



The Grace of Giving | Chad Bruegman | 12.9.17

LG Weekly

START

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

Think of the most generous person you know. What is it that makes him/her that way and what about his/her lifestyle inspires you? Is there anything about his/her commitment to generosity that makes you fearful or uncomfortable?

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 weekend, Chad talked about how the grace of giving is a catalyst to change lives for God's glory, including our own lives. Yet one of the many hurdles in talking about generosity, is how it can first appear completely fiscally irresponsible to the less mature or hard-hearted believer. For example, have you ever witnessed someone help a person in need more than you ever imagined and thought to yourself, 'that money could have gone to something more important' or 'they are just going to waste that money and never learn responsibility.' We have all thought that at times, we can rationalize why we are the exception to generosity because it seems irresponsible. When we get an opportunity to give above and beyond what is expected, we cross over a whole new border...into Kingdom of God territory.

Kingdom of God territory is where our hearts cross that border from judgement into grace, from fear into generosity. Those are the moments when people so caught up in themselves see a light in the darkness, a city on a hill that is the Kingdom of God, where believers are united in purpose to be generous to those who are desperately in need. At Red Rocks Church, we believe the local church is the hope of the world because it is the one and only plan that Jesus set in motion that not even the gates of Hell can withstand. Jesus Christ is the head of the church and He will build it lead it, and guide it. As God leads us, we need to be the people of God we are called to be...generous, authentic, humble and united. As followers of Jesus, we live differently, we think differently and we respond differently to challenges.

Read Matthew 5:38-45

Without using names, in general what type of person would you consider your enemy? Why do you find it hard to love them?

Jesus tells us that we will experience pain, we will be pushed around, we will be forced to do things we don't want to do and we will be taken advantage of. According to this passage, what is Jesus' answer to how to deal with being treated that way?

G R O W

Matthew 5:38-45 is just one biblical example of how Jesus expects his followers to live differently than those who do not know Jesus. To his Jewish audience when he first delivered these words and to us today, his command to “love your enemy” is not only out of the ordinary, it’s wholly irresponsible. The same can be said of all that Jesus taught about how we, now in Kingdom of God territory, are to handle our money.

Since finances aren’t exactly a “dinner-table” topic of conversation, it can feel awkward to lean into these sort of discussions about how God is calling us to give. And yet, a failure to both teach on generosity and challenge our community to excel in the grace of giving would be to ignore a huge portion of Jesus’ teaching!

Howard L. Dayton Jr. writes, *“Jesus himself talked much about money. Sixteen of the thirty-eight parables were concerned with how to handle money and possessions. In the Gospels, an amazing one out of ten verses (288 in all) deal directly with the subject of money. The Bible offers 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 verses on faith, but more than 2,000 verses on money and possessions.”*

Why do you think so much of Jesus’ teaching revolves around money and possessions?

Why is taking Jesus at his word in regards to tithing, generosity and giving so hard?

Jesus was incredibly proactive and intentional about leaving us with a kingdom perspective on how to handle and steward our finances. In the kingdom of God, what was seen as irresponsible according to the culture’s view—caring for the widows and orphans, giving from the first of one’s income (first fruits) or tithing 10%—was seen as absolutely holy. And when we excel in the grace of giving and choose to walk in generosity, we are living in a state of holy irresponsibility that brings us to a posture of trust and dependence on God. It’s from this place of humility and gratitude that the Lord can truly use us and our resources.

Read Mark 12:41-44

If you’ve heard this story of the widow before, is there something new that spoke to you after hearing her gift described as holy irresponsibility? And if it’s a new story for you, what are your reactions to the widow’s gift?

M O V E

For the widow in Mark 12, excelling in the grace of giving looked like trusting God with her future and surrendering everything—all she had to live on in the form of two measly copper coins. Somehow, she understood that everything she had was a gift from God. Even though her life was marked by tragedy, poverty and hardship, she was confident that what little she did have to her name were God’s gifts and resources given to her out of his blessing. She knew it was never her money to begin with, and she trusted that in giving it back to God she would know his provision and peace. Her generosity gave God the opportunity to move in her heart and in her life. She stands now as an example of what it means to be generous—to experience the grace of God to walk in a perpetual state of holy irresponsibility.

Look honestly at your own heart, which character do you identify with more in this story: the rich people or the widow? Have there been times in your life where you responded more like the other character?

How does the challenge to walk in a perpetual state of holy irresponsibility sit with you?

P R A Y

As a group, spend some time praying with and for each other. Consider asking the Lord to reveal how you can be holy irresponsible in your generosity. If you are in a coed group, we recommend breaking up into men’s and women’s groups to share more freely.

T O G O

Matthew 6:19

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

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