

Giving to Glorify God

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[0 : 00] We are in lesson number two on stewardship.! And I have to tell you, I remember at one point in ministry being very hesitant to teach!

on stewardship. And the honest truth of that is that I was a little troubled by the fact that it seemed a little over the top for me as a pastor, who, by the way, I want you to know you do pay me, and I'm very thankful for that.

And I felt as a pastor it was a little embarrassing to talk about giving because I was a recipient of your generosity. And I thought, well, I ought not to do that. And then it dawned on me, you know what?

But whether you pay me or not doesn't change the fact that the Word of God is explicit and consistent about giving. And here is a spiritual truth that you need to get your arms around, and giving is one of the starting places of genuine spiritual progress.

So last week we talked about the why. Why? Why do we give? We give to glorify God. I think about that passage in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 31, where it says this, Whatsoever you do, whether it is an eat or drink, what?

[1 : 30] Come on, say it with me. All to the glory of God, right? So the way in which we give, truthfully, is a reflection of our view of God.

God. That's a fact. How many of you know that Valentine's is already over? It's gone. And I bring that up because I remember deciding that I should do something for Valentine's, which I normally do.

And I thought that I would go look for cards. Don't raise your hand. Don't do that. But, you know, when I went to look for cards, I found myself laboring over the right kind of card to give my wife of 43 years.

How many of you understand that process? You know, I was like, well, should I get it? No, you read those sappy things. I don't know. There must be little people that sit in cubicles, you know, that, all right, let's see. I have to have four Valentine's cards done by noon.

And then they crank these absolutely inane things out. And then I'm there reading them. Their lack of creativity was very stifling for my card-picking process.

[2 : 41] But you know what? I was pretty determined that I was going to find a card that was appropriate for my bride. You follow that? Because, you know what?

I love her. And so just any card won't do. Well, what actually happened is I ended up picking a card that was a relatively simple, unadorned card that didn't have much to say on the outside.

And guess what I did? I penned her one of my own little notes. You know, I said, hey, I let her know how much I appreciate her. You're reading into that more than you probably should, but, you know, it's a fact.

I have to tell you, it would have been so inappropriate. Everybody smile. It would have been so inappropriate for me just to give her one of those off-the-cuff 10-cent cards, right?

Would you agree with that? That would have been really tacky. The reason I bring this up is because your giving is a reflection of what you think of God.

[3 : 53] That's the way it is. Your giving is a reflection of what you think of God. Now, last week we talked about why the believer should give, but this week we want to talk about how.

We want to fill it out a little bit more. And I do want to take the time to explain to you that giving is one of those things that the Scripture is quite clear on.

The Scripture brings up often. And surprisingly, you will find the subject of giving to be one of the early lessons that the apostles evidently taught to the church.

That suggests that it is more important than some of us might think it is. And so what I want you to do this morning is turn in your Bible to 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and 9.

And we're going to spend most of our time in this passage listening to the apostle as he addresses the matter of giving in the church at Corinth. And by the way, the church at Corinth would really not be all that different from the church in Columbus.

[5 : 09] So we look at the passage. And we begin there in chapter 8, verse 1. We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia.

Now, so that we understand what Paul is saying from the very beginning, understand that in most of our thinking, when we think about the grace of God, we think about something we have received from God, in particular our salvation.

Isn't that right? The grace of God has brought salvation to us. And we have been blessed by His grace in our relationship with Him. And I have to tell you, this morning as we were singing, my heart was just into it.

I love singing songs that remind me of the glory of Christ and His salvation. It's my joy and it's satisfying. And by the way, I like listening to you sing behind me.

And here, this is a sidebar. I hope you just blast it out every time. And here's the reason I ask that of you. It's this, those people who are Spirit-filled sing enthusiastically.

[6 : 22] It's just the way it is. And so, here we are. We're reminding ourselves of the glory of Christ in salvation. And we're reminding ourselves of His goodness to us.

And we sing enthusiastically. And our giving should be the same. And here, the grace of God is actually spoken of in this passage to be a matter of giving.

And so, here you sit this morning and you're thinking, Well, I really am not interested in listening to a sermon about giving. I'm not into that. I want to tell you something. Truthfully, it might be that you don't know Christ.

