

Generosity

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[0 : 00] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. As always, if you'd like to learn more about us as a church, you can go to FCCGreensburg.com or you can check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, thank you so much for tuning in today. Our heart is always to get into the Word of God, but most of all, let that Word get into us and change these hearts to truly beat for Christ every day. Now, there were four brothers who left home for college. In time, two became very gifted doctors and the other two very successful lawyers. Years later, when they were very well established with their families of their own and all the luxuries that this life offers, they met together to have dinner in Las Vegas.

They each discussed gifts that they were able to give to their elderly mother who lived across the country. The first said, I had a big house built for Mama. The second said, well, I had a \$100,000 theater built inside the house.

The third said, I had my Mercedes dealer deliver a brand new EQE sedan to her. And the fourth said, you know how Mama loved reading the Bible?

[1 : 19] And you know she can't read anymore because she can't see very well. He said, I met a preacher who told me about a parrot that can recite the entire Bible. It took 20 preachers 12 years to teach him.

I had to pledge to contribute \$100,000 a year for 20 years to the church, but it was worth it. Mama just has to name a chapter and verse in the Bible and that parrot will recite it.

The other brothers seemed pretty impressed by this. Well, shortly afterwards, their mother sent out her thank you notes. She wrote, Milton, the house that you built for me is so huge, I live in only one room, but I have to clean the whole thing.

Thanks anyways. Marvin, I am too old to travel. I stay home. I have my groceries delivered, so I never use the Mercedes. The thought was good though.

Thanks. Michael, you gave me an expensive theater with technology I don't even understand and I can't use. It could hold 50 people, but all my friends are dead. I lost my hearing.

[2 : 23] I'm nearly blind and I'll never use it. Thank you for the gesture just the same. And then she came to the son that gave her that Bible reciting parrot. She said, dearest Melvin, you were the only son to have good sense to give a little thought to your gift.

The chicken was delicious. Thank you. Well, hey, welcome back to the eighth and final week of this series called DNA.

Next week, we'll jump into our series that, believe it or not, will lead us up to Easter. But our prayer as a staff and an eldership over the last couple of months is that you can see the great work that the Lord is currently doing and he wants to continue to do in and through this church in the years to come.

And the leadership is seeking his face so that we can live out those plans that he has for our FCC family. We've been talking about our unique spiritual DNA.

I know change is hard, but I hope you can also see that this new vision, mission, and values is simply a God-led vehicle that will steer us in his will as God's word is always our guide.

[3 : 38] I'm sure you've probably already noticed some different decor throughout the church that features our vision, mission, and values, and even new logo. And for our folks on Sunday morning, we won't do this over the radio because it'd be really hard.

But for our folks on Sunday morning, we're actually going to take about five minutes at the end of this message and kind of talk through what that logo stands for, kind of explain our logo a little bit.

But church, I hope and pray that you are as excited about the present and the future of First Christian Church of Greensburg as I am. But I always point back to our heritage. How grateful I am to stand upon almost 200 years of faithful shoulders who impacted Greensburg and beyond for the cause of Christ.

From D.R. Van Buskirk to Danny Wolford, I am humbled to be the lead pastor of this church in 2025. We are blessed with a strong heritage, but even more excited about how God is going to use each of us to impact our world today.

[4 : 45] And I wanted to kick off this message today with that goofy chicken joke to lead us into this last core value that works as a parameter to keep us on track.

Generosity is our standard. Let me say it again. Generosity is our standard. And I must start by telling you why we have this great desire to be a generous church in every area of our lives. And it starts with our generous God. John 3.16, a passage that you probably know well. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

God so loved you and me that he saw us in our lost state. He saw our sin and how it created this barrier separating us from his daily and eternal covering.

And he made a way for us. When he could have given up on us and it would have been justified, he didn't. His love pierced through man's darkness in the person of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh.

[5 : 58] Leaving the perfection of his heavenly throne, he came to this dreary earth, born in a stable to a couple from very humble beginnings. He grew up enduring every temptation that we face, 100% God, 100% man, and yet he lived a sinless, perfect life.

