

BACK TO THE BASICS: Stewardship / Generosity **2 Corinthians 9:10-15ⁱ**

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! It is good to see you this morning. For those of you that are guests with us today, whether you are in the room or joining us online, we say a very special welcome to you. My name is Chris Wigley, I have the privilege of serving as one of the Pastors here at Trinity. And on behalf of our church family, and our staff team, we welcome you.

We would love the opportunity to be able to connect with you. You can let us know you are here in a couple ways. You can text the keyword, "TBCMP," that stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you do that, a reply text will be sent with a link you can click on. That will direct you to a form that will then provide us with basic contact information to follow up with you.

Or you can stop by the information center in the lobby area. We have a gift we'd like to give you there. Again, we look forward to connecting with you.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

Today, we wrap up our teaching series this summer that we have called, "Back to the Basics." We are taking a biblical look at foundational principles of Church and Christianity. Today our subject is Stewardship and Generosity. So, I want to invite you to take your bibles and turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 9, as we will be in verses 10-15 this morning.

Now, I know what you guys are thinking. You hear the subject of today's message, and you go, "Oh no! I come to church, and they are talking about money." Let me say a couple of things if I may.

First, know that this is a discipleship issue. And there are two groups of people in this room. Believers in Jesus, disciples, and unbelievers. If you are here today and you are not a believer, we are so glad that you are here, but this message is not for you. This is a discipleship message and therefore is directed to those that have professed Jesus as Lord and Savior.

We began this sermon series this summer with the topic of discipleship. We have also talked about what it means to call Jesus Lord. And what we've

learned is that when we become a disciple of Jesus, we surrender to Him in all areas of our lives. We give Jesus everything. We talked about our tendency to categorize our lives and that it is often easy to give Jesus certain categories while holding onto others. But to call Jesus Lord means that we give Him everything, including our finances.

So, understand, that if you have not given your life to Jesus, you have not surrendered that over to Him. Now, it is my prayer that those of you that have not surrendered to Jesus, that today's message would allow you to see the generosity of God toward you. God so loved you, that He **gave** His Son, Jesus, as a sacrifice for your sin. My prayer is that you would embrace God's generosity. And please understand that this message is intended for those of us that have professed Jesus as Lord of our lives.

So, the subject of stewardship and generosity is a discipleship issue. But the second thing I want to say today, before we dive in, is that if you feel uncomfortable with this topic, I get it. I have felt the same conviction because I have not always been faithful to God in the area of finances. I grew up with my parents modeling for me the discipline of tithing, but even with that example, it was a challenge for me, and I wish I could say I have been faithful. But not so.

And, in my past, I justified that. To ease my conviction, I would tell myself, "When we make more money, we will become faithful." Or I would say to myself, "I could make more money in the workplace had I not surrendered to ministry." And let me tell you what I've come to realize. With every raise I got, generosity became increasingly difficult. And that financial faithfulness has less to do with my income and more to do with my heart. At the core, stewardship and generosity is a heart issue. It's a discipleship issue. And I know the struggle is real.

ILLUSTRATION: You're Up Wigley

Let me share with you the day my life changed in this area of financial stewardship. Years ago, I was serving as Student Minister at the First Baptist Church of Burleson, Texas. Our Pastor was preaching through a series on stewardship, finances. Well, one Sunday, very early, I got a phone call from Bro. Mike, and he was whispering on the other end of the phone. He said, "Young man (that's what he liked to call me, either that or he would call me Wigley), I am having trouble with my voice this morning. I am going to try to

make it through the day, but I am putting you on notice. If I can't make it, you'll need to preach the sermon for me." To which I replied, "You're preaching about money. Bro. Mike, you got this! I'm praying God's strength on you!" I hit my knees!!

Well, as The Lord would have it, he preached the 8:00am service and came to me in the Student Ministry area and this is what he said, "Tag! You're it. I can't preach any more today," and he handed me his notes. Y'all, my heart sank. Ever get that punch in your gut feeling?! Yeah! I started sweating, I couldn't swallow, my mouth all the sudden went completely dry. I was freaking out!

