

Giving Like God

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[0 : 0 0] Hello again. And I want to say a quick hello to those. You can leave that there actually. I need that. Thanks. A quick hello to those that are listening online. Thank you for doing that.

And if you're new, so glad again that you're here with us. If you have your Bible, you can turn right now to 2 Corinthians chapter 8. If you don't have your Bible, don't worry about it. We always throw the verses up on the screen as well. Just so you know, we have a full chapter to read and get through today. Thankfully, it is not one of those very long chapters in the Bible, but also full disclosure, it's about giving, right? And I just want to say, if you brought your friend to church for the first time, I am sorry. All right. It is going to be a subject on generosity and giving.

And so in this part of the letter to the church in Corinth, Paul moves away from dealing with some of the more personal stuff that was happening between them, some of the relational strain that existed, some of the awkwardness surrounding the sin issues that he had to address and the response to it.

And then also like their relational kind of strain that was more about like, man, he was the guy that started this church, but man, there's some other really good apostles and preachers and speakers and leaders. And so some of their hearts were kind of like drifting away from Paul to these other guys.

And so Paul's, you know, for the last seven chapters is addressing all of this. And based on the last chapter though, as it ended, it kind of ended on a good note. Chapter seven ended on a good note. It looks like they've landed, the Corinthian church and Paul, they landed on better footing as he just really finished praising them for their response of repentance to his instructions to deal with certain things in the church that was going on in the church. And maybe because of that, maybe Paul's like Titus had gone and then came and fed back to him. It's like, man, all that stuff you addressed, they had really turned from it and they've responded well and they've repented of those things. And maybe Paul's like feeling encouraged and emboldened to bring up this topic because he just, man, it's like a quick pivot. It's not even like a soft entry into talking about giving. It's just like, let's go, let's go right to it. And he reminds them of a past commitment they had made to provide financial support to the Jerusalem church. And for the context of the Jerusalem church in that time was experiencing severe hardship, right? It was like, it was hardship to the level of, are we going to have food on the table? That kind of stuff. So I know it's awkward. I just want to like, hey, just run to the tension. I know it's awkward to talk about money in the church because of the many abuses and the manipulative ways pastors have used to get people to part ways with their dollars.

[2 : 5 8] I'm just going to acknowledge and say that's a real thing. But what I love about this passage is that we see how much giving and generous giving is at the heart of God. God is a generous giver.

That is who he is. And this passage, it encourages us to give like God, which is the name of the sermon, giving like God. And so in our pursuit of that, we're going to consider four things. The power of generous giving, the power for generous giving, the challenge of generous giving, and the unexpected return of generous giving. So let's launch into it. 2 Corinthians chapter 8. We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia. For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.

And this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. Accordingly, we urge Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. But as you excel in everything, in faith and speech and knowledge and all earnestness, and in our love for you, see that you excel in this act of grace also. I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. And in this matter, I give my judgment. This benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work, but also to desire to do it. So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness and desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness, your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. As it is written, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he is going to you of his own accord. With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel. And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us for the glory of the

Lord himself and to show our good will. Almost there. We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us. For we aim at what is honorable, not only in the Lord's sight, but also in the sight of man. And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you. As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. So give proof before the churches of your love and of our boasting about you to these men. This is God's word. So Paul brings up this subject in a very interesting way. He doesn't go right to the man unload your wallets for your poor brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. He doesn't paint this bleak picture for them. What he does, he takes the spotlight off of them and puts it on the Macedonian churches, which is interesting. In verse one, he starts this whole appeal by saying, we want you to know brothers about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia. For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. And what Paul isn't doing here, he isn't doing that like terrible parenting thing that we sometimes do of like, how come you can't be more like your brother type of deal, you know? He's not doing that. Paul is tapping into the power of generous giving because generous giving is contagious. Like even outside the church, this is a thing. Y'all remember Pay It Forward, that movie or that little, you remember back in the day, I dated myself, Haley

Joel Osmond. And for some reason, I was a really bad person. I hated that kid. I had no idea why. I had no reason why. But when I was younger, it was just like, you know, and that's who you're stuck with. I'm a jacked up person in some ways, guys. I've repented. I don't mind Haley Joel Osmond anymore.

