

## **Let's Have a Party**

*Series: Generosity: Maturity of Faith*

1 Chronicles 29:1-9; 2 Corinthians 9:6-10 (NLT)

November 26, 2017

Well, today we conclude our series on stewardship called "Generosity: Maturity of Faith." Now, for some people, there was only one good thing in that sentence: conclude a series on stewardship. Some folks just don't like to think about or hear a message, let alone a series, on stewardship.

I don't get that. Thinking about stewardship is pretty cool for me. I must be a wierdo then. No really, stewardship is great. I'm serious.

Let me put it this way. Whether you are a spender or a saver, stewardship is a great thing to talk about. If you are a saver, then being a good steward of the things God has given you is just hard wired into you; it's right up your alley. If you are a spender, then when everyone is faithful in their stewardship, we can do really cool things in ministry, like send kids to church camp or pay for a great meal at St. Paul or feed a bunch of hungry Sonshine in a Bag kids or really help a missionary or even buy recliners for the choir. How about that?

Good stewardship – the kind God wants His people to do – benefits so many people, including the steward that is faithful with what God has given them.

For example, I'm pretty sure you all know how Myra and I are wired. I'm the saver; she's the spender. I try to save money, and she tries to spend it all. That's the way it is. She gets excited when she buys and brings in a bunch of food for the food pantry or Sonshine in a Bag (which is about every week). I get excited when we have been able to watch our money and give an extra offering for a specific cause.

Just yesterday, we started talking about how we could return to the Holy Land in a few years. So I figured that if we or anyone else wanted to go to the Holy Land, say in 2020, they need to save \$200 a month per person. So as a saver, I look around our budget and find ways to save \$200; cut down on the number of trips to McDonalds or going out to eat less at a restaurant, looking around to get a better deal on car insurance, maybe cut the cord on cable or satellite TV. I get excited about saving money to be able to go to the Holy Land again. Myra likes that we are thinking about going back to the Holy Land so that she can buy more scarves, 6 for \$20.

So folks, when we do stewardship right, the way God intended it, it is not boring or a drudgery or something to be avoided. It's a party! So today, let's have a party and talk about stewardship.

Think that is crazy? Let me draw your attention to the sermon notes on page 6 in your bulletin. One of our scripture passages today comes from the Old Testament book 1 Chronicles. Let me give you the background. King David has assembled the leaders of the nation of Israel. He wants to talk about building a temple for the Lord. Up to this point, the center of worship was a tent called the tabernacle. It had been in existence since the wandering in the wilderness with Moses 400 years before. Now David wants to build a Temple. God has told David that he has spilled too much blood to build the Temple, but that his son Solomon will build it. So David saves and plans and stockpiles so that once Solomon becomes king, he has much of what will be needed for the Temple.

So David calls the leaders of the nation together to talk about the succession of the throne, then the building of the Temple – God's house. He says:

*“My son Solomon, whom God has clearly chosen as the next king of Israel, is still young and inexperienced. The work ahead of him is enormous, for the Temple he will build is not for mere mortals—it is for the LORD God himself! Using every resource at my command, I have gathered as much as I could for building the Temple of my God. Now there is enough gold, silver, bronze, iron, and wood, as well as great quantities of onyx, other precious stones, costly jewels, and all kinds of fine stone and marble. And now, because of my devotion to the Temple of my God, I am giving all of my own private treasures of gold and silver to help in the construction. This is in addition to the building materials I have already collected for his holy Temple. I am donating more than 112 tons of gold from Ophir and 262 tons of refined silver to be used for overlaying the walls of the buildings and for the other gold and silver work to be done by the craftsmen.”<sup>1</sup>*

Then the passage in your bulletin:

*“Now then, who will follow my example and give offerings to the LORD today?” Then the family leaders, the leaders of the tribes of Israel, the generals and captains of the army, and the king's administrative officers all gave willingly. For the construction of the Temple of God, they gave about 188 tons of gold, 10,000 gold coins, 375 tons of silver, 675 tons of bronze, and 3,750 tons of iron. They also contributed numerous precious stones, which were deposited in the treasury of the house of the LORD*

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Chronicles 29:1-5a (NLT)

*under the care of Jehiel, a descendant of Gershon. The people rejoiced over the offerings, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD, and King David was filled with joy.<sup>2</sup>*

Don't get bogged down in how much they all gave. The point here is this: when the people, including the king, were generous towards the work of the Lord, the amount given was so much that everyone rejoiced over what was given. They had a party to celebrate the tremendous offering.

So how do we repeat that in our church? How can we give so that what we give is pleasing to the Lord and we can have a party? 4 ways.

**First, Give willingly.**

Look at verse 6: they all gave willingly. Then that last verse in the passage from 1 Chronicles:

*The people rejoiced over the offerings, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD...<sup>3</sup>*

There was great joy because the people had given freely and wholeheartedly.