Because here's one of the things that I know about salvation. Salvation changes the way you think. Would you agree with that? Salvation changes your value structure.

Salvation changes the certainty of your destiny. And if He has your heart, He has your wallet. Would you agree with that?

[7 : 22] If He has your heart, say it with me. He has your wallet. I want you to recognize this morning that God honoring giving is joyful.

That's something I want you to recognize. Now, we're in 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians chapter 8. But I want you also to go a little further and go to 2 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 7.

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

I want you to follow the flow of the text here. Giving is a biblical duty that shows in practical terms what our interest is in His glory.

And at the same time, I want you to recognize that the passage of Scripture makes it clear that our giving is to be a personal decision that each individual believer makes without coercion.

[8 : 28] I'll never forget at one point in pastoral ministry, actually stopping in to visit in a home of individuals that had been visiting in the church. And in the flow of conversation, I discovered that they were members of another church.

And a little bit of a surprise. And so we actually got to talking about their experience. And they said, oh, well, you're not the first pastor who has visited here lately. Our pastor stopped by and also one of our deacons.

And they came by to talk to us about the faithfulness of our giving and how much we should be doing. And I was a little curious.

It was a new thought to me. And I said, what does that mean? And he said, well, our church, if you're a member, the stewardship committee, figures out what your proportion is, and then they go around to all the homes and they talk to each member about what their input is supposed to be.

Do you follow that? Now, I decided that it was inappropriate for me to launch at that moment. And so I just kind of stood there and nodded.

[9 : 43] And really, that's rather it. Is that what they do? Yeah, yeah. You know, so that's not the way it is here. But the way it is here is not governed just by the fact that deacons and pastors sat around and arbitrarily decided on, well, let's try it a different way and see if that works.

That's not how it ended. The reason our giving is the way it is here is because we are informed by Scripture and we want to be faithful to what the Word of God dictates. And so recognize in this passage, there you're looking, 2 Corinthians 9, verse 7, each one must give as he has decided in his heart.

There's not a single one of you here that can say I have ever talked to you personally about what you should give. Furthermore, probably you know that I'm a little perverse about touching money. How many of you know that about Pastor Knoyer? Try to give me a check. If I know what it is for, I don't take it as a general rule. Do you know what I do? How many of you know what I do? Come on. I say, give it to... We have deacons. We have Pastor Saul. And listen, it's just me. That's just the way I am.

[10:53] I don't want ever to have any kind of attachment to what your particular frame is. And you recognize in the passage there, it says, hey, listen, as he decides in his heart, there is no place in the Scripture for manipulation or pressure regarding giving.

Probably the best illustration of this would be over in the book of Exodus. And so I want you to turn back just for a moment. And in Exodus chapter 25, and then we're going to look at 35 as well. But in Exodus chapter 25, the nation of Israel is taking up an offering for the building of the tabernacle. This was big time. How many of you here have been through building programs in other churches? Raise your hands. Building programs in other churches. Building programs can become major fundraisers, right?

A lot of pressure, a lot of attention put on it. And so here's how the nation of Israel went about fundraising for the tabernacle. Exodus chapter 25, looking at verse 2.

Speak to the people of Israel that they take for me a contribution. In other words, hey, we need money. From every man whose heart moves him, you shall receive the contribution for me.

[12:16] In other words, who was to give? Give those who wanted to. Now, turn forward, if you will, to Exodus chapter 35. One of the things that I've done in my Bible, you may not want to do in yours, but it's helped me to kind of pick up on the thread.

In Exodus chapter 35, you look at verse 5. Take from among you a contribution to the Lord. Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the Lord's contribution.

And then we look also in verse 21, 22, 24, 26, and 29. And the recurring theme in each one of these verses is that the matter of giving is left to the individual and to the willingness of that person's heart.

The reason that I have never pressured this congregation and their giving isn't because I'm indifferent to the matter of stewardship. But it is because I am sensitive to the authority and the sufficiency of the model of Scripture, and I want to follow the example that we find in the text. So let me say how neat it is that Scripture has this organic unity. And what I mean by that is that when you find a theme displayed and worked through in the Old Testament, there's a high probability you're going to find it somewhere else.