His earthly ministry transformed this world, setting the prisoner free, healing the blind, casting out demons, healing the lepers, showing the kingdom of God to all.

He was lied about, conspired against, mistreated, arrested, spat upon, had thorns shoved into his skull, was beaten severely, almost to the point of death, and even forced to carry his cross to Golgotha where he was nailed to it and then hoisted up to suffer.

Taking the punishment our sins deserve to offer us the opportunity for freedom. And then he breathed his last breath and it got quiet for the rest of Friday, all day Saturday, and into Sunday morning, what the Jewish culture would call three days since it touched three days.

And then the ground began to rumble. The tomb could hold him no longer. Death is strong, but life is stronger. And he came busting out to offer life to us on this earth and for all eternity.

[7 : 23] And while he will never force us to accept this most amazing gift of his grace, he extends it to us as we, by faith, make that decision to repent and be baptized into him, living the rest of our days for his glory.

So the reason generosity is our standard is because we have been blessed by a generous God beyond measure, and we can do nothing to earn that.

That is called grace. You are saved by grace, and you are held up by grace every day. So our biblical response to that grace, that daily sufficiency that he lavishes on us, is to steward our lives for his kingdom.

To be a manager, a good, faithful manager of everything God entrusts to me, so that he can be glorified in my life, and others can come to know this same hope and joy and peace and purpose that we have been invited to walk in daily.

And I often hear this stewardship of our lives broken down into three T's. So three T's that are important when you talk about generosity and being a good manager of everything the Lord entrusts to you.

[8 : 41] And the first one is time. Precious time. You know, the average life expectancy in the U.S. is somewhere between 77 and 78 years.

That means if you live about that long, you get around 2.4 billion seconds, 4 million minutes, 69,000 hours, and 28,400 days, give or take.

And boy, those precious days go by faster than we thought as a kid when they just seem to drag on, right? But let me show you a prayer of Moses that's taken from Psalm 90, verse 12 that gives us perspective into this valuable time.

Here's what Psalm 90, 12 says. Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom. And then the famous doctor, you know, Dr. Seuss, he echoed the same idea.

He said, How did it get so late so soon? It's night before it's afternoon. December is here before it's June. My goodness, how the time has flown. How did it get so late so soon?

[9 : 48] And I bet most of us can relate to that in some way. So what about, let me ask you, what about this precious time? And I have to confess, I don't always do this very well either.

I don't always manage my time well either. But God has been convicting me on this lately. And I want to honor him more in this area. And I think so many kids and so many adults, our faces are buried in our phones several hours a day.

And I get it. Some of it's necessary. You may have things you have to do, but a lot of it is not. And leisure time is not wrong in and of itself. It can be healthy, but it also can get out of control really quick.

So my prayer is this. Lord, teach me like Moses to number my days, to capitalize on those treasured seconds you give me. And that starts with precious time in the word and coming before my creator in prayer.

Precious time seeking his face before anything else. And I get it. Life is crazy. Different seasons pull us in different directions. And yet remember what we've said lately.

[10 : 57] You make time for what really sits on the throne of your heart. Let me say that again. And just in case it needs to sink in. You make time for what's truly on the throne of your heart.

You make time for what's most important to you. So generously, let's make time to spend with the Lord daily. Getting our hearts right before him.

Watching everything else fall into place. Generously put down that phone, that tablet, that unnecessary work project, and spend 30 minutes reconnecting with your spouse.

Or playing with your kids or your grandkids. Or ministering to a friend. Making a phone call. Going and visiting someone who's sick. Mentoring a youngster.

Make time for the kingdom of God. Be generous with your time in the right areas. Because it's amazing. It's amazing what God can do when we open up our schedule and say, Okay, God, take my time and help me to manage this well for your glory.

[12 : 03] And that leads us to the second T. So first is time. And second is talent. Be generous with your talent. With the gifts that God has given you.

And as I was thinking about this, God just began to display faces from our church in my head. And I'm just going to share a few first names. Wishing I could share all of them.

But I think of Micah, a teenage boy in our church who runs the computer that puts the screens up for everyone to see on Sunday morning. I think of Nicole and Anna that spend 20 plus hours baking homemade treats for us on Sunday morning.

