

40 Days of Community
Part 7B: Living A Giving Life
Philippians 4:15
November 20, 2011

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A. Give thoughtfully

B. Give enthusiastically

C. Give voluntarily

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D. Give cheerfully

2 Corinthians 9:7

2 Corinthians 8:9

Introduction

These “40 Days of Community,” have been about building relationships and deepening the sense of community in our church family.

Let’s see how observant you have been...

First week – How to create a partnership

Second week – characteristics of relationship success or failure

Third week – How we help each other to grow

Fourth week – Building a team

All on the same background

You had to know this was coming...

...

If you **count the words in the Bible** you will find:

the word 'believe' is used 270 times.

the word 'pray' is used 371 times

The word 'love' is used 714 times .

But the word 'give' is 2,162 times.

God wants you to learn to be generous because

If we’re going to community there has to be generosity between us.

Philippians 4:15 “**You became my partners in giving.**”

There’s no such thing as community without generosity!

Think about the people who you feel the closest to and

you’ll notice they are also people that have been generous with you.

Today I’m going to give you the seven incredible benefits produced by generosity:

I. Generosity creates community

Earlier, when I announced I was going to be speaking about generosity, some probably expected to get hit up for money. Then you probably couldn't figure out why we received the offering before the sermon.

If I planned to talk about generosity, it would make sense to some of you that I would take the offering after the sermon, so the sermon would convince you to give more. But this message about generosity is not about money, for two reasons...

1. After last Sunday you do not need to hear about giving money.

Last week's deputation offering for our missionaries was the highest I've ever seen... \$1,500!

2. The emphasis this month is on community, not on stewardship.

Matthew 6:21 "Your heart will be wherever your treasure is."

Wherever you put your time, your money, your effort and energy, wherever you invest yourself, that's what is going to attract you like a magnet.

In other words, the moment you buy stock in Microsoft, you will be very interested Microsoft's future

If your heart is in your home,

You'll put your time and your money into fixing it up.

Or your heart may be in your work, so

that's where you are putting your time, your money and your energy.

Or it may be in a hobby.

That's where you put your time, your money and your energy.

Wherever your treasure is, your heart will be there.

So any time that you are generous with someone you will be creating community with them.

II. Generosity defeats materialism

Unsanctified American culture has a problem with building community because we have a problem with materialism

The problem with materialism is that it values things more than people.

Let me show you what I mean...

[Rav 4 video](#)

Study after study shows
the people who give the most to charity
are the people who have the least.
Those who have more, give less.
Sometimes the worst thing God could ever do for your ability
to live in community with others would be
to answer your prayers for money, because
money will change you for the worse.

The antidote to materialism is generosity.
Every time that you act with generosity, you have a spiritual victory.
Don't you know that every time you are generous, your heart grows?
Well, if you don't believe Dr. Carnahan
maybe you'll believe

Dr. Seuss...

What was the problem with **the Grinch?**

At the start of the book

His soul was an appalling crooked dump-heap,
overflowing with the most disgraceful assortment imaginable
mangled up in tangled-up knots.

He's a foul one, Mr. Grinch!

He's a nasty wastey skunk.
 His heart was full of unwashed socks,
 his soul is full of gunk, Mr. Grinch.
 The three words the best describe him, and I quote:
 stink, stank, stunk.

By the end of the book,
 he was a completely different Grinch.
 Instead of stealing Christmas he brought everything back,
 all the food for the feast,
 and the Grinch himself carved the roast beast!

What happened to him?
 What happened when he started to act with generosity?

The Grinch video

His heart grew because he practiced generosity.

Every time you are generous you break the grip of materialism in your life
 because materialism is all about getting.
 But every time that you share with a friend,
 any time you are generous
 you are becoming more sanctified, more Christ-like because
 you are defeating the materialism in your life.

Generosity creates community, and

III. Generosity strengthens faith.

There are two kinds of people in life:
 the faithful
 and the miserable.

