say yes to everything and then we can't finish anything...Some of us say no to everything and start nothing!

We need to learn how to say no to certain things so that we can say yes to other things...no isn't a bad word! Jesus didn't say yes to every need, and He didn't say no to every request...

Jesus understood the difference between following the urgent verses following the important...sometimes there are demands that seem so urgent, but we must learn to manage our time not according to what is urgent but to what's important...to what God has called you to do at that time!

Peter says “Hey Jesus, people need You now”
Jesus is like I’m going to the next town...that’s
why I’ve come...In other words there’s a big
picture you’re not seeing guys...

The question for us to consider this morning is
what is crowding our time and keeping us from
what’s important? If you’re married then your
priority is your relationship with God, Spouse,
Children, Job, etc...If you’re single then it’s
God, family, friends, job, etc...

Is there something that you’re doing that’s
eating up your time? Check your smart phone,
how many hours did you spend on it this past
week? How many episodes did you binge on
Netflix?

The Bible tells us in **Ephesians 5:16** that we
should redeem the time because the days are
evil...So where can you buy some time back to
reprioritize it? Be more generous with it?

Where can we say no to certain things so that we can say yes to important things? It's time to take your next step...time to get in the game!

The Holy Spirit wants to help us be more generous with our time...But He also wants to help us be more generous with

Our **TALENTS**

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching...Acts 2:42a (NIV)

In other words, the apostles were the primary teachers in the beginning...that was their gift. If they had taken growth track then they would have a high score for preaching and teaching...but that's not all

43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.-Acts 2:43 (NIV)

What did the apostles do in the early church?
They taught doctrine and God used them to
perform miracles...

Now this doesn't mean that they were the only
ones to be used by God...because as the
church continued to grow they couldn't do
everything...

By the time we get to Acts chapter 6 we see
that certain needs come up and the Apostles
are like we can't do that...we have to say no to
what is urgent and yes to what is important...

We have to stay in our lane...We're going to
lead prayer meetings, preach and teach and
you're going to need to find someone else
who's gone through growth track, and is gifted
to do those things!

This is where those supernatural gifts that we
talked about last week come in...

45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. -Acts 2:45

Now you have people with property and possessions selling them and sharing the profits with others who are in need...

In other words, we see people start to use the spiritual gifts that they've been given...

We see the gift of giving, the gift of hospitality, the gift of helps, the gift of exhortation (or encouraging others) The gift of evangelism...people are inviting their friends to church...sharing the gospel...

Hey by the way...someone has to arrange all of this, or it's chaotic...that's the gift of administration...It takes everyone coming together...

This reminds me of the Avengers...When there was a situation...the battle cry was “Avengers Assemble” and they would come together with their gifts and take care of business!

When the church is generous with their time and talents...You know what happens?

Souls are saved, needs are met...
People are blessed...The broken are healed,
the sick are made well, the lost are
found...those in bondage find freedom...

We're pushing back the darkness...taking
ground...advancing the Kingdom of God! Every
gift is important...every gift is needed...And this
is why it's so important for us to be generous
with our time and our talents...

Again...it's time to get in the game...Take your
next step...register for Growth Track...or sign
up for a position on the dream team!

There's one more area that the Holy Spirit helps us to be generous in and for some it's the hardest one...

Our **TREASURE**

45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

Now here's what I want you to notice...

Nobody told them to sell their stuff and give it to the church...They weren't forced to do it...they wanted to do it!

This isn't a message about money...but one thing I've noticed as I read and teach from the Bible every year...the Bible talks about money a lot!

Let me give you an example...

Jesus taught 29 parables in Scripture...16 were about money...

In Matthew, Mark & Luke 1 out of every 6 verses deals with the topic of money. The Bible has about 500 verses about prayer...Less than 500 verses about faith...over 2,000 verses on finances!

Why is the topic of money so important? Our relationship to finances is an outward gauge of our inward spiritual growth...It's not the only gauge, but it is an important gauge...Jesus said **21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also-Matthew 6:21 (NIV)**

If you want to find out what's important to a person, see what they spend their money on...

