**Transformed: 2 Corinthians wk 11 – Pay it Forward**

**Why do we go verse by verse? Honest - Accountable – exhaustive.**

**2 Cor is about God shaping and transforming them (us)**

**Previously, in 2 Corinthians: Paul meets Titus in Macedonia.**

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

**Today - Paul changes the subject to an issue of meeting needs.**

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

**After hanging out in Macedonia, he is encouraged by their generosity. A struggling, persecuted church that God used to change the world through generosity - and we can 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.**

**Repeated as an “act of Grace” – used 5 times.**

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

**He is referring to generosity. He considered the opportunity and willingness to give a gift from God.**

**3 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, (sacrificially) of their own accord, (willingly) 4 begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints - (excitedly 5 and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.**

* **Generosity begins with giving ourselves first to the Lord - key**

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

**Genesis 1 – God created all things, and all things are His.**

**Psalm 24:1 The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.**

**Haggi 2:8 - All the silver and gold are mine. / Ps 50:10-11 Every beast in the forest, cattle on a thousand hills, every bird, every animal are mine.**

**I am simply a steward of what God enables me to have - much or little.**

**Job 1:21 And he said, “Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”**

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

**It is an act of worship. Skittles (Ed Young) 1. I gave it to you. 2. I can take it back. 3. I can buy my own. But I want to connect with you thru your generosity.**

**Last week was Chapter 8 - Generosity 101 and Practical Giving Challenges. Let’s pick up where we left off… How to Give:**

**2 Corinthians 9:1 Now it is superfluous for me to write to you (pointless to say it again) about the ministry for the saints, (that is, serving the Jerusalem church through the offering) 2 for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. (Macedonia is n. Greece – Achaia is S. Greece) And your zeal has stirred up most of them. 3 But I am sending the brothers (Titus and two others) so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be.**

**Corinth, I’ve been talking about how generous you are – I know you will be ready when they get there.**

**4 Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident.**

**I have been talking about your readiness to give and generosity – I hope I’m not wrong and get embarrassed.**

**5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction. (aka – “not as one grudgingly given”)**

**Three people are coming to prepare the offering. When we get there, we will receive it and take it to Jerusalem.**

1. **Come prepared to give - Generosity should be planned**

**A couple of thoughts about this: If you're a part of this family of believers come ready / AND / Live in such a way that you are ready.**

**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... (We are to be prepared, and it is to be proportionate)**

**You may not know when you will need to be generous - Have sandwiches – extra money ready (Our girl's Christmas money).**

**Slow your day down – leave room for divine appointments.**

**9:5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction. (That is a funny translation – “extraction” - Feeling pressured when the offering comes - because you're unprepared)**

**(He continues) 9:6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.**

1. **Give generously and expect to reap generously**

**9:6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.**

**A farmer holding on to seed cannot produce a harvest – sow it!**

**He might feel he has lost the seed as he releases it from his hand, but he anticipates a harvest from it. Had he planted only a few and held onto the rest – little would come from it. So, he sows bountifully.**

**Unfortunately - This is a staple verse for the word of faith prosperity teachers, often used to preach wealth and to manipulate more giving.**

**Truth is: Generosity is reaped in other areas of our life, not just money. Reaping life change in others and some earthly blessings.**

1. **Give to what you love (Generosity is a heart issue)**

**9:7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, (Not out of obligation or forced – it should come from a right heart) for God loves a cheerful giver.**

**“each one” every Christian should learn how to be a giver.**

**“Without compulsion” You should give because you want to.**

**“God loves a cheerful giver” Giving should be joyful giving.**

**A way to do that is to give to what you believe in. If you believe in the ministry of this local church and desire to be a part of the work – sow.**

**Like any missionary, ministry, or work of God.**

**Your money shows your devotion to the work of God.**

**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matt 6:21)**

**As Jesus' followers, we should want to / think it through / plan it / then get excited about its potential to make a difference.**

**When you think about giving – Some Suggestions:**

* **Give to things that are gospel-centered**

**Many organizations aim at helping needs in the world, but people’s greatest need in the world is Christ – focus on those.**