[13:34] Things fit together. And they stay together because they come from the mind of God and the wisdom of God. And what He presents at one point is going to match up consistently with something else we find elsewhere in the text.

And we're going to see that as we work our way in particular through the passage in 2 Corinthians. So turn back there if you will now and understand that our giving is not only just to be something that is not manipulated, but it is also to be something that is joyful to us.

Our giving is to be marked by a personal joy and satisfaction. Look at verse 7 again in 2 Corinthians chapter 9. And it says, In other words, do not give reluctantly.

What does that mean? If you are reluctant, what? Try this. So, you bring flowers to your wife, but you have an obvious reluctance.

How would you communicate reluctance? I'll give you an illustration. One of the biggest challenges I have in my marriage is moving furniture. Okay?

[14:51] I just got to admit it. I'm working on it. And I'm not home yet. Right? Do you follow that? You know that at one point in my life, I decided that I would help my wife understand this by putting dates on the bottom of couches and chairs.

I stopped. It wasn't helping her at all. It was just irritating me. So, you know, probably early in my prayer life in the morning, the Lord helped me if I have to move furniture.

No, that's not that bad. But she knows when I'm reluctant. You follow that? And the sad thing is, and I'm working on this, the sad thing is, because she knows I'm reluctant, guess how it makes her feel when she can't lift that couch and she needs my help.

What do you think? Now, my wife doesn't hyperventilate about anything, but if you know her, it's like, okay, we'll get there.

Tim, move it. You know, it's like, you see, reluctance is something God doesn't want us to have. And he says, hey, if you have a reluctant heart, don't give.

[16:04] By the way, the rest of the text is change your attitude, right? Because this is about God's glory. But let's go back at the passage here. It says, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

The word cheerful actually is the word hilarion. What's that sound like? Hilarious, yeah. I mean, here's the deal. When you give, giggling is not a bad thing.

I'll give you an illustration of that, too. Two weeks ago, my wife called me and she says, honey, you bought me a birthday present. Now, her birthday is on this Friday.

I know that date is coming. It's in my calendar, et cetera. But, you know, she let me know she bought me a gift ahead of time. Or she bought herself a gift ahead of time.

Do you follow that? It's not that she didn't trust me, I think. It's that she had discovered just the incredible bargain that couldn't be passed on.

[17:11] And so she went ahead and bought it. And then she advised me, you're going to love it. I actually laughed.

Yeah, right. So who needs Swarovski crystals in their bathroom, right? You understand that? Okay. You know why I chuckled when I started into this conversation with her? It's like, because I do love her. I love her. I love her.

And I just, I got the biggest kick out of it. Well, if it makes her happy, that's good. So, you know, when God receives your free will contribution, He wants you to enjoy doing it.

I want to recognize a second thing. God honoring giving is quietly generous. Quietly generous.

[18:31] Turn back in your Bible. We're going to go to Matthew chapter 6 just for a moment. And Matthew chapter 6, verse 1 through 4, it says, Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them.

For then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others.

Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be seen in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

You know what it's saying? It's saying that the giving of believers is to be different from the giving of the world. I chuckled the other day when I read the news and found out that there are a number of senators who are opposed to the Keystone Pipeline.

And I'm not getting into a political issue here. But it was discovered that a number of the people who are opposing the Keystone Pipeline actually had investments that would tank if the Keystone Pipeline went through.

[19:50] They're directly connected. And so what they were doing in their voting was representing their self-interest. I don't think it's just senators that do that.

You see, all over the world, people's giving and people's efforts are always directed to, so what am I getting out of this? One of the questions in the back of people's minds is, so what's my return for the investment that I am engaging in?

The world gives with an eye on return, either financial or some kind of public credit. That's what Jesus is talking about here in Matthew chapter 6. And Jesus instructs that our giving is to be done quietly and without man's reward.

That's the reason that you're giving here. We don't post on the bulletin board what you're giving is, and there's only a select number of individuals that know what that is, and they're the ones who give you that annual report, so you can handle it in with the tax people.

I want you to go back, if you will, again to 2 Corinthians chapter 8, and we want to mark something else that is noted here. 2 Corinthians chapter 8, verse 2 and 3, says that biblical giving is marked by personal, personal generosity.