The words 'miser' and 'miserable' comes from the same Greek word --
 misers are miserable.

Generosity is the biggest test of faith some people ever encounter
 because, when it comes to giving, a lot of people act like atheists.
 They don't act like atheists when it's time to go to church.

they don't act like atheists when it's time to pray before a meal.
 But when it becomes an issue of giving –
 then they act like atheists with no faith in God's promises.

Such as ...

2 Corinthians 9:8 "God is able to make it up to you by giving you everything that you need and plenty left over to give joyfully to others."

If you will practice generosity with the people around you,
 God promises to make it up to you by giving you everything you need,
 plus, he will give you more so you can be even more generous.

A father took his son to McDonald's
 and he bought him super-sized French fries.
 Those things smelled so good in the car he reached over and just took
 one little french-fry out of his son's bag and ate it.

His son got all upset and said,
 "Dad you cannot have that one! These are my fries."

Immediately the father had three thoughts:

1. He would not have any fries if it were not for me.
 I brought him here. I placed the order, I paid for it...
 The only reason that he has any fries is because of me,
 "the great fry giver."
2. "My child doesn't realize that I could take them away in a second if
 I wanted to.
 Or I could buy him an entire truck load of fries if I wanted to,
 because I have the power to do either."
3. He realized he didn't need the boy's fries.
 He could easily get his own.
 He could buy himself 100 packs if he wanted to.

Those three thoughts are the reasons why God wants you to learn
 to be generous with other people.

God says, "Have faith that I am the source of everything you got, and
 you wouldn't even be alive if it weren't for me.
 I could take it away from you just like that, or,

I could double it just like that, because I have the power.”

God says, “I don't need your fries.

I don't need your money,

I just want you to have the faith in me it takes

to be generous with your community

because

IV. Generosity is an investment for Eternity.

Everything in this room,

was provided for us by the generosity of other people.

Notice I did not say by the generosity of rich people.

Board by board, brick by brick this church was built by the sacrifices of those who went before us.

They were making an investment in us.

Nearly all those people are gone now,

so the opportunity exists for us to fill in their shoes

and do the same thing for the next generation.

Generosity is an investment for eternity.

Luke 16:9 "Use your worldly resources to benefit others.

In this way your generosity stores up a reward for you in heaven."

Every time that you are generous with your community
you are storing up rewards in heaven.

You're only going to get 70 or 80 years on this planet

with the stuff you hang on to, but

you will spend trillions of years in eternity with the stuff you send ahead

Where do you need to have the biggest account?

1 Timothy 6:18 "Tell the rich"

-- by the way, that's all of you.

Compared to the rest of the world, even the poorest Americans are rich.

So this verse is talking to all of us --

"Tell the rich to use their money to do good, giving happily to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them. By doing this, they

will be storing up real treasure for themselves in heaven."

When you help other people with your time, with your money,
with your resources, whatever you got,
you are making an investment in heaven,
where it's safe and pays great interest rates!

I've lost count of how many funerals I've conducted,
but I know how many people took their money with them: 0
I've ridden in a hearse more times than I can remember, but
I remember how many times that hearse was pulling a U-Haul behind it:
0

You can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead by
investing in people who are going there.

V. Generosity blesses in return.

Generosity not only creates community and defeats materialism and
strengthens faith, it blesses in return, right now.

You don't have to wait for heaven.

Deuteronomy 15:10 "Give generously and do so without a grudging heart.

Then, because of this, the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in
everything you put your hand to."

Do you really believe that?

If you don't believe that,

you should take a pair of scissors and cut Deut. c. 15 out of the Bible.

But while you are cutting out the parts you don't like

go ahead and cut out the parts you do like.

Because if you cannot trust God with your stuff

why should you trust him for salvation?

How can you trust God to forgive sins but

not trust him to keep his promise about money?