So, I went to the worship center and begged Jesus to just get me through the day. I preached that sermon twice, to the 9:30 and the 10:45 services. When I got home, I was under so much conviction, I told Cathy, my wife, "Put a for sale sign in the front yard, plan a garage sale, we are going to give everything away!" Big time conviction.

Needless to say, we didn't do that. But that day began in me a change of heart in the area of finances. We began to make tithing a priority. We set a budget and the first line in the budget is tithe. And I wish I can say from that point on we never struggled with this area again. That's not true. It is easy for me, even to this day, to look at the electric bill, see that we are sending a child to college, and then look at our budget and say, "I know where we can find some money."

But hear me, God has proven to me that He can do more with 90% than I can with 100%. Giving remains a priority for Cathy and I, and it's not always easy. But knowing that God can do more with 90 than we can with 100, continues to build our faith and trust in Him. And my prayer for you is that you would come to know God's faithfulness when we honor Him in this area.

And you know, we sacrifice all the time for what we believe to be worth it. If you go to the gym, you understand sacrifice. You sacrifice sleep in order to gain health. You have determined that the sacrifice is worth it. Or what about giving toward your 401k. You sacrifice a little income now, for retirement later. You have determined that the sacrifice will be worth it.

And I want us to see, today, that the financial sacrifice of being generous is worth it. I can tell you, from personal experience, that not only are their benefits

for us, but we get to be a part of what God is doing in, around, and through His church.

So, today's topic is a discipleship issue. It is often one of the last things we surrender. And I want you to know that I get the struggle. I've been there. And I also want you to know that I am not preaching this message with any kind of agenda. It is not my prayer that I guilt you into giving to the church. This is a generous church! It is solely my heart's desire to help us grow in our faith, to grow as a disciple of Jesus, to consider the basics of Christian practice. That is the sole reason for this message today.

So, with that said, let's look at 2 Corinthians, chapter 9. I want to begin in verse 6 and read through verse 15. ***6The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 9As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." 10He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. 12For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 13By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, 14while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. 15Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!***

MESSAGE:

The first thing we learn from this passage is that...

1) Good Stewardship is a result of understanding God's provision.

When I make mention of the word, "stewardship," we don't fully understand that term. That's because it is no longer used in everyday vernacular. Now, I'm going to date myself, and some of you. How many of you remember when flight attendants were called stewardess?ⁱⁱ Yeah, we no longer use that term, do we?

When we come across the word, “steward,” in the bible, it carries the idea of manager. That’s a word that we understand. We know the role of a manager; to oversee an account, a project or a business. But let me ask you a question. Who is more concerned about a business, the manager or the owner? Well, it’s the owner. Because at the end of the day, everything belongs to the owner. The manager is just entrusted with what belongs to the owner.

The same is true when it comes to our finances. Everything is God’s. He is the owner. King David said in Psalm 24:1, *“The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.”* If God is the owner of everything, then we can conclude that our jobs, our income, our homes, our cars all belong to God. And you and I are then managers of what belongs to Him. God entrusts a portion of what is His to you and me. Look at verse 10 of our passage of study this morning. *“He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.”*

We have a tendency to think, “I worked hard for what I have.” And I would agree with you. But who gave you the health and the ability to work? Who blessed you with the intellect to be able to know what you know? God did. And therefore, all that we have, we have gained because God has given it to us.

ILLUSTRATION: Prayer before a meal

You know, we often say a prayer before we enjoy a meal. Why do we do that? It’s not an empty ritual that we just do because we’ve always done it. No, it is to pause and thank The Lord for His provision in our lives before we enjoy it. The Lord taught His disciples to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” It is a position of acknowledging God’s provision and being grateful for it.

