

Giving

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[0 : 00] I wonder when I say the word giving what comes to mind. Maybe you think of giving someone a hand with whatever it is they're doing. Maybe you think of giving your young people lifts to all their various events.

Maybe you think of giving money to people who are fundraising for charity. Or maybe you think of giving presents to loved ones. For me, I definitely go straight to thinking about giving and receiving presents at birthdays and Christmases.

And I was thinking about some of the gifts I've given and received over the years. I wonder what the best or most memorable gift you've ever received was.

For me, it was my 21st birthday present from my parents. Mum and Dad got me tickets to go and see Les Mis on the West End. So Dad packed Mum and I off to go off to London to see the show. We had a ride on the London Eye. We had breakfast on the South Bank. We had lunch with some of my family in London. It was an amazing time. One of my favourite experiences.

[1 : 06] Because my parents had got it so spot on. They know me so well. Almost definitely better than I know myself. That they ticked all the boxes in getting the best 21st birthday present for me.

And it wasn't so much just about the show, amazing as that was. But it was about the time. It was about the relationship and the joy that that present bought me.

So hold that thought for a minute. And let's take a look at what David has to say in this morning's reading. He starts by appealing to the assemblies.

Saying his son Solomon, who is young and inexperienced, has been given the task for rebuilding this temple. And that's a huge task. David tells the people what he's given out of his duty.

All the materials that he's provided in his kingship for rebuilding the temple. But then he says, do you know, I've given all of this. But now I'm so passionate about the Lord that I'm going to give even more.

[2 : 10] And I'm not giving out of my duty anymore. But out of my passion and my desire to give to God. I might be wrong, but I'm guessing for a man, a king, who is so often called the man after God's own heart.

Who wrote so many of the poems in the book of Psalms, professing his intimacy with God. I guess that his desire and his passion to give to the Lord came from that intimate relationship that he had with him.

And bearing in mind all that God had given him, I guess that it felt like only a tiny sacrifice to give some of all of that to the Lord.

David's example of giving led other people, the family leaders, the tribe officers, the commanders and the officials in charge of the king's work to also give. And we see that the people celebrated greatly because of the wholehearted and free giving that they were seeing for the Lord.

And then David does what David does oh so well. And he says this beautifully poetic prayer, which is where I started getting really excited about this passage.

[3 : 23] Because he calls on the Lord appealing to who he is. The Lord, the God, the Father of Israel from everlasting to everlasting. And in acknowledging that all things in heaven and earth belong to God, David gives us this beautiful insight into giving.

He reminds us that everything we have comes from God. Wealth and honour come from you. In your hands is strength and power. Everything comes from you.

And we have given only what comes from your hands. In youth, we've been following along with the sermon series that you guys have been looking at here in adult church.

And a few weeks back we were chatting about this term spiritual disciplines and what spiritual discipline really means. A few of us felt that it feels like a bit of a set of rules that we have to follow.

A bit strict. And we weren't sure we liked it. So we googled that term spiritual disciplines and found this definition that we really liked. It says spiritual disciplines are practices that by design can lead to life transformation.

[4 : 33] Their purpose is to aid spiritual growth as disciples of Christ and deepen our relationship with God. They are like training exercises for the spiritual life. I'll read that again.

And I don't know about you, but that's something that I really want to get on board with.

And that being said then, giving is one of our spiritual disciplines. One of our training exercises that can lead us in our spiritual growth and help us to go deeper in our relationship with God.

And because my dad has always said that every good sermon has three points, I've got three points or three principles of giving for us this morning. Proverbs 3 verse 9.

So my first principle for us this morning is that we should always give from our first fruits.

[5 : 48] I'm not sure about you, but when I hear the word giving being talked about in the faith and church context, I automatically think of tithing and giving money to charity. And that's great because that is part of what giving is.

But it's so much more than that. It's about giving finances, of course, but it's about giving time, giving hospitality, giving services and giving ourselves.

It's about giving to friends and family, but also giving to strangers and giving to God. This proverb, to honour the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of your crops.

I love that language, to honour the Lord with your wealth. The inference is that in giving some of all we have, it's not just about obeying a command. But in this way, when we give, we worship God.

We bless him. We honour him. In our passage this morning, David shares his revelation with us, that everything that we have comes from God.

[6 : 52] And everything we give returns to his hands. He says, wealth and honour come from you. Everything comes from you. And we have given only what comes from your hand. I think when we share in David's revelation here, when we come to the realisation that everything we have ultimately belongs to God, our perspective on giving changes.

It becomes less a question of giving, but of stewardship. I have X, Y, Z, so what am I going to do with it? How do I give from my finances? How do I give from my skills and gifts or my time?