[21 : 12] He talks about the grace of God in giving, and he says, 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, and as I can testify, beyond their means of their own accord. It was very interesting to do some research on the matter of generous giving on the part of our culture, and recognize that the largest amount of giving actually comes from people that are not wealthy.

That's interesting, isn't it? You would think that the more you have, the more you can afford to give. Isn't that right? Right? Ironically, the truth of the matter is, is that as a general rule, the more people have, the more self-focused they become, and the less they're inclined to give.

And in the Bible, we find here that the matter of giving is to be something that is marked by personal generosity, and a generosity that finds satisfaction in what that generosity represents.

There's another point that I want you to recognize as we think about the matter of giving, and mark the fact that in this passage, in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, where the apostle is laying out in broad terms for two whole chapters, the matter of giving to instruct the church at Corinth, he makes this point that God-honoring giving is a matter of confidence.

[22 : 55] Godly giving not only affirms our desire for God's glory, but it also says that we are confident in his provision. Here's what I mean.

I want you to look at 2 Corinthians 9, verse 8 through 11, and let's just track the passage just for a moment. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

As it is written, he has distributed freely, he has given to the poor, his righteousness endures forever. He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

You'll be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. Now, what this passage explains to us is that our giving actually gives an opportunity for God to show his sufficiency and his provision.

Now, we're not all gifted at math, but we can do simple numbers without taking our shoes off. And so, I want you to imagine here that if you have five apples and you give someone else three of them, how many are you left?

[24 : 26] Now, another question, a very complex one, but are five apples generally better than two? If you like apples, that's very true, right? I mean, I would rather have five nice honey crisp apples that have been picked in the prime of life and maybe refrigerated just for a couple hours so they're really at the top end of flavor and, you know what I'm saying?

And even if I can't, being a diabetic, eat all five of them in one sitting, I like to think about them in the refrigerator. I can't eat them when I want to, right? And five is better than two.

And so, when you give three apples away, what goes through your little pea brain? Loss, loss, loss, loss.

And some people get caught in that mindset when they think about giving to God. If I am faithful in my stewardship, I will have less money for pizza or for whatever else that it is that I am inclined to involve myself in that I've just got to have if I'm going to be happy in life.

God honoring giving always says, I trust Him to provide what I need even as I give. How many of you think about that with me? I trust Him to provide what I need even as I give.

[26 : 02] I shared with you last week the experience that Judith and I went through when we, for the first time in our married life, began to become faithful in the matter of stewardship.

I grew up in a wonderful Christian home. But for whatever reason, it really never connected me, connected with me, that stewardship was really something that was a hard attitude.

And I can remember hearing Randy Patton teach on the matter of stewardship for the first time. And Judith and I, I remember going home and talking about it and deciding, all right, we're going to be faithful in our giving from this time forward.

And as I said last week, we did not get any checks in the mail or a raise or any windfall. No aunt in Tucson died and left me a chunk of money.

In fact, what we noticed is for about six months, our giving consistent, our reserves going down. It was like, do you know what we learned?

[27 : 06] We learned that we had to change our spending patterns. How many of you realize that you ultimately can outspend whatever income you have? Trick statement, I know, but it's true.

And so we began to change our giving, our giving first, and then we began to change our spending. But here's what giving does. Giving says, I trust God to provide what I need as I give.

Paul reminds the believers, we're in 2 Corinthians 9, verse 8 through 11, Paul reminds the believer that God can be trusted to meet our needs. When we give away what we have, think with me, it's a challenge to our selfish heart for it cuts into what we think is going to provide our own pleasure and our own satisfaction.

And over and over again in Scripture, we find that God insists on being first. I think about the illustration of the widow.

Remember, the prophet comes out of nowhere, walks up to her house, Elijah, and the prophet says, hey, why don't you make me something little to eat? You know what she says to him?

[28 : 26] She says, hey, all I have is enough to make one little cake for my son and I, and then after we're finished eating that, we're going to starve to death. What does he say? Oh, I am sorry to ask.

