**Transformed: 2 Corinthians wk 10 – Make It Count**

**What I love about preaching through the Bible:**

* **It keeps us honest – prevents a measure of misuse – contest.**
* **It keeps us accountable – keeps us tethered to the intention.**
* **It touches on everything – I can’t skip areas we don’t like.**

**Areas in 2 Cor we have talked about that are shaping/ transforming us:**

**Trials, mistreatment, change, being teachable, hope of heaven, relationships - and now everyone’s favorite thing to talk about…**

**Previously, in 2 Corinthians: Paul went to Troas to meet with Titus to get an update on Corinth - but Titus never showed up. So, he left for Macedonia to look for him - and guess who was there? Titus.**

**Titus fills him in - Paul then writes another letter and sends it back.**

**Today is one of those passages where the Bible speaks - and we listen.**

**There is no need to do a series on money - we will get to it just by preaching the text.**

**This is actually one of the longest sections on giving in the NT.**

**Today - Paul changes the subject to an issue of meeting needs. After hanging out in Macedonia, he is encouraged by the heart of the people – and decides to talk about them as a good example of generosity.**

**Paul gives insight into a struggling, persecuted church God uses to change the world through their generosity – and it can change us too.**

**2 Corinthians 8:1 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 2 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.**

**Who are the Macedonians? Northern Greece. They were a region that included the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.**

**Acts 16-17: The Philippi church was started by Paul and Silas after they led Lydia (a local businesswoman) to Christ.**

**The churches were generous supporters of Paul’s work. It allowed Paul to do ministry full-time. They also faced severe persecution.**

**Since Paul’s ministry was supported – Paul would often take up offerings for the persecuted believers in Jerusalem (Gal 2:9-10; Ro 15:25-28; 1 Co 16:1-2)**

**2 Cor 8:1 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given…**

**You will see this phrase often in the next two chapters.**

**Grace here means a God-given God-enables – gift.**

**The gift that he is referring to is – generosity. He considered the opportunity and the willingness to give, a gift from God.**

**Generosity 101**

**\* Generosity is not about how much you can give, but it is about giving**

**8:2 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.**

**History confirms the Macedonians' poverty. When they were conquered, the Romans took most of their wealth.**

**They were poor and going through difficult times, yet they still gave. Their situation did not stop them from being generous.**

**“Well, I'll give when my debt is paid off… when I get a job… Well, I’ll give it my time instead.” They knew time did not pay the bills, feed missionaries, and provide ministry support.**

**They gave even when it was hard.**

**BTW - That’s how you know you’re being generous.**

**3 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, (sacrificially - above their ability) of their own accord, (willingly) 4 begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints - (excitedly - excited to be a part) 5 and this, not as we expected, (They asked Paul – can we give too! It was unexpected.) but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.**

**They saw it as a privilege – it was not about the amount, but the joy of being a part of making a difference. They are proof that generosity has nothing to do with the adequacy of means.**

**They gave sacrificially – Willingly – Excitedly – Joyfully.**

**(How were they able to do this?) 5b …but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.**

**\* Generosity begins with giving our self to God (this is key)**

**They first gave themselves to the Lord - It's not about giving money but giving ourselves as an act or worship.**

**Generosity is not about the dollar but the devotion.**

**It is not only a financial issue but also a spiritual issue.**

**When a church talks about being generous - all kinds of things go off inside - I ask you to start here: Does the Lord have you?**

**This is key - as it reminds us that all we have is the Lord’s, we are simply stewards of what he has given us.**

**2 Cor 8:6 Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. (generosity) 7 But as you excel in everything—in faith, (trust in the Lord) in speech, (self-control of your mouth) in knowledge, (understanding the truth of God) in all earnestness, (zeal and eagerness to serve the Lord and others) and in our love for you (grow in love for the body of Christ) - see that you excel in this act of grace also. (4th time he calls generosity an act of grace)**

**\* Generosity is a part of growing mature in God**

**You’re growing in those other areas – now grow in this. As you grow in God - this becomes a given - a matter of trust and faith.**

**We are all to mature and grow in this grace/gift of giving.**

**8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. *(KJV - I am testing the sincerity of your love)***

**\* Generosity is not a command, but it is a test**

**It is not meant to be legalistic. It is not a God tax. We are under grace and freedom - it is not to make one feel pressured – it’s about worship.**

**It is a personal reflection of your own maturity.**

**Some think we can love without giving, but – 1 John 3:17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.**

**Giving is a reflection of our love of God and others.**

**Paul writes - 8 “I say this not as a command…”**

**Some pastors don’t trust people to give this way – so they impose the law of the tithe on their people – let me explain:**