How can we honour him with the first fruits of all we have? And I think that leads nicely to our second principle, that in our giving, we should reflect the way that God has given to us.

And how has God given to us? Well, one of our great go-to Bible verses, John 3, 16, says, God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

God so loved the world that he gave. He gave us everything. He gave himself. He gave his life. So that we could have an everlasting relationship with him.

[8 : 15] And if this is the way that God has given to us, are we willing to give our everything for him? We know that the night before Jesus died, he spent the night in prayer.

In his distress about the suffering that he was about to endure for us, he prayed, not my will, but yours be done. And in spending time in prayer, Jesus was able to surrender himself to God's will. And he gave all of himself to the Lord's purposes. Likewise, we see when we look at the passage this morning that David's giving was also covered in prayer. Verse 10 tells us that David praised the Lord in the presence of the assemblies.

His prayer didn't focus on his own giving, but the one who he was giving to. What does it look like for our giving to be covered in prayer? I want to reiterate here that giving isn't just about money. Giving is about all the things that we have, all the things that we are. Romans 12, 1 says, True and proper worship isn't just about turning up to church on a Sunday morning and tithing our 10%.

[9 : 35] We know that. We've heard that hundreds of times. Worship that God delights in is when we give ourselves in sacrifice and service to him.

When we put others above ourselves. When we live and surrender to him. That blesses his heart. When Jesus sent out the 12 disciples in Matthew 10, he gave them instructions as he sent them on their way.

He told them to go and proclaim that the kingdom of heaven has come near. To heal the sick, to raise the dead, to cleanse the leper, to cast out demons. And then he said those famous words. Freely you have received. Now freely give. And I love the message version of those words. You have been treated generously.

So now live generously. Jesus tells his disciples that as we have received so freely from God, so should our lifestyles reflect that.

[10:40] Shouldn't that be such a joy for us? You might see where I'm going with that final principle. And that's that giving should be a joyful, cheerful experience for us.

You may be familiar with the verse in Corinthians that says, God loves a cheerful giver. And the line that follows is that, and God is able to bless you abundantly.

So that in all things, at all times, having all you need, you will abound in good work. Why shouldn't we give cheerfully when God blesses our giving so abundantly?

Psalm 23 says, the Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing. Psalm 84, no good thing does he withhold from the one whose way of life is blameless before him.

John 10, the enemy comes only to steal, kill and destroy. But I have come that you might have life and life in abundance. Abundance. He is the God of abundance.

[11:45] Now, don't hear what I'm not saying, because I'm not saying that we should give because then God blesses us. But how amazing is it that we worship a God who never stops blessing, who never stops giving to us?

We read that David gave first from his duty as king, but then his passions overflowed in his devotion to the Lord. And he tells the assembly that he is also given from his personal treasure over and above everything else he's already given.

The passage then states that the people rejoice greatly in the response to the response of their leaders who have been stirred to give in response to David's challenge.

His challenge where he asks, who is willing to consecrate themselves to the Lord? Who else is willing to dedicate themselves to the Lord in their giving today? The people celebrated because they recognised that their leaders had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord.

And David the king also rejoiced greatly. Because when we give freely and wholeheartedly in honour of the Lord, it gets to be a joyful experience for everyone involved.

[13:02] Just like David gave from his passions, we also get to give from our passions too. God has given us those passions to serve him. So we can serve him through them by giving ourselves and using them.

God has given us a lot of time. Do you love to sing? Maybe you could sing in the worship group. Maybe you could give in that way. Maybe you're passionate about coffee.

I'm sure there's someone who would love for you to take them out for a coffee and give them time to chat. Maybe you love cooking. I can't tell you how blessed I felt every time someone's invited me for a meal or boxed me up a bit of what they've been cooking so that I don't have to cook sometimes.

And that's not a ploy for you all to feed me. But just to show you how simple giving really can be because we can overcomplicate it. But we've been given passions for a reason.

We are loving, giving beings because we're created in the image of the one who is love and who gave himself so that we could experience full, abundant life.

[14:10] So there are my three principles for us this morning. That we should always give from our first fruits. That our giving should always reflect the one who gave himself for us.

And that our giving should be a joyful, cheerful experience. And thinking back to that 21st birthday present, I think it checked all of those boxes because it was the time that they gave me.

It was the giving of themselves an investment for me. And it was the joy that that gift gave me. And still does when I think back to it because godly giving has lasting effects for everyone involved.

So I suppose my challenge for us this morning, myself included, is what does our giving look like this morning? Are we giving from the first fruits of all we have?

Because you know, when we give 10% of our 100%, we're still left with 90% for ourselves. Does our giving reflect the one who gave himself for us so that we could know that full, abundant life?

[15:22] And does it bring joy?