And here’s the deal. When we come to the realization that God is the owner and we are the managers, we are much more purposeful in how we spend, what we do, and how generous we are. God’s Word is full of teachings on stewardship of resources. In fact, Jesus spent more time on this subject than any other. Why? Jesus said in Matthew 6:21, *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Stewardship is a heart issue; it is a discipleship issue. And we become good stewards when we realize that God owns it all and He has provided it to us. Secondly, ...

2) Good Stewardship is rooted in The Gospel.

The management of the resources we’ve been given is rooted in the very gospel we preach. Look with me, again, at verse 13 of 2 Corinthians 9. *“By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ.”*

Listen, this is important. **Our submission to The Lord, in the area of generosity, cannot be fueled by guilt but instead must be fueled by the gospel.** Here’s what I mean by that. Preachers can guilt us into giving. But that is not helpful as it would only be short lived and is the wrong motivation. Paul says the submission, in other words, how we give all of ourselves to Jesus, comes from our confession, or our understanding, of the gospel. In other words, generosity is a display of grace, not guilt. Generosity is rooted in our understanding of how generous God has been toward us.

ILLUSTRATION: Hymn: He Gave Himself for Me

There is a great old hymn entitled, “He Gave Himself for Me.” The lyrics of the first verse and chorus are, “The debt I owed I could not pay, For I was helpless from the fall; Yet still I heard the Spirit say that Jesus paid it all. He paid my debt upon the cross, He died to set me free, when nothing else could pay the loss, He gave Himself for me.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The gospel tells us that our sin resulted in a penalty, of which, the demand is something that we could never meet. But Jesus took on our sin, in our place, that by faith in Him, we are forgiven. That’s the gospel. Jesus paid the penalty of our sin. And our generosity is a reflection of the generosity shown to us.

Now, there has been much debate, among New Testament scholars, as to whether or not The New Testament teaches the tithe principle. Now, I understand that the word “tithe” might be a new word to you, especially if you have not grown up in church. Tithe means to give ten percent of one’s income. The Old Testament Law commanded the Israelites to tithe.^{iv} But then, fast forward to the New Testament, and we don’t really see the command to tithe. The reason for that is that there is a new motivation to give. Not guilt, but grace.

Now, I do see evidence where tithing is presupposed. For example, Jesus said in Luke 11:42, *“But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe [there’s that word] mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you*

ought to have done [tithing you ought to have done], *without neglecting the others.*" I see the point that some argue that tithing is presupposed.

But here's what I want us to see. **Beloved, generosity cannot be motivated by legalism.** Why? Well, it creates a sense of obligation. And if we give out of obligation, it seems like we are attempting to purchase our salvation or somehow purchase God's favor on our lives. But that's not the tenants of the gospel. God's favor is already upon your life because He has saved you, rescued you! So, on the other hand, generosity fueled by grace, is an act of worship. One is giving in order to get (that's legalism) and the other giving because of what has already been given to us (that's grace). Generosity cannot be motivated by legalism, it must be motivated by the gospel.

And here's the practicality and point of this discussion. I am inclined to give much more than 10% when I understand what Jesus has done for me. Right? When what Jesus has done for us sinks in, we want to give it all! It no longer becomes an obligation but a privilege. Make sense? This is why Paul said in verse 7, *"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion [that's legalism], for God loves a cheerful giver.*

Listen, I want you to be obedient in what The Lord is leading you to do, but let me share with you how this plays out in our lives. Again, please know that we are not perfect. We are far from it. But Cathy and I have come to the conclusion that all we have belongs to God, and we are so very grateful for what Jesus has done in our lives, that we have committed to the tithe being the base for our generosity. Take that for what you will, but I just wanted to share with you how we have put feet to this aspect of discipleship.

So, we've talked about how good stewardship is the result of understanding God's provision and that good stewardship is rooted in the gospel. Thirdly, ...

3) Good Stewardship is a reward to self and others.

While we do not give in order to get, there are certain benefits that come from our generosity. Read with me, the second part of verse 13 through verse 14 in 2 Corinthians 9.