[8 : 16] All right. But there is something alluring and attractive about generosity. Like, man, that was like a whole thing that like caught on like wildfire, you know, that paying forward thing. There's something attractive about generosity. And here's the thing. It's like, anyone can do it. Everyone can do it.

You don't have to be rich. Like Jesus, he applauded the poor widow. He gave two, like the equivalent of two pennies. She gave out of her lack of abundance, but she gave proportionally way more than the people that were splashing the pot that had a ton of money. And Paul's drawing the same conclusion with the Macedonians. The Macedonians in their poverty, they gave according to their means and actually beyond their means, actually in their poverty. Paul uses them as an example, not to shame the Corinthians into giving. He's not, that's not what's happening here. But when we experience generosity, what it does, it moves us towards generosity as well. I experienced this recently, the church, we were wanting to go visit my mother-in-law, my wife's mom, who had been diagnosed with cancer and all the way in South Africa. And he was like, man, it was impossible thing. They rallied, you guys rallied around us and everybody giving little bits and pieces. We were able to afford plane tickets and then some, and then we were there, we were there like somebody just gifted us a safari trip and not like a really nice one. It was like a four night safari trip. Guys, we showed up there and I felt like the Beverly Hillbillies just crashed the party. That's what I was like, this was a jujee place.

I was like, um, I don't feel like we fit in like the way we're dressing and looking and all that stuff. But you know what it did is through that time, man, we got to, because of the generosity given to us, man, we were just lavish with our tips to people. Yeah. I was able to like bless the workers that were serving us and giving us food and driving us around. And, and even our driver, his name was Grant.

We, we tipped him as you're supposed to be at the end, but man, God had put it on our heart to, he was this agnostic guy and we had talked about our faith. And so we had this kind of fun rapport with him. We drove with him every day on safari. And so at the end, we just said, Hey, God just put it on our hearts to bless you lavishly. And we gave him this tip and just this young man, his eyes just welled up and he was like, Oh my gosh. He's like, are you serious?

Like those things, they, they move people. They show the heart of the father and the generosity of him. And, and what this path, what, what this passage points out and what happened to me in that trip, it says in verse two, their abundance of joy and man, the generosity that flowed to us during that time. It welled up in our hearts and abundance of joy. And it says in verse two, what happens in that abundance of joy, there was an overflowing, just like in Macedonia in a wealth of generosity.

[11 : 25] Generosity produces joy and joy produces generosity. And when I, when I think of generous people, you know, they are always a joyful people. They seem to always be joyful.

And guess what? Here's the thing. We, we were made for joy. It's funny. Like there's a, there's a neuroscientist that has been studying the brain. He's in UCLA. He's a doctor. And he's actually all his research of trying to find like, when does our brain function best? When we are, when, when are we mentally healthy? And he's, he says, man, our brain is at its best firing in all cylinders. When we, when a person is full of joy, when they are in a state of joy, that's what they have found. Science is saying yes and amen to theology. And I love that because it always tends to do that from time to time. In God's original design and the way he created us as image bearers, pre-sin, there was no lack of joy because sin is a joy drain. Because what it does, sin gets us to turn inward. It gets to focus our attention and focus on ourselves and care about ourselves more than anything else. And generosity is a joy gain because what it is doing, it is refocusing our attention outward. And what's interesting about generosity is that the joy it produces, it spills out beyond us. The joy that wells up in us, it spills out beyond us and splashes onto others. So even those who hear about it benefit, like what's happening with the Corinthians hearing about the Macedonians' amazing generosity.

Because Paul says that, he's like, man, we want you to know, brothers, we want you to know about what the Macedonians have done. It's important to share these stories of generosity that are happening, not to manipulate people or to get man's praise. In fact, it's not the Macedonian churches bragging about themselves. They're not telling Paul like, hey, can you just slip this into the Corinthians so we can one-up them and show them like, hey, we're better than you, like how generous we were.