I think of Barbara as one of many in the kitchen making that delicious Wednesday evening food. Or Jack who fixes all kinds of broken things around this building.

I think of Ed seeking out new people to make them feel welcomed and loved. Or Jeremy working alongside Tyler to wire up our buildings so we can hear sound and have live feeds of video and do things that I don't even begin to understand.

[13 : 09] I think of Kelly who's always telling us a corny joke to brighten our day and to get us to laugh. I think of Caitlin who paints beautiful pictures in the youth room to show the beauty of our God.

I think of Steve or Teresa who faithfully hand out bulletins with a smile on their face. And I wish I could share about all of you. But I say that to simply say, let's use our talents and our gifts for the glory of God generously.

And you watch how the Lord will use you to really impact lives. 1 Peter 4, 10 and 11 puts it like this. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength that God provides. So that in all things, God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. I want to share a story that I just recently heard about our church that I am so very proud of.

[14 : 21] A young mom came into our church and admittedly she was broken. Just broken. Life has been hard. Going through so much.

Feeling very nervous. Kind of walking in the doors of the church because that can be intimidating for a lot of people. And yet she knew she needed to get plugged into a church. Her son needed it. And so she walks in one Sunday. And parking is a struggle for us. We know that. And so she found a spot, which praise God for that. She came in.

And she's walking in. She looks at someone and says, Hey, I'm new. I don't know where to go. And this guy, he just takes it upon himself to be her personal tour guide. I don't even know who it was. But he showed her around, showed her everything she needed to see. And he just made her feel so welcome. And then she walks in. And she's a pretty emotional person.

[15:18] And she walks in and she looks in the sanctuary. And it's almost like God just did something in her heart right there. And the tears began to flow. And our lady who was passing out bulletins saw that.

And she just began to love her and minister to her. And she showed her to a seat. And then when the service started, that same lady, after she got done passing out bulletins, went up and sat with her and hugged her and was there to just help her just feel comfortable and loved and a part of the family.

And I'm telling you, that's what it looks like, those two examples right there, to use your gifts for the glory of God. Church, it takes all of us using our gifts to do this big mission that God has called us to.

And I love the words of Max Lucado, who says this. He says, some convert the lost, some encourage the saved, and some keep the movement going.

All are needed. Exhibit God with your uniqueness. When you magnify your maker with your strengths, when your contribution enriches God's reputation, he says, your days grow suddenly sweet.

[16:28] So let's not hoard those gifts. Let's be generous with that talent, and let's make an impact in the lives of people. And then the third T, so time, talent, and then treasure.

Treasure. Before I tell this story, I got to admit that I do what all preachers do. We have our favorite stories that we like to tell over and over. So if you've heard this story before, pretend that you haven't, okay?

But it's this little boy, probably seven, eight years old, and we're going back to the 1960s probably. Old-fashioned general store with all that old type of candy that I absolutely love.

And a sweet old gentleman who ran the store, he loved to bless children. And when this little boy came in with his mom, we'll call him Billy, they're at the checkout, and they're buying their stuff.

And the owner says, hey, young man, here's a box of candy here. Go ahead and grab some out of the dish. Just grab a handful, and you can have it. It's free. But this normally outgoing little boy didn't move.

[17:30] So the guy said it again. He said, son, don't be shy. Just grab you some candy. But again, he didn't move. So finally, the nice man reached in the jar, grabbed a handful, and he gave it to the boy.

Well, as he and his mom walked outside, his mom kind of stopped him and stooped down to his level and looked him in the eye and said, Billy, are you okay? You've never met a stranger in your life. Why would you not talk to that really nice man when he's trying to give you a handful of candy? And that's when Billy got this smirk on his face. And he said, well, mom, his hand is so much bigger than mine, and now I have two handfuls of candy. Church, we have a generous God.

We have a generous God who has no problem providing for us, blessing his children when we are faithful to give back that tithe, that offering as a faithful steward or manager, putting our trust in him while also building his kingdom.

And I love how 2 Corinthians 9, starting in verse 6, the Apostle Paul, through the power of the Holy Spirit, says, Remember this, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly.