The great reformer Martin Luther said *"There are three conversions a person needs to experience: a conversion of the head, a conversion of the heart, and a conversion of the wallet. And the last is the hardest"*

Charles Spurgeon wrote *“With some [Christians] the last part of their nature that ever gets sanctified is their pockets”*

With that in mind please turn to 2 Corinthians 9...As you're turning there let me tell you what's going on...This is like 30+ after Acts chapter 2...and in this section of the letter, the Apostle Paul is teaching about financial giving...

The church in Jerusalem was struggling, and now Paul who is on his third mission's trip is stopping at the other gentile churches that were planted, and he's receiving an offering to help the church in Jerusalem out...

6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 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.

8 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. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 (NIV)

How do we become generous with our treasure? Paul says that all of us should give in other words, a giving heart is a growing heart...

But there are a few takeaways for us and the first is this...

We should Give INTENTIONALLY
7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give...

This means that our giving is something that we've planned out ahead of time...we've prayed about it, it's between us and God...

We want to give because God is moving us to give...

If I say that I love the Lord more than I love Starbucks and then He says okay then show me...I want you to give to missions every month...

But at the end of the year, if I've given more to Starbucks then I have to missions then I've got some growing to do! I need the Holy Spirit to move in my heart...

My point is that giving is something I want to do...something I get to do...it's not forced...The Holy Spirit will move your heart, and will help you to grow in your generosity...

We should give **CHEERFULLY**

7 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.

Some people give with the wrong motivation...they don't give with joy they're like (sigh) here you go...No it shouldn't be reluctant and it shouldn't feel like your forced...you should be glad to do it!

If you don't want to give...

If you don't want to grow in your generosity...

Keep it and spend it on you...

If you can't gladly give then don't give...

Now you probably never heard that in church before...But here's the thing...God wants you to get to a place where you want to give...where you're happy to give...That takes the work of the Holy Spirit in your life!

When He starts to change your heart about giving...You see the blessing of it...You see the benefit of it...You see that God wants something for you, not from you!

Did you know that this isn't just a NT principle? It's in the OT too...in fact we just read this a week or so ago in our Bible reading plan

In Exodus God tells Moses to take an offering from My people for the Tabernacle...

25 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2
"Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an [a]offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering. - Exodus 25:1-2 (NKJV)

See the qualification? You want to do it...you're willing to do it...it's from your heart...

By the way, notice how God loves a cheerful giver? The word cheerful is the Greek word **hil-ar-os'** it's where we get the English word hilarious!

God loves a hilarious giver...Have you ever met a hilarious giver? I have...they live to give...

They don't give to live...they live to give...it just flows from them...and let me tell you... they're happy...they're full of joy! They're blessed!

God loves a cheerful giver...now we know that God loves all of us, but this tells us that God has a special place in His heart for those who give generously...You know why? Because that's how He is! When you're generous you're acting like God!

We should give **EXPECTANTLY**

6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

Think about this...a farmer plants seed in the ground and he expects a harvest...If he only plants a little bit, he gets a little harvest...If he plants a lot of seed he gets a big harvest...

We should give with expectancy...

Sowing and Reaping is a biblical principle...Jesus said

38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”-Luke 6:38 (NIV)

25 A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed. -Proverbs 11:25 (NIV)

9 The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor.-Proverbs 22:9 (NIV)

9 Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; 10 then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.-Proverbs 3:9-10 (NIV)

All through the Bible we see the same principle...You can't outgive God! Try it and you'll see...when you give it's given back to you...when you bless you're blessed...when you're generous to others...the Lord is generous to you!

As I was studying for this message I came across an old Jewish parable about the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea...

The old legend explains that both the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea receive their water from the Jordan River. The Sea of Galilee is vibrant and alive, while the Dead Sea (which is at the lowest altitude on Earth) has no outlet for it's water...

The Sea of Galilee flourishes because it has an inlet and an outlet, it takes in and gives away while the Dead Sea only takes in...

What's the lesson? Those who are generous keep themselves flowing and growing...

Think about that...We should be generous, and our generosity should flow from a life that is being transformed by the Holy Spirit...

So as we come to a close today we see that God wants us to be generous with our time, talent and treasure...

As we ask the Holy Spirit to search our hearts I'm going to ask Him to show us where we can take our next step in generosity...

What's the Holy Spirit Saying To You?
Altar Time