**OT principle, Tithe= “1st tenth.” In OT - 3 tithes: priests, temple, benevolence + a gleaning - totaling 35%. If one were to still follow OT law of the tithe, you would be expected to give 35%.**

**The law was fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus is the offering. We don’t give out of a command or law – but we give out of grace.**

**We don’t preach the law of the tithe, but we teach the principle of the tithe as a guideline. We don’t throw it out. The principle and function are still important. A tithe is now the start of how we give. We are not under the tithe – we are free to give more.**

**The tithe, like all of the OT, is the place to begin – not the end. God owns it all… If God has your wallet, He has your will. If he has your money, he has your pursuits. God asks for all of you – spirit, soul, body, actions, time and resources – to honor Him.**

**Generosity is a dipstick of faith - it can measure the depth of one's trust in God. The tithe is not floor not the ceiling.**

**9 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.**

**\* Generosity was modeled by Jesus**

**Paul explains that Christ is the example: Was Jesus well off? Yes, in heaven. Yet he became poor so we could be rich in Him—his heirs.**

**As His followers, the desire to go without material possessions so others might be rich in him - is in us.**

**"God so loved the world that he gave... " - John 3:16**

**Practical words of advice regarding giving**

**2 Cor 8:10 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. 11 So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. 12 For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.**

* **Follow through on what you know is right**

**10 (you) desire to do it. 11 So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have.**

**Just because you gave a year ago does not mean it’s done.**

**Be consistent. Some of you know you want to and know you need to - follow through.**

**If you're a Christian, choose to obey God’s word concerning generosity**

**The Bible teaches that giving starts in your local body / your church (Heb 8:1-7, 10:1-4, 2 Cor 9:1-15, Gal 6:6, 1 Tim 5:3-18, 1 Tim 3:3, Acts 4:32-37)**

**Start now, talk to Jesus about this. Giving ultimately reflects who has control of our lives—it is an act of worship/surrender.**

**Where does our money as a church go? (planes, cars, house) JK. Rent, utilities, admin, supplies, outreach/ministry support. Imagine if we all trusted God on this what we could do.**

* **This is not about the amount – we each give equally**

**2 Cor 8:****12 For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.**

**Teaching children to be givers with change – but I don’t make enough to give – somehow, we think – the amount has anything to do with it.**

**1 Corinthians 16:1 Now about the collection for the Lord’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income... (proportionate)**

**When giving is brought up, many ask “How much do I have to / need to give?" or “How little can I give and still please God?” Was it sacrificial, willful, cheerful, worshipful – then it was...**

**For some, ten% is not enough (it’s a tip); for others 5% may be a massive step of faith.**

* **This is about meeting the needs of the house of God (and yours)**

**Paul explains that our faithfulness to help others - ensures that we are taken care of in times of need – 2 Cor 8:13 For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness 14 your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. 15 As it is written, (Ex 16:18) “Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.”**

**Exodus - God dropped manna, but they were not to hoard it or it rotted – Possessions are like manna; they can’t bear hoarding.**

**We hold loosely what God provides. Hoarding makes you poor, generosity ensures you and others will have enough.**

**I’m sending Titus (whom I trust), and a couple of friends who love Jesus to you to collect an offering for the Jerusalem church - 16 But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. 17 For he not only accepted our appeal, (to go see you) but being himself very earnest, he is going to you of his own accord. 18 With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel. 19 And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace (generosity – the offering to Jerusalem) that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our goodwill.**

**20 We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, (Other translations - We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this gift. We want to avoid accusations on how we handle the money) 21 for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.**

* **Handling Money in the church is serious business**

**- Money should be handled by trustworthy people.**

**Paul is sending several honorable, earnest, and respected people to handle the offering.**

**Multiple people / trustworthy people / who love Jesus.**

**People who understand money is a tool of the gospel.**

**- Money should be handled with accountability.**

**V21 “we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.**

**Money should be handled properly in the church. All financial matters should be conducted above board and transparent.**

**To keep it safe, we like to stuff it in the walls of our bathrooms.**

**How we handle our money**

**22 And with them (Titus and the preacher) 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. 23 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. 24 So give proof before the churches of your love and of our boasting about you to these men.**

**When they get there – treat them right. We have said you would take care of them. Prove us right.**

**He continues the discussion of generosity in chapter 9 – next week.**

**They supported kingdom work.**

**The principles of generosity are simple. They gave…**

* + **Sacrificially**
  + **Willingly (voluntarily)**
  + **Excitedly**
  + **Expectantly**
  + **Consistently**
  + **Joyfully**
  + **Equally (proportionally)**

**What would God be saying to you through this today?**

**We have one life and God has entrusted**

**\*\*\* John 3:16 – the greatest offering ever given was from God himself.**

**The highlight of this passage today is - 2 Cor 8:5b … they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.**