They weren't doing that about themselves. It's Paul testifying about them. But these generous stories are so important. I want to actually practice that right now. If I could have Freddie and Tom come up, and if your name happens to be Freddie and Tom, and you're wondering if you'd make a way forward, trust me, I talk to them. They know who they are.

They're going to... Yeah, you guys can actually, I'll get out of the way here a little bit, and you guys can stand off to this side. All right. So this is Freddie, and this is Tom.

[14 : 14] Hello, Freddie and Tom. So Freddie, in two minutes, kind of explain how you and Tom came to know each other. I don't know if you guys know Tom, but Tom is actually the New Bern waver. He used to sit down outside of the graveyard, and he would wave at people. So George Street, he knows where it's at.

I don't know any street names. I've lived here my whole life. Everything's a picture. And so I would drive by, and he started waving. I would wave back, and we just did that for a while. And then he was saluting people, and he was saluting. It actually become like this highlight in my day. It really warmed in my heart. It was kind of, it was crazy. It was just, he was just pouring into me, and he had no idea. I looked forward to that moment. I would actually go out of my way to go past there. And so that was kind of our first interactions of each other.

Yeah. You want to talk about like our first date? And then what happened, yeah. Our first date? Yeah. Our first date was, there's another guy who lives a few blocks up that I've known, and every Christmas we'll take him plates when I'm headed home. And Levi and I were actually headed home, and he wasn't there. So Tom reaped the benefits, because I was like, I'll see if Tom's down the way. He said he loved mom's food. So I like took him down there, and I handed him the plates, and just talked to him for a minute, and really got to know him, because I didn't know him outside of us waving and saluting each other. And we were probably only there two minutes, but I don't know. I just felt like I'd say, hey, what do you need? And he looked at me, and he said, hey man, I would really just like to put my, because he was living in a tent behind the wall, cardboard box, sorry. He had not moved up to the tent yet. So he was just behind the wall in the cemetery with how many others?

Just you, just him by himself at the time. But he had a lot of friends that were coming around. You'd see them often just hanging out, because it was a safe place, because Tom tries to keep things really safe and neat. But he said, I just really like to put my tent somewhere. And I said, I'll talk to you this week. And I came back to him. My office is four blocks down, and I told him he could put my, his tent in my backyard and stay there if he needed to.

It was just a space. I had to talk to the wife. She was good with that. Somebody, he has lots of friends. So people were stopping in, bringing him food all the time. Someone brought him a camper.

[16 : 37] And so he moved up to the camper. Next step was, it got really, really hot. So then I was like, man, I got plenty of offices. He started staying in the back office at our office for a while. So that was kind of like first date, us getting to know each other well.

All right. So Tom, just in a few words, just describe what Freddie's generosity did for you. Oh my gosh. Like he said, he took me from a cardboard box living in a graveyard to living in his office.

And his, just being with Freddie and then getting to know, coming to this church and getting to know some of you's here, which a few of you's already knew me anyway from saluting and waving out there on George.

It's just been one blessing after another. And God has put me on express lane with blessings. I mean, whenever he says he will do it in abundance, he does it in abundance. I couldn't even keep up with all of them. Jesse would ask me on Sunday, well, what does God bless you with? You got an hour?

Other than that, it's just one blessing after another. I just, it's overwhelming and unbelievable. I'm a firm believer now. If I had any doubts at all, I have none now.

[18 : 06] Yeah. Amen. So just, just fast, fast forwarding. And, um, now Tom, you are actually in a house, right?

About to, yeah. Trailer. Yep. So now he's in a trailer and yeah, yep. And, um, which is amazing. But, uh, along the way, um, this was amazing to you is that he needed a car to get around and, uh, yeah, yeah, absolutely. Uh, with my medical issues, I've got a, it's an endless list between heart problems, lung problems, ABN of both, uh, hips and shoulder at the same time. And I need back surgery all at the same time. But the vehicle that this church actually blessed me with because almost everybody, but one person I think was involved with me getting this vehicle goes to this church.

