

The Grace of Giving

Just as you excel in everything else—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness . . . see that you also excel in this grace of giving. (2 Corinthians 8:7 NIV)

Why does God want you to excel in the grace of giving? It's because he influences the world through his people. God gives to you so he can give through you. The Bible tells us that everything we have is a gift from God (1 Chronicles 29:14). As you give both financially and faith-fully, the world is changed for the glory of God: the gospel is preached, lives are touched, people are fed, bodies are healed, churches are built; and you, in turn, are blessed by God so that you can give again. It is amazing what happens when we give. Needs are met, both locally and globally. Thanksgiving is expressed to God, both from the giver and the receiver of the benefits from the gifts. Giving is a profound testimony of our trust in God's promises to supply our needs when we act on our faith, and giving has a wonderful effect of uniting the church around the cause of Christ. The New Testament describes it this way:

This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! 2 Corinthian 9:12-15

Paul the Apostle saw giving as a grace, a fellowship, a ministry, a generous gift, a blessing and a service of worship. No wonder he ends this passage with "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift." There is great benefit to the Christian and Christ's cause.

God has taught his people about generosity, and sharing in meeting needs from the very beginning. The oldest systematic method of giving was called the tithe. What is a tithe and how is it different from an offering? The word, "tithe" literally means tenth or 10%. A tithe is the first 10% of your income. It was a planned, systematic participation in the things of God. Giving beyond this was called an offering. An offering is anything you give above and beyond the 10%.

Why do we tithe? The Bible says, *The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives* (Deuteronomy 14:23 TLB). Tithing is a reminder that God is the supplier of everything we have. It is also God's personal invitation to an outpouring of his blessing in your life.

In Malachi 3:10 (NLT), God says this: *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it."* This is the only place in Scripture where God tells us to put him to the test. In other words, he's saying, *"Go ahead. I dare you. See if you can out-give me."*

Is God wise? Do you trust him? These are two fundamental questions behind the act of giving. If God is wise, then you should listen to what he says about financial stewardship. If you trust him, then you should trust him with all aspects of your life, including your finances. So go ahead. Accept God's invitation to put him to the test. Start tithing faithfully and watch what he does in and through your life.

Those who have learned to excel in this grace of giving are called cheerful givers. Cheerful givers settle this matter of giving in their heart, and then act on the decision with consistency and generosity

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 2 Corinthians 8:8-9

Cheerful givers experience God's blessing in their lives in a unique way summed up in the words of "God loves a cheerful giver." This doesn't mean God doesn't love the reluctant giver or even the non-giver, it just means the promised blessings flow to those who have learned this attitude. Think about these realities

The cheerful giver has a clear conscience knowing that he is doing what is pleasing in God's sight. Others can never experience that kind of peace.

The cheerful giver grows in Christ likeness. Christ came to give. When we give we are developing the same characteristics. Others do not grow into such Christ likeness.

The cheerful giver joins in with those who are wanting and working to see God's work done. Others miss out on being a part of what God is doing.

The cheerful giver proved his faithfulness in little and the Lord gives more. Others are in danger of becoming bitter because God does not trust them with more.

Grow in the Grace of Giving

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