People who are stingy simply don't trust God and as a result they cannot
receive the things that God wants us to gain by faith.

Generosity creates community,
 Generosity strengthens faith,
 Generosity is an investment in eternity, and
 Generosity blesses in return, and

VI. Generosity produces HAPPINESS.

Occasionally I've heard a preacher say "Give 'till it hurts."
 You'll be glad to know I won't be using the phrase.
 In fact you should never give until it hurts.
 Instead, give until it feels good, because somewhere along the line
 a transformation will take place.

Acts 20:35 "There is more happiness in giving than receiving."

If you need proof that givers are happier than takers,
 think about the takers you know.
 They are scared to death that they are going to lose what they got.
 They're insecure, uptight and unhappy.
 God wants to produce happiness in your life,
 and the happiest people generous people.

When you become a generous person,
 life becomes an adventure because
 you see God working through you over and over and over and over.
 God wants to make a miracle worker this week.
 You can be the answer to somebody's prayer if you are alert,
 aware, generous and willing to give of your time or resources.

Generosity creates community,
 Generosity strengthens faith,
 Generosity is an investment in eternity,
 Generosity blesses in return, and
 Generosity produces HAPPINESS.
 and it's the most important of all.

VII. Generosity makes us MORE LIKE GOD.

If you've been thinking
 "generosity is a strange topic for an emphasis on community"
 You need to get two things figured out

1. God is all about community.

The most basic thing we know about God is that he exists
 in a community so close we say the tree are one.

If we are going to fulfill our calling to be like him,
 we have to develop the same sense of community.

2. God is a giver -- God so loved the word that He gave.

To become like him, we've got to be generous with your community.
 You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.

2 Chronicles 29:14 "Everything we have comes from you Lord...

God already owns everything.

Since he owns it all, he can keep it coming.

What God looks at is the attitude.

He is a lot more interested in our willingness than in our wealth.

God has all the french fries he wants, he does not need yours.

What he wants is for you to be unselfish, so

he does not look at the amount you give,

he looks at the attitude that's involved in the giving.

The Bible talks specifically about four key heart attitudes. "

1) Give **THOUGHTFULLY**.

Don't give impulsively, think about it and pray about it --

We plan anything that is important in our lives,

so we should plan to give,

and give thoughtfully.

God wants your generosity to be meaningful,

based on loving consideration.

Recently someone gave a coffee maker to Cheryl and I.

You might think it's a silly gift because neither of us drink coffee.

But this couple thought about it and knew we constantly have people over to our house who do drink coffee. So we appreciated the gift because it was thoughtful.

3. Give **VOLUNTARILY**.

The attitude of the Apostle Paul comes through in this note he sent to one of the churches:

1 Thessalonians 2:8

We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.

Nobody was forcing him to share, it was voluntary - he wanted to do it.

No wonder God was able to do so much through Paul's life!

Attitude #4 Give CHEERFULLY.

You must make up your own mind as to how much you should give.

Don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure, for God loves the person who gives cheerfully." *2 Corinthians 9:7*

Don't be like the little girl whose mother wanted to teach her something about giving.

She gave the little girl a quarter and a dollar for church

She told the girl "Put whichever one you want in the collection plate and keep the other for yourself,"

When they were coming out of church, the mother asked her daughter which amount she had given.

"Well," said the little girl, "I was going to give the dollar, but just before the collection the man in the pulpit said that we should all be cheerful givers.

I knew I'd be a lot more cheerful if I gave the quarter, so I did."

Sometimes it's a challenge to be cheerful when God is challenging you to give.

When you feel that way, just remind yourself of these benefits:

Generosity creates community,
 defeats materialism,
 strengthens faith, and
 it's an investment for eternity
 it blesses in return,
 produces happiness
 makes us more like Jesus, and
 the only reason you can have any of these things is because of the
 generosity of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 8:9

“Do you remember the generosity of Jesus Christ, the Lord of all?
 He was rich beyond our telling, yet He became poor for your sake so his offering
 might make you rich.”