Uh, I am now able to get to my appointments, which at first I was trapped. And what I mean by trapped, I was literally trapped. I got messed doctor's appointments. They accused me of this, that, and I'm not going to go on and everything they accused me of, but it's been one battle after another. But since I got the vehicle, I was able to get to my doctor's appointments and get everything done that I needed to get done to get my life started back on a real positive note with my medical issues. So thank you. And God bless the ones that were involved in that.

All right, cool. Thank you guys. You can take a seat now. Thank you for sharing that story. This is what blew me away. I came back from vacation and you guys as a church, uh, quite a few of you had heard about that need, had discovered that there was a car available to buy. Uh, somebody who is a mechanic in the church said, I will get that thing fixed up and ready to go really nicely. And, um, and so all these people, like they pitched in to buy the car, fix the car, get it ready for him, and then presented to Tom on a Sunday without him actually knowing it. And you just see the generosity of the church coming together in various ways and just rallying around somebody. It's a beautiful thing, man. It is an absolutely beautiful thing. And you get to, you hear these things, um, how the, the church stepped in of their own division to just give lavishly and be a blessing. And here's the thing. Why, why do we do that? Why would we do that? And that gets us to consider the power for generous giving. And in second Corinthians eight, the second part of the very first verse, Paul gets right to where this power comes from. The grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia.

We don't step back and applaud ourselves and say, Ooh, look at us. We must be so good because we thought of these things. Paul prefaces the Macedonians generosity by attributing it to God because the power for generous giving comes from him. God imparted a gift among the Macedonian churches that made them eager. It put a desire in them to want to give and not just give, but give with overflowing generosity. Right? So what was this gift, right? What was this gift that God puts in them? Well, it wasn't money falling out of the sky, which would be nice, but that's, he put his heart into theirs. That's what God did. See, before you and I can give like God, God has to give himself to us.

[22 : 18] He has to impart who he is into our hearts and generous giving is God's heart. It says in verse nine, for you know, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich yet for your sake, he became poor so that you by his poverty might become rich. See, generosity is more than just a particular grace God puts in us on the rare occasion. It is who we are becoming in greater and greater measure as we are becoming more and more like Jesus. As we grow in our sanctification, we will become more generous. And Jesus is, his generosity, it was fueled by his sincere, genuine love for others. And that's what Paul wants. Paul wants their generosity, the Corinthians generosity. He wants it to flow out of that same grace, that impartation, that becoming like Jesus, right? He wants that to be what motivates them. He's not trying to use coercion. He goes, he goes on to say in verse eight, very clearly, I say this not as a command. Paul's not trying to set this up as you better do this or you're going to be in trouble. Because when you start putting in commands and demands for like, you have to be generous, it ruins the environment of grace. Because grace by its own is freely given, right? As you freely receive, so you freely give. And so in God's kingdom, we're not fueled towards generosity by fear of punishment, but we're feared by that grace and that love that compels us. It stirs us towards a lavish generosity. We give because we want to, not because we have to.

Which means it's also not dependent on our circumstance. So I don't give my leftovers when I have excess, right? That's not the only time I give. But as mentioned already, like the Macedonians, my generosity can even overflow in my poverty, in my lack. And that's more of a challenge to my sensible mind, to be perfectly honest. It's hard to do. And I'm sure for many of us in the room, it's a challenge to yours as well. But what that brings us to is the challenge of generous giving. And which is why we must have perseverance. And why perseverance is so important in this matter. Generous giving requires our perseverance. And that's what Paul is calling out in verse 10. He says to the Corinthian church, in this manner I give my judgment. This benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work, but also to desire to do it. So a year back, the Corinthians, like God puts this desire, this grace in their heart to say like, man, we want to get behind the Jerusalem church. We want to serve them in this way. We want to bless them so that they can be blessed in their lack. And then somewhere along the way, they drifted away. That desire cooled down a little bit. And then Paul says in verse 11, so now finish. Finish doing it as well. So that your readiness in desiring it might be matched by your completing it out of what you have. And it is hard to finish what we start. And that is true of anything, especially when it's costly. Right? So here's an example. I run for exercise. I don't run very fast, but that's what I do for exercise. And so I'll run a few miles a few times a week. But man, that last mile or that last eight minutes of my run, it is always the hardest. There is a mental game going on inside of like, Jesse, you could do this. You got to just keep going. I have a goal and I want to finish. But in that last stretch, my body's resources are depleted. It just has less to give. And you'll perceive this as God moves you toward giving like him. At times, it will feel like you need to pull back or you need to take a break. And you'll probably have lots of legitimate reasons to do so. But here's the thing. God will never ask you to give what you don't have.