¹³By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others.¹⁴while they long

for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. When you and I give, we get to be a blessing and we receive a blessing.

Let me give you 4 prepositions that will help us get ahold of the stewardship principles taught in Scripture. Some of you grammar nerds in the room just left for joy. 4 prepositions: From, Unto, Through, and For.^v From, unto, through and for. All we have is FROM God. Given UNTO us. THROUGH our generosity, our gifts are used FOR The Kingdom of God. Let's say that together. **All we have is FROM God. Given UNTO us. THROUGH our generosity, our gifts are used FOR The Kingdom of God.** Verse 11 of 2 Corinthians 9 says it this way, *"¹¹You will be enriched in every way [that's FROM God UNTO us] to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God [FOR the Kingdom]."* That is the biblical summation of stewardship.

And when we see it that way, we understand that our generosity is a reward to self and others. It is a reward to us because we get to be a part of God's activity in the world. And it is a reward to others because they benefit from our generosity. Good stewardship... A result of understanding God's provision, rooted in the gospel, and a reward to self and others.

CONCLUSION: As we close this morning, I want to ask the band to come back and lead us in a time of response.

I started off today mentioning two groups of people. Those that are believers, followers of Jesus, and those that are not. I also mentioned that my prayer for those of you that are not followers of Jesus, that you would understand and receive the generosity of God on display for you. Did you catch it? John 3:16, "For God so loved the world [that's you], that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life." God's love for you motivated Him to give His best for you.

If you're here today and you have never trusted Jesus as Lord, perhaps today is the day. If you have not received Jesus, or if you have questions about that, our Elders will be here at the front and would love to visit with you about what it means to make Jesus The Lord and Savior of your life.

Others of you here this morning are sensing the prompting of God in other ways. This time of response is an opportunity to pray and respond to that prompting. Maybe you need prayer, you come. Maybe you are carrying a burden, you come. Maybe it's something else. We are here for you. [PRAY]

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation of this message: John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 2 Corinthians*, Moody Press: Chicago, 2003; Scott J. Haefeman, *The NIV Application Commentary: 2 Corinthians*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2000; Connor Bales and Todd Kaunitz, *Gospel in the Home: Turning Chaos Back into Order*, LucidBooks: Houston, 2016; T.L. Howard, Jason Shepperd, and Tierce Green, *Developing a Life of Generosity: Learning to Give Like God*, Booklet published by Church Project, accessed: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55f09904e4b05ead54ed6aab/t/5be05c9a03ce642d24af00f0/1541430427097/GenerosityCPBooklet.pdf>; Michael S. Houdman, "What Does The Bible Say about Tithing," article published by Got Questions, accessed: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-tithing.html>; Jonathan Mast, "Warning Labels: May Be a Choking Hazard – Greed," sermon preached at Hillside Christian Church, Amarillo, Texas, February 13, 2022, accessed: <https://hillsideonline.com/message-detail?Item=1570&Message=1580>; Jack Graham, "Generosity," PowerPoint Ministries, accessed <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGS0zKMLUTk>; Vance Pitman, "From. To. Through. For. – Stewardship," sermon preached November 25, 2018, Hope Church Las Vegas; Michael Youssef, "Living Generously: Part 1," Leading The Way, accessed: <https://www.ltw.org/watch/teaching/series/living-generously/part-1>; Todd Kaunitz, "Jesus and Money: Financial Faithfulness," sermon preached at New Beginnings Baptist Church: Longview, accessed: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/5394615>.

ⁱⁱ Example taken from an article published on Gentle Christian Parenting, accessed online: <https://gentlechristianparenting.com/biblical-stewardship/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ https://hymnary.org/text/the_debt_i_owed_i_could_not_pay.

^{iv} Michael S. Houdman, "What Does The Bible Say about Tithing," article published by Got Questions, accessed: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-tithing.html>.

^v This illustration was inspired by the sermon series title of Vance Pitman's sermon series at Hope Church in Las Vegas, NV.