You guys go ahead and eat it and die. No, that's not what he says. He says, feed me first, and God will take care of the rest. And what happens? Faith. She bakes him that little old eensy-weensy cake, and do you know what happens?

This is amazing. She has enough the day after, the day after that, and just God cares for her throughout the entire famine. God wants to be first. And so, here in this passage, in 2 Corinthians 9, the apostle is explaining, hey, listen, God is able to help you with this matter of grace as well, so that having sufficiency in all things, in other words, what you have, you have received from God. How many of you recognize that? The income that you have, the provisions that you have, the place that you live, all these things actually belong to God and are from His hand. Isn't that right? That's God's. And he says, God's given it to you, and so in your faithfulness of giving back to Him, what you are doing is saying, God, I trust you to continue providing for me.

[29 : 48] The promise of God is that He will provide what we need as long as He sees fit to keep us on this earth. Let me say that slowly.

The promise of God is that He will provide what we need as long as He sees fit to keep us on this earth. And sometimes we do get caught up in telling God exactly what we need.

God, I need steak. And God says, no, you're going to have beans. How many of you know that there's a lot of protein in beans, right?

Beans and rice. There you go. And we get in an argument. I got, well, God, I really, if you love me, you'll let me have steak. I'm going to take care of you.

Eat beans. And so, God is committed to care for you until the time that He decides to take you home. And He has not promised to give us basements and garages that are so full of stuff that our children are hoping that a dumpster is the thing after the burial.

[31 : 01] Okay? You see, I like the imagery of the Old Testament with the wave offering called first fruits. One of the things that happened in the Old Testament when the, and by the way, in the Old Testament, everybody was a farmer, pretty much, almost everybody was a farmer.

And towards harvest time, guess what they were supposed to do with their first couple sickles of grain or their first couple baskets of olives? What did they do with it? It went into the storehouse and it was actually called the wave offering.

Do you know why it was called the wave? Because they would literally take it and wave it before the Lord and say, hey Lord, this is yours and there's more to come. They would always put God first.

So here's the question. Is God first in your giving? Or is God the one who gets the leftover after the government and your mortgage and all the other things that you're engaged in?

Is he kind of the, well, you know, after I take my wife out for supper and I go to the movies, there's probably going to be about \$20 left for the month and you know what, God can have that.

[32 : 13] Is that where he fits in your picture? If that's the case, what you're saying is that the other things are more important than God. I remind you that Scripture Scripture wants you to think of God as first in your giving.

There's one other thing that I want you to look at and see in the passage and that God-honoring giving is kingdom-driven. It's amazing how many people want to be part of your giving.

Do you follow that? Everybody. I have to tell you that every now and then I see those absolutely tear-jerking advertisements for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. I mean, the saddest song as it tears me up and I see these animals that have been abused and it's like my heart goes out to them. How can anybody do that? And then after that, you know, you get everybody else that loves you wants your money too, right? I signed up for the NRA several years ago and I got to tell you they still, they call me regularly. [33 : 24] Thankfully, it's an 800 number and my phone picks that up and helps me. But my wife, my wife and I are sitting there supper, after supper, just sitting there in the family room and she gets a call from High Point College in North Carolina.

We lived in North Carolina back when, was that Judith? 74. That was a long time ago, okay? And she actually went to High Point for about one semester. They still have her on their call list. You know? Hope springs eternal in the human breast. They're hoping that Judith someday, I mean, you just call regularly. I get a call from all the different people that I went to school with and they're not calling to tell me how much they appreciated that I graduated. They're just, they want me to give. UNICEF, Girl Scouts, whoever it is, they all want your money. [34 : 26] And I want you to know that the believer is encouraged by Scripture to direct his giving through the local church. See, Scripture sees the local church and its vision as the primary channel of giving.

I have to tell you that we live in a day of Winnebago believers. Do you know what Winnebago believers are? They're people that are always setting up camp temporarily here or there and they're on the move. They dabble in a pew here, they dabble in a pew there. But they're also involved in a host of other activities and it really just doesn't work for them to settle in and pitch in and be part of what's happening in a particular family. And they struggle with being more committed to their personal agenda than with Christ's agenda. And really, that's not the picture we find in the New Testament church of what God wants for the body of Christ to be. Jesus sees the church as His most important instrument in this age. I want to say that carefully. Jesus sees the church as the most important instrument in this age. Over in Matthew chapter 16, verse 18, Jesus said this, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. [35 : 41] What He's saying is that the church is His instrument of grace. It is the principal organism, organization that He intends to be used to bring blessing to people. Another passage that really confirms that truth is over in Ephesians.