Verse 12, for if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. And when giving flows out in accordance with God's will, there is a promise that you will not lack what you need. In verse 13, he goes on to explain, for I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness, your abundance at the present time should supply their need so that their abundance may supply your need that there may be fairness. Here's the thing. God's given us different baskets and different abilities to gather, right? Man, I know some guys, they can take 10 bucks and turn it into a million dollars. I don't know. I don't, there's a gift there. I don't, I wish I had it, but I don't.

But there is, there is different, definitely like different baskets, right? God, there is people that God has entrusted and gifted with to, to make money and to steward those resources that they give.

And you know what? There's a lot of those guys that receive it as a grace of God and then use it and leverage that toward the kingdom. And they put a lot of their dollars to work for the kingdom. And it's a beautiful thing. It advances the kingdom of God in a lot of ways. But we do have different abilities, right? I'm not a \$1 million basket guy. I am somewhere less, a lot less than that, right? And that's okay. That's not a big deal. Because it still counts. Man, I remember there was a friend of mine, they were doing a building project in South Africa and they would take up these offerings for the building and they would get these little like, these little coins that were worth like less than a dollar, the equivalent of a dollar for us. And it came in from like the kids church. And I remember the guy just saying like, these are like, whatever, this isn't gonna, this isn't gonna get us there. These, these little coppers, they're, they're not gonna do it. And then God like said, no, no, no, those count. It's like, I'm gonna, I'm gonna build this building on the faithfulness of people just giving, even their little coppers, putting it in there. And lo and behold, over time, man, they, they were able to raise up the money and, and, and get into a bigger building because they were overflowing as it was and they needed the space. But God uses the faithfulness of the, the big gifts and the little gifts and everything in between. But here's the other thing about having the different baskets and different abilities. He, God also puts us in different seasons. And at times, our baskets are full and overflowing. And then other times, it's more like old mother Hubbard's cupboard, right?

[29 : 19] Things look a little bit bleak. But in an environment of generous giving, it means that you have no lack and, and neither do I. Because when I'm overflowing, my excess and, and even more than that is, is being given and generously flowing out of me so that in your lack, you're not lacking. And then when I step into a season of lacking, the same is flowing back to me. And that's what Paul's getting at here.

And that's also why generous giving works best closest to home. And I'm not talking about like the idea of like getting your money back with interest, you know, it's like, I'm going to sew it out and God's going to return it like tenfold. Now there's, there's an unexpected return in generous giving. Generous giving promotes partnership. And that's what we see at the last section of this chapter, starting in verse 16, where it says, thanks be to God who put it in the heart of Titus, the same earnest care I have for you. It's partnership language, love language. For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he is going to you of his own accord.

And with him, we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel. And not only that, but he is appointed by the, he was appointed by the churches, or he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our goodwill. And we take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, for we aim at what is honorable, not only in the Lord's sight, but also in the, in the sight of men. And, and with them, we are sending our brother more language, more partnership language. There's another guy in this as well, whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now even more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you. And as for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker, partnership language again, for your benefit. And as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. We see this, this beautiful picture of mutual blessing happening in this section of this chapter. And Paul and his team, he's sending some guys in their coming to receive the Corinthian church's collection, right? That was going to be taken up for the Jerusalem believers. And their role in this was like getting it and transporting it to, to, to, to get it to the Jerusalem church. That's the partnership in this whole thing.

They're being entrusted with the administration of this. And that's a beautiful picture. Out of our ability and abundance, we, we can meet the needs of those in our church. It's partners. We partner together, but also in our broader church family. And you may not know this, but we are, our church is a part of a network of churches or a family of churches called advanced.

