



*The Grace of Giving* | Shawn Johnson | 12.2.17

LG Weekly

## START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer the following question:

**Remember back to when you were a kid, what was the gift you wanted most? Did you end up receiving the gift you wanted?**

## SHARE

*Welcome to our brand new series, entitled "The Grace of Giving."*

*Giving is a grace. Giving is a privilege. Giving changes lives. When God's people rally together to give to the purposes of God, lives are changed. We are to give back to God in obedience, but we are also to give above and beyond out of abundance. As followers of Jesus, we want to make an impact in the world by cultivating a spirit of generosity.*

*The Apostle Paul talks about excelling in the things of God in his letter to the church in Corinth. They excelled in everything, they were excellent in ministry; a people full of faith and knowledge. But Paul points out that for the church to excel in all things, it includes this grace of giving.*

### **2 Corinthians 8:1-7**

And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this

act of grace on your part. But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

*When we excel in the grace of giving and become rich in generosity, lives are changed and the Kingdom continues to expand.*

This week, Shawn kicks off the series talking about giving as a grace and how our own lives are changed in the process of trusting God with our finances. The act of giving has to do with the condition of our hearts, not our bank accounts.

**There are no wrong answers on this...when it comes to finances, do you tend to be more of a sharer/giver or more of a guarder/saver? Why do you think you lean that way?**

**What brings you the most joy to give towards?** (i.e. Clean water initiatives, sponsoring kids, single moms in need, arts programs, local church, nonprofits, red cross, St. Judes etc.)

**How do you personally feel after you give?**

## G R O W

Cultivating a spirit of generosity may not happen overnight. Trusting God with our resources can be difficult, especially when we are in a difficult situation ourselves and giving is the last thing on our radar. Regardless of our situation, whether in times of plenty or times of need, God wants to speak to us about finances in the same way he wants to speak to us about forgiveness, discipline, relationships and prayer.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:21, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

As the people of God, we want to store up treasures in Heaven. But what is considered “treasure” in Heaven? What did Jesus value most on his time on earth? People. His compassion went out towards people, especially those that were hurting and lost. He not only sacrificed time, resources and public appearance for people on earth, he gave his life. Since people were what Jesus valued most on earth, we should also consider people as the real treasures in Heaven. It’s not the status of our bank accounts that has ultimate

reward, but rather, who we are investing into. People are treasures and our financial means are only a vehicle towards something greater.

If we believe God truly owns it all, then it is by faith we trust him and offer back what is already His through the act of giving. Giving back is so important to God that He even asks us to test him in this promise.

### **Read Malachi 3:10-12**

God promises to pour out so much blessing it will overflow in our lives. This does not mean tithing is a financial formula for God to give you more. God just promises that in tithing, you will be blessed. While for some, this could mean financial blessing, God can bless you with opportunity, relationships, peace, joy, contentment, etc. God knows you and what you need most. The important thing is that we trust God and what He says is true for our lives.

**Why do you think God allows us to test him when it comes to giving?**

**Is it difficult for you to trust God with your finances? Where are you in the journey of learning to trust God?**

### **M O V E**

No matter where you are in the journey of learning to trust God with your finances and your life in general, trust is not something at which we ever suddenly or finally arrive. This side of eternity, trusting God has to be something we choose to practice over and over again—especially when it comes to trusting the Lord with our finances. But our predisposition towards doubt, control and fear is no surprise to our creator God.

God knows we're going to have trouble trusting him with our finances and offering up our resources. It's why he offers to let us test both him and his promise to provide. And it's why the authors of the Bible as a whole mention money in over 2,000 verses! God knew the money conversation would be a hurdle for many of us in our journeys of faith, just like it was for the Corinthians when Paul encouraged the church to excel in the grace of giving.

Because we're all at varying stages of the journey, taking the next step towards cultivating a spirit of generosity and excelling in the grace of giving will look differently for each of us. But we will all experience the joy of generosity when we tangibly decide to trust God, believe his promise of blessing is true, and take a step toward excelling in the grace of giving.

This week, Shawn shared he knows he's beginning to excel in the grace of giving when he feels like there is risk involved. As a result, his heart skips a beat, his chest tightens, and he exhales audibly. It's a physical sign of an intentional, inward decision to give sacrificially and trust God with financial resources.

**When you've stepped out in generosity before, what have you experienced? Is there a physical, emotional or spiritual change that can help you identify when you are excelling in the grace of giving?**

**Looking at where you're at in your faith journey, what does it look like for you to "excel in the grace of giving" during this sermon series and the remainder of this year?**

**What keeps you from taking a risk and giving sacrificially today?**

## P R A Y

As a group, spend some time praying with and for each other. Consider asking the Lord to reveal how he is calling you to give in this season. If you are in a coed group, we recommend breaking up into men and women's groups to share more freely.

## T O G O

Proverbs 11:24-25

"One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed."

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