[18:41] Whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what he's decided to give in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion. So guys, that's why we will never guilt trip you.

We will never guilt trip you into giving anything. It says, for God loves a cheerful giver. So when you give out of reluctance, when you give out of just duty or, fine, I guess I'm supposed to do this to make God happy, you know.

Listen, that doesn't honor God. You might as well keep it in your pocket. God loves a cheerful giver. And then verse 8 says, So let's trust him with our treasures that come directly from him and belong to him in the first place.

And you watch, like Malachi 3.10 says, How when we trust him by faith, he will open up those floodgates and he will pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough to store it. And we know that his blessings can come in so many ways that are even more important than financial gain. I have to tell you that I love the heart of generosity that's been in this church well before I was alive.

[19 : 58] And that I see every day growing more and more in this church family. If you remember back to December when we did what we call Giveaway Sunday, the main project we had was to help a deaf woman in our general area who loves Jesus, who has like nine kids and has been dealt a really rough hand.

And yet she's amazing in her level of trust in the Lord. And as she recently moved into a new home with her kids that she desperately needed, we were able to help provide several things that they needed to furnish that house.

But the bigger project that is still ongoing and making great progress is that they were converting her garage into an apartment for her mom who will be helping with the children.

And I can't wait in the coming months to share those before and after pictures with you of just how your generosity has impacted a family in a big way. But it's been a blessing to partner with her Nazarene church in Shelbyville to impact this family.

And she is so very grateful. I mean, so appreciative of all that God is doing. So because we serve a generous God who has lavished that all over us, generosity is our standard.

[21 : 15] With our time prioritized for his glory, with our talent used to impact the world for Christ, and with our treasures that all belong to him anyways, we choose generosity.

We choose to be great managers of everything God has entrusted to us. And so this morning, I'm going to take a few minutes in our Sunday morning services and we're going to talk through kind of our new logo and all that kind of stuff.

So this message today, we're going to be cutting it just a little bit short, shorter than normal. But I just want to kind of end today by taking you back to this whole series and just recapping it for a second.

So as we've walked through these last eight weeks, we've talked through our vision, mission, and values. We've talked about our vision of Jesus first.

Now, when you put Jesus first in everything, everything falls into place. We talked about our mission, the how, belong to, believe in, become like Jesus.

[22 : 21] And then we even walked through our five values that kind of work as a parameter to keep us on track and to keep us faithful, serving Jesus with all our hearts.

But today, I simply want to leave you with that opening verse that we talked about in this series from Matthew 6, 33. Here's what Jesus says.

And I'm telling you, if you and I will put him first in everything we do, everything else will be taken care of. Here's what he says.

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. God bless you, and I hope you have a great week.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, thank you so much just for how good and faithful you are in everything.

[23 : 16] Thank you, Lord, for what you are doing in this First Christian Church family. Thank you for just the new vision and mission and values you've given us, even the logo that will hopefully point people back to a Jesus First Church, where they can find that family that they truly need in their life.

Father, I just pray over anyone listening to this message right now, that we can have those generous hearts that you call us to have, that we can realize that everything we've been given comes from you.

And we, as followers of Jesus, are called to be managers or stewards of everything, our time, our talents, and our treasures. Lord, help us to do that well.

It's all yours anyways. Help us to give back, all of us, so that you may be glorified in every way. We love you, Jesus. We pray all this in your precious and your holy name.

And God's people said, amen and amen. Hey, once again, my name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. Thank you for tuning in to the preaching of God's Word today.

[24 : 26] I want to give you a real quick invitation here. If you've been listening to this message, maybe you've been listening for weeks, and maybe you have questions about your faith, maybe you have questions about our church, maybe you have questions about what it means to truly give your life to follow Jesus Christ.

Listen, others have come alongside us to help us when we were on that journey as well, and we're still on that journey. So please, reach out. Here's a couple ways you can do that.

You can call the church office, 812-663-8488. That's 812-663-8488. You can ask for me. I'm Ray. Or you could email me at ray at fccgreensburg.com.

Hey, God bless you. Thank you for tuning in today. Thank you.