Paul tells the Corinthian church the same thing. Look at 2 Corinthians 9:7

*You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. (2 Corinthians 9:7a, NLT)*

Paul is talking about willing hearts giving to the Lord. Now, some people take that verse and twist it to say, whatever you decide to give, that will be fine with God. Paul isn't talking about the amount here; he is talking about the attitude of our hearts toward giving.

When David and the people gave to the Temple, they rejoiced not only because of the amount, which was awesome, but that when everyone give willingly and according to what God asks for us, there is a tremendous outpouring.

When you and I give willingly and according to what God asks for us, we get to celebrate when we pay our Apportionments or extra on the mortgage or sponsor a free community day. It's a party when we give willingly.

**The second way we can give that pleases the Lord is to Give thankfully.**

Our giving should be with an attitude of thanksgiving for all that God has done for us. Psalm 107:21-22 reads:

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Chronicles 29:5b-9 (NLT)

<sup>3</sup> 1 Chronicles 29:9a (NLT)

*So thank GOD for his marvelous love, for his miracle mercy to the children he loves; Offer thanksgiving sacrifices, tell the world what he's done—sing it out!*<sup>4</sup>

Refusing to give indicates an unthankful heart. Just as saying thank you to someone who gives you something or does something for you is the proper thing to do, so is giving to the Lord the responsible and proper thing to do as a way of being thankful for what He has done.

Are you thankful for what the Lord has done in your life? How does your giving reflect your thankfulness?

Jesus said in Matthew 10:8

*... Give as freely as you have received!*<sup>5</sup>

**The third way we can give that pleases the Lord is to Give cheerfully.**

Paul reminds the Corinthians in verse 7:

*And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully."*<sup>6</sup>

Paul is saying that we should not give with sorrow or grief or in distress or against our will. We should give cheerfully.

The Greek word for cheerfully here is *hilaos*<sup>7</sup> which is where we get our word "hilarious." God loves a person who gives hilariously! He is looking for those who will give with an attitude of joy.

**The final way we can give that pleases the Lord is to Give expectantly.**

Paul puts this in easy to understand language. Look at 2 Corinthians 9:6

*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>8</sup>

Can you imagine a farmer who says, "I really don't want a big crop. I'll just plant a little bit." That's crazy. "I've got this whole big field, but I'm going to plant just in the corner." Anybody ever seen that? Nope. Instead, the farmer plants generously to get a generous crop.

Folks, when you give, expect a harvest. Now, this isn't give to get, like the name it and claim it crowd. This is simply what the farmer does. If you give sparingly, don't expect much back. But if you give generously, expect God to do what He said He would do. When we give, we need to

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<sup>4</sup> Psalm 107:21-22 (MSG)

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 10:8b, NLT

<sup>6</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:7b (NLT)

<sup>7</sup> ἡλαρός

<sup>8</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:6, NLT

give with purpose expecting God to take it and use it to be a blessing to others.

Giving is an important value to build our lives upon. Giving is getting close to the heart of God. The Scripture is filled with examples of great givers, but none so vivid as Jesus Christ. As we seek to grow in our relationship to Him, and to develop or build our lives on biblical principles and in accordance with biblical values, we need to be reminded of the importance of generosity in the maturing of our faith.

For 2018, we have several stewardship goals. Just like David telling the leaders what was to come in building the Temple, here is what we want to do in 2018.

1. Support our church budget of \$278,000 100%. That would include paying 100% of our Apportionments. We haven't done that in a few years, so let's be generous in our giving so that next year at this time, we can have a party and celebrate 100% Apportionments paid.
2. We want to not only be able to pay our mortgage, but we want to pay at least \$30,000 extra on the principle next year. Friends, when I arrived almost 6 ½ years ago, we owed \$1.57 million on this building. With mortgage payments and extra principle payments, that number is down to \$1.2 million – over \$300,000 less in just 6 ½ years. That's cause for celebration isn't it? So let's keep going, even accelerating our payment. We've still got 24 years of payments to make; what if we cut that in half? Now that would be party time, wouldn't it?
3. Right now, about 15% of all our givings go outside of us, to missions, to Apportionments, to outreach. Wouldn't it be awesome if we could increase that to 20% and help feed more people and help more children and send more youth and adults on mission trips? I'd like to have a party about that.
4. I would like for us to put a new sign out by the road that would bring attention to our church; a digital sign. Right now, Janet Withrow has to brave the wind, the sun, the cold, and the fear of slashing her head on that cover glass in order to put messages on our sign. Before her, Lori Desch did it. I would love a digital sign that would not only draw attention to our church nestled back here in the woods, but one that could have different messages on it depending upon the time of the day. For example, one message of encouraging words to the parents and students that drive past us every day to and from school, then a different message at other parts of the day. All controlled from the church office. A digital sign is better than cutting down a bunch of trees so that people can see us.

5. Finally, and this is a wild one. BEDOUIN GIRL AT MARAH. TURN HER BITTERNESS INTO SWEET.

Imagine what it would be like if we were able to accomplish these and other things for the glory of God because we were generous in the way the Lord wants us to be. Can you imagine the joy of lives that were changed because we gave willingly, thankfully, cheerfully, and expectantly? It would be party time!