And, and we're closely knit together in doctrine and, in mission, but, but also there's some real relational significance. So if you were here when Rigby Wallace was here, he was the old guy with a really cool accent. Rigby Wallace was his name. And he talked like that. He's just like, yeah, you could listen to him talk forever, you know, but he, he came right. And he, he was a pastor at another church, but he came out to, to be a blessing to us. And he wasn't just here on like, I'm going to come in on Sunday, preach, and then peace out, man. He came and he stayed at our home.

[32 : 48] He had meals, we had meals together and he loves golf. So we were forced to watch golf with him and hear him talk about golf and wax poetic about some of that stuff. But then there was also times where we just got to talk and receive for him wisdom and a guy who's just been following Jesus and leading in the church for years and years and years. And just like speaking into us, our lives and dreaming together as a church. And there was this beautiful gift that we received and, and he's a blessing and he was a blessing to us. And he was generous enough to give us his time and his, his talents and to relationally connect so that we could be blessed by it. And here's the thing. Every church is blessed by God in various ways. Every church, this church is blessed by God in various ways. And it's not just the people up on here. It's, it's all of you. He gives resources called gifts to the body, to the local church body. And, and that is, that is for the local church body. But some of those gifts can also be shared between churches as well. So I'm going to City Gates Church. It's an advanced church up in

Canada. And I'm doing that in October and we're going with our family and we're going, we're just going partly to just be a relational blessing to this couple who has like just suffered in isolation for a long time. And, and they just need friends around them, but also to come and maybe I can be a blessing and minister in other ways as well. Here's another cool example. Advance. Sometimes when we're together at a conference, we'll take up offerings for churches. And so a couple of years back, we took up offerings for churches in Nepal and India. And during COVID, they were, they were decimated, right? We all kind of got hit by COVID. Like they, they were, they couldn't keep the doors open. Like their economies were shut down, shut down. But here's the beautiful thing. I mean, many, many churches in Nepal and India. And for a hundred thousand dollars, we could like support them for a year. Like they, I mean, you think about that, not just one church, like many, many churches. And so a collection of all these churches came together and they were, they were able to keep the doors open and supported. But you know what? In May, when we were at our global conference, Advance, just hearing updates from everybody, the India and Nepal pastors got up and they said like, hey, thanks so much for the gift. Oh, by the way, in the last two years through COVID, we planted like an exit, somewhere between 20 and 30 churches in the last two years in that region of the world. That generosity did something, right? Do you hear, did you get like a rise of joy when I told you that? Did you feel that in your soul?

And what that happened, guys, in part because of this site, because of our church, because of your faithful giving out of your abundance. And I know you're not writing checks to Nepal and India directly, but you're giving to this church and you're letting us steward it. And then we can send it on, on behalf of you. We get to administer that and be a blessing. And that happened in part, those church plants happened in part because you were faithful and you continue to be a generous church and you are. And I don't say that to puff you up or to manipulate you, manipulate you, but I do get to boast about you, right? When I go to others, I get to boast about you. When I go to other contexts, I get to boast about you. But I want you to hear from my lips too, because these, these things are proofs of your love, which, which, how Paul ends this chapter. So give proof before the churches of your love and of our boasting about you to these men. It says in verse 24. And when I boast about you, when I see how you guys rallied around to pray for Jim and Nancy a few weeks back, it wasn't like just a couple of people. It was like, man, I honestly stood back and I was like,

I love this church. I wasn't pushing for it. It was like everybody, so just rich, loving community, caring for one another and leaning in and wanting to press in. It's a beautiful thing.

The way so many of you came together to bless Tom, which you heard about earlier. And these are proofs of your generous love. And I want to bring those things into the light and highlight them. And I don't want it to do it so that we somehow get arrogant. I just want it to encourage us. I want to say, man, well done. Because I think that's what the Father says to you when he sees that. Well done. Well done for being so generous. And if you and I never see the proofs of our generosity, it's just easy to lose sight of the value of being a generous giver. But when we do see it, and we get to hear about the fruit it is producing, man, what happens? Our hearts get enlarged.