When this verse talks about being rich or poor
 it is not talking about money

Conclusion

ticking sound effect begins and fades up slowly

Although I've been talking about generosity
 I've not been talking about money either.

If I was talking about money today
 I would have followed this message with the weekly offering.
 But I intentionally scheduled the offering before the message
 and the announcements after the message because
 I'm talking about generous relationships.

If we are going to build loving relationships,
 they have to be generous relationships,
 and there is something way more valuable than money.

If we are going to follow Jesus
 If we are going to have loving relationships it's going to cost something.
 You're going to have to give something that's a true gift

because you can never give it back.
Building relationships requires the gift of time.

Generous relationships invest time in people.
That means showing up at an event,
when you would rather do something else.
That means on your trip home, you turn the radio off
and call someone on your cell phone just to see how they are.
It means showing up for the café even if you're not hungry,
just showing up to put some time into building relationships.
That "going to lunch with people after church" thing
so many of you do...
don't ever stop.
Sure it puts a hole in your day... but it builds relationships

If we are going to have loving relationships
there needs to be a generosity of compliments.
That means finding something good to say about other people.
You might have to look hard to find it,
but it can be found.
Wouldn't it be great to have a Sunday without a sermon,
or music,
or announcements ...
just a time when the church gathered to
compliment the way we see Christ in each other?

Mostly, if we are going to have loving relationships
we have to develop a giving of grace.
Biblically, grace and gift are the same word
because grace is something undeserved.
If we are going to have a community of loving relationships
we have to learn how to be graceful in situations
where we give it to someone who has not deserved it.

When someone does something you don't understand ...
 Give them the grace that says "the must have had a reason."
 When someone does something you don't appreciate ...
 give them grace instead of judgment
 When someone doesn't do something
 you think they should have done...
 give them grace instead of a hard time.

I wish I had time to go through all 125 references the Bible makes
 to the concept of grace,
 so I could show you how loving relationships require grace.
 It would include verses like:

Colossians 4:6

Let your conversation be always full of grace...

That means loving relationships are full of conversations,
 compliments, and considerations
 that other people have probably not earned,
 but you give it to them anyhow.

If we had time to be instructed by all 125
 verses on grace, we would have an encyclopedia
 on relationships.

I don't know if you are interested in that kind of thing
 I don't even know if you want to learn how to be more loving
 I can just tell you this very important principal.

The only grace we have to give to other people
 is the grace we have received from our relationship with Christ.

2 Corinthians 9:8

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times,
 having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Lights: **begin to fade**

Piano **starts here**

There's just no getting around it...
 the grace that is needed to make relationships thrive

comes from Christ.

the grace that is needed to make small groups thrive

comes from Christ.

the grace that is needed to make a church thrive,

or a marriage thrive

comes from Christ.

Someone only becomes graceful by being full of Christ.

Please stand

Today we need to end with some people seeking
an extra supply of Grace from the Lord.

It's going to take some honesty and humility
to say "I'm not as much like Jesus as I should be,
I don't treat people the way Jesus would,
because there are some people who just get on my nerves."

If your marriage struggles,
the answer is not spending more "quality time" together.
If you have a graceless marriage,
and you spend more time together
you'll just get on each other's nerves more.
If there are intolerable people where you work,
or in your church -- the answer is not spending more time with them.
More grace-less time just means more fighting time.
Small groups are unquestionably the building block of any church
but once they are started, they reveal all the weakness of the church.
If there is gossip in the church, there will be gossip in the small groups.
If there is tension in the church, there will be tension in the small group.
If the church is shallow, the groups will be shallow.
If we cannot get along together,
getting together more will just result in more occasions when
we cannot get along.

The answer to every relationship issue

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begins with grace, flowing out of Christ,
grace flowing into us,
and grace flowing out to each other.