

## Good and Bad Habits - Giving

### Sermon transcript

*Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. <sup>7</sup>You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." <sup>8</sup>And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. <sup>9</sup>As the Scriptures say,*

*"They share freely and give generously to the poor.*

*Their good deeds will be remembered forever."*

*<sup>10</sup>For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you.*

*<sup>11</sup>Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God. <sup>12</sup>So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God.*

*<sup>13</sup>As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God. For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. <sup>14</sup>And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you. <sup>15</sup>Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!*

*(2 Corinthians 9:6-15)*

*Share about a time when you felt excited to give something. It might have been a special gift, a donation to a particular cause or time and skills that you used to help someone.*

I wonder when you have felt excited to give. Do you consider yourself to be a generous person? How do you feel when you have the opportunity to give to others?

In 2 Corinthians 9, we learn that Paul was organising donations for the believers in Jerusalem. The church in Corinth had promised to help and Paul was preparing to collect on this promise.

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Paul called the believers to be generous and cheerful givers. Jesus also modelled and taught about giving. He gave of his time and energy, his money and his power. Ultimately, he gave his life.

# GOOD HABITS



Today we are going to consider our own attitudes towards giving and some good habits that we can develop.

## 1. Develop a habit of being grateful

What has God given you that you are grateful for? *Invite everyone to call out their answers or tell the person next to them 5 things they are grateful for.*

Giving begins with a grateful heart.

*Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God. 2 Corinthians 9:11*

An article about generosity, from Psychology Today, says...

"The happier we feel when we give, the more likely we are to give to others again in the future. And the more grateful we are, in general, the more we enjoy the experience of witnessing other people benefiting from our gifts."

[What Is Generosity? \(And How to Be a More Generous Person\) | Psychology Today](#) - Tchiki Davis

Generosity creates a ripple effect. This is the basis for the 'pay it forward' movement. When we are grateful for the generosity of others, we are more likely to be generous to others. When we are mindful of God's generosity to us, we are inspired to give to others.

*And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. 2 Corinthians 9:8*

Good habits for giving, begin with a developing a habit of gratitude.

### Practical suggestions

- ☐ Each morning, write down 5 things you are grateful for.
- ☐ Over a meal each day, ask each family member to share something great that happened that day.
- ☐ Pray a prayer of thanksgiving every night before bed.

## 2. Give spontaneously

Generosity and giving flow from a grateful heart. Gratitude is an attitude. Generosity is an action. It includes actions that are kind, selfless and giving to others.

Sometimes when we think about generosity, we think only about giving money or possessions. But each of us has so much more to give.

For example, 1 Corinthians 12:7 says, "A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other."

# GOOD HABITS



**Think for a moment about what you could generously give to others.**

- Time
- Compassion
- Skills e.g. cook a meal
- Joy
- Prayer support
- Wisdom
- Kind words

With those things in mind, what opportunities have you taken this week to give generously to someone? Can you think of any opportunities that you might have missed?

As we read through the Gospels, we see that Jesus lived a generous life. He willingly gave time, compassion, healing, food, water, wisdom, friendship and, most importantly, his life. Jesus noticed the needs around him and responded with generosity.

We can also develop the habit of giving spontaneously as we notice the needs of our family, friends, community, church, and world.

### **3. Plan to give**

In addition to spontaneous giving, we can develop the habit of planned giving.

The Israelites were given instructions about when to give, what to give and how much to give. They were instructed to give to the work of the Temple (Deut. 18:1-5), to the poor (Deut. 15:10), to foreigners (Deut. 10:19), and to widows and orphans (Deut. 14:29).

Who will you plan to regularly give to? A neighbour? A charity? A friend?

We find instructions in both the Old and New Testaments about giving to the work of God through the Temple or church. (For example, Deut. 18:1-5; Matt 22:21; 2 Cor 8-9). How do you regularly support the work of God through the church?

For many of us, it is tempting, when we receive our income, to start with paying our bills, planning our expenses, and purchasing a treat or too. When everything has been paid, we think about what we have to give.

God taught the Israelites to give from the top; to give the 'first fruits'. "You must also give to the priests **the first share** of the grain, the new wine, the olive oil, and the wool at shearing time." Deut. 18:4

These gifts were also the 'cream of the crop'. The best, most perfect ten percent of the harvest, the whitest lambs, the juiciest olives, the purest oil.

God calls us to give with gratitude and faith, trusting that when we give, God will meet our needs.

The big question when it comes to giving, is 'how much'?

'I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare'. C. S. Lewis

# GOOD HABITS



'Save all you can . . . Give all you can'. (John Wesley)

God instructed the Israelites to give one tenth of everything. This habit of tithing (or giving ten percent) has continued to inform how we give throughout the history of the church.

We also find some guidelines in the New Testament around how much to give.

- *"Give in proportion to what you have. <sup>12</sup> Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have..." 2 Corinthians 8:11-12*
- *You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." 2 Corinthians 9:7*

Plan to give. Decide what to give. Be intentional about how much to give. Give with a spirit of gratitude and faith.

*"As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God. For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ." 2 Corinthians 9:13*

## Practical suggestions

- ☐ Give gifts for Christmas or birthdays.
- ☐ Random acts of kindness.
- ☐ Leave a kind note for a colleague.
- ☐ Text a family member to tell them something you appreciate about them.
- ☐ Cook a meal for another family.
- ☐ Buy a coffee or lunch for a friend.