[37 : 37] Literally, more room is made for more love and to love more people. Because partnership is always about moving toward one another in love. Generosity draws us closer. And there is no better proof than Jesus.

When you look, looking back at verse 9 again, he left heaven. He left the wealth of heaven. He became poor so that by his poverty, you and I might become rich. Jesus gave us undeniable proof of his love toward us. He came and gave everything, his very life, to close the gap between us.

We get to draw near to God. We get to enjoy relationship with him and be near to him because of God's generosity and the life seen in the life and death of Jesus Christ. We can draw near because of Jesus, our resurrected high priest. He didn't ascend to heaven, get on his throne and be like, sweet, I'm sipping my ties till it's my time to come back. What is he doing? He is a high priest, ever interceding for you and me. He has never stopped caring about us. He ever lives to intercede.

He is saving us to the uttermost guys. That is generosity, right? 1 John 3, behold what manner of love the Father has lavished on us, that we get to be called children of God.

Jesus died. Because of that, we have an inheritance that we get to have a foretaste of now, but an inheritance in the eternity to come that is going to blow our minds that we didn't earn and we didn't deserve. But God in his grace gave to us because he is so generous.

[39 : 40] If the band comes up, if I can have the band come up, how can we respond? I want to say if you are here and you or you're listening to this and you're not yet a Christian, I want to say, man, I'm so glad you're here. And I hope through this, you heard more than just an appeal for more money. That is not what we're going after. Man, we want you to hear. I want you to hear God's generous heart towards you.

And he doesn't care about your money. He has, it says everything belongs to him. He created everything. It all belongs to him. He wants your heart. He's after your heart. He wants to draw close to you. He wants to close that gap that exists between you and him because of your sin. And the generous offer of salvation today is a free gift. And all it takes is faith that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins and rose again. And it's a response saying, yes, I believe that.

And Lord, come, save me, be my Lord and Savior. And we're going to give you a moment to respond in a little bit. There'll be a verse for you to pray if that is you. And I want to encourage you, man, do not, man, there's a scripture that says today is the day of salvation. Today is the day of you reckoning with the generosity of God and taking hold of it. And I want to say to the rest of us who are here, we're listening and are already a Christian. I want to say first this, rejoice in God's lavish generosity towards you. Rejoice in it. Reckon with it. Remember it. Sit on it. Marinate in it. Rejoice in it.

And then I want to challenge us to listen to where he might be calling you into more generosity flowing out of your own life. What is your next step of surrender that the Holy Spirit's been highlighting to grow in generosity? Where can you serve and love and give your time and talents and treasures to your church family to be a blessing? Maybe it's out there as we go on mission out into the world. And then I want you to consider what are the obstacles? What are the fears? What are the shame? What is the shame that might be keeping you from taking that next step of obedience? And I want us to really, all of us, right now, take a moment just to examine our hearts and respond to him. I'm going to give us a minute to do that. Let's do that right now.

Thank you.

[42 : 42] our confession. Father, we love because you first loved us. We can only be generous because you were so generous to us.

What you have begun, we have stirred up in our hearts, Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. We're going to respond and with communion, if you would stand with me. And this is something we do as Christians. It's a sacred moment. This isn't just a simple ritual that we just, ah, we got to get this out of the way, man. This is, this is us believing and participating in union with our Savior, Jesus Christ, which is why we say, man, if you're, if you're not a believer, we encourage you not to partake of this. It really doesn't make sense. If however, that you prayed that prayer for the first time that was up on the screen, man, we, we say with excitement, man, this is your first real communion. So join us in that. Christians, we do this. We participate in communion because we are invited by our Savior to commune with him together. By faith, we come and we receive from him, his body that he offered for us. It was broken for us, his blood that was shed for us. He gave it for us, for you and me. These are his most generous gifts that draw us near to him and near to one another. In communion by faith, we are spiritually nourished in Christ. In communion by faith, we experience union with Christ. In communion by faith, we experience community with one another, the gathered body of Christ. And so my friends, by faith, his body broken for you and me. Let's eat together.

my brothers and sisters, his blood shed for you and me, the forgiveness of our sins. Let's eat, let's drink together.