And I want you to go there just for a moment. Ephesians chapter 1. Ephesians chapter 1, verse 22 and 23. The passage just makes a profound statement about the supremacy and the significance of the church. 22 and 23. And He put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church. Verse 23. Which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. The church is Christ's present body. Now, are we a little put off on occasion by what the church is in reality?

Yeah, we bump into each other and find some uglies. Isn't that right? But here's the truth. We're all part of the church by His grace, by salvation, and we are the manifestation of Christ in the world. [36 : 51] And being involved in the church and what the church is doing is God's plan and intention for the believer. Christ intends for every believer to be connected to a local church and to be serving and giving through the local church.

It's very interesting that you will find in the New Testament that the giving of the believer flowed predominantly through the local church and God was honored in that. That's what we find in that passage in 2 Corinthians. Very interesting also to find that apostolic counsel on the use of spiritual gifts, just like the matter of giving, was directed towards the local church and it was in the local church that both giving and giftedness were to be played out and we see this very clearly in 1 and 2 Corinthians. The model that we find in Acts chapter 5 and Acts chapter 6 point to the church rather than individuals as being the principal vehicle through which giving is to come. And guess why most people avoid giving through the local church? A couple reasons. Number one is because often the local church does not do as good a job as they should. And that's appropriate

to be challenged by that.

[38 : 03] But secondly, and here's another thing, I want to vote with my own money and you're not going to mess with it. Hmm. I want to be in control and I want to have a say.

See, when I put my money into the offering plate, guess what I do? I relinquish my own right to control how it's given. I release it to the responsibility of the corporate body and to their vision collectively.

I am not in charge. I want you to see that again in Acts chapter 11 verse 27 through 30.

And turn there just for a moment. Acts chapter 11 verse 27 through 30. Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch and one of them named Abagas stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over the world.

This took place in the days of Claudius. So the disciples determined according, everyone according to his ability to send relief to the brothers living in Judea and they did so sending it by the elders or sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

[39 : 22] And who were Barnabas and Saul? They were members of leadership that were responsible to carry it from one congregation to another. Interesting when Haiti had that horrible disaster and the Philippines horrible disaster.

This congregation sent money. Do you know where we sent it to? We sent it to responsible believers in the Philippines or in Haiti and we said we want you to use this for the furtherance of the gospel and the meeting of the needs of people that are suffering in the Philippines that are suffering in Haiti that are suffering and there is a wonderful gospel opportunity.

Believers through the congregation of God's people ministering on behalf of people in that local community. Finally biblical giving is to flow towards gospel proclamation and gospel living.

Biblical giving is to flow towards gospel proclamation and gospel living. So as we put this together let me summarize by saying that our giving as believers is first of all to be joyful.

Isn't that right? And I wouldn't be put off at all in fact some of you I know are perverse enough that you'll do it next Sunday. I wouldn't be put off if you giggled next time you put your offering in.

[40 : 54] You know kind of have this joyful grin and your wife probably looks hey I'm having fun doing this. Giving should be joyful giving should be liberal giving should be confident of God's continuing provision and giving should be gospel focused through the local church.

Let's close in prayer. Our Father God this morning as we take your word in hand and we are reminded that you have spoken clearly we also understand that it is for our benefit and our blessing. you who have graced us with salvation and delivered us from the curse of sin have made us to be part of your family and drawn us together to be effective for the testimony and the glory of Christ and we want to be a people that are generous not because of manipulation but because of our high and holy view of a God that someday we will enjoy forever in eternity.

Lord this life is brief and we want to spend it and be spent for the testimony and the power of Christ and we ask that you would take your word and drive it firmly into our heart that we would be a people from this day forward that are generous and faithful and do not turn back because the spirit of God has touched our heart and the word of God is our authority and we have confidence in your provision.

We ask this in your precious name. Amen. Amen.