**Mark 8:36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?**

**If there is a gospel-based ministry doing a similar work—sow into them. There are struggling missionaries and ministries around the world – who need support.**

* **Give in a way that is church-focused**

**God’s primary agent for bringing redemption to the world is the church - it is the only ministry commissioned and ordained by Jesus himself.**

**Team with organizations that connect people to a local church. This ensures discipleship. All ministries should flow from church connections where there is accountability.**

**Ask: What church do you go to? Who is your covering?**

* **Give to something trustworthy**

**We are all aware of the abuses of charities and churches.**

**As stewards of God’s resources, we are responsible for giving to those who will handle them with integrity (Last week).**

**If we give like that Paul says – 2 Cor 9:8 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. 9 As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”**

1. **Give knowing it ensures our abounding sufficiency at all times**

**Sufficiency is knowing God has and will provide what you truly need.**

**Paul writes about generosity and sufficiency to Timothy: 1 Tim 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. (You gave birth to an alien… greasy, wrinkled, & naked… how you’re going to leave. What did you bring with you?) 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.**

**\*\*\* Godliness and contentment are the two ingredients for true riches**

**1 Tim 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. (sufficiency/abundance).**

**Tim, do you want the church people to be truly rich? Help them live lives that honor God and are thankfully content.**

**Are you stuck in a place where you think there has to be more to life? Here’s freedom: Live an honorable life before God, be thankful, and be at peace with what God has given you.**

**9 Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. (ever known someone who constantly chases money? Hidden camera show - chasing a $1 on a fishing line. Paul is saying don’t be that guy – you look silly chasing after money.) 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. (What God gives us is not evil – but the love of them is haywire worship) Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (we need to get God's perspective on money)**

**Hebrews 13:5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."**

**We live in a country where money is king, and people spend their whole lives to get it and will ruin their own lives to have it.**

**1 Tim 6:17 Tell those who are rich in this world (that’s all of us - if you have 2 pairs of clothes, you are wealthy against the backdrop of the world) not to be arrogant and not to trust in their uncertain riches, but their hope should be in the living God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.**

**18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. (Three quick thoughts about this)**

**\*\* God blessed you to enjoy it (v17)**

**For you, your family, loved one’s enjoyment.**

**\*\* God blessed you to give it (v18)**

**Blessed to be a blessing to others.**

**\*\* God blessed you to send it (v19)**

**Invest in the kingdom of heaven.**

**God wants you to enjoy what he gives and for you to use it for Him – with eternity in mind. This is sufficiency (abundance).**

**Back to - 2 Cor 9:8 …so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 9 As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” (Psalm 112:9)**

1. **Generosity is to be part of our lifestyle**

**This is more than giving at church—it is walking at all times in a generous manner with those around you.**

**God has freely given what we have for us to extend generosity in every good work (Every God-commissioned work)**

**At a coffee shop, a neighbor, with your possessions, in line, to a stranger, to a friend, ready to give what God has generously distributed to you - whether it is much or little. Be generous.**

**“Well, I’m not a generous person.” Then, you need to learn how and to grow.**

**Last wk - 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, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you - see that you excel in this act of grace also.**

**You are to grow in those other areas – and grow in this.**

**We are, however, to use wisdom in our generosity – that is, being a good steward.**

**9:10 He (God) who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. (blessed to be a blessing)**

1. **We give because we know - are blessed to be a blessing**

**This goes back to stewardship – everything is all his already. What you have has been given by God. So that…**

**11 “You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way,”**

**Blessed to be a blessing. What I have is the Lord’s to be used to bless others and ultimately bring people to Jesus.**

**We have an opportunity to make history w/ our life & treasure.**

**Notice what happens – 11 …which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints (practical) but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. (Spiritual)**

**13 By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, 14 while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. 15 Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!**

1. **Generosity is ultimately about pointing others to God**

**11 …produces thanksgiving to God. / 12 … but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. (because of your faithfulness in this) 9:13 …they will glorify God. (they will say) 15 Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!**

**Godly Generosity produces thankfulness and gratitude to God for his provision and draws people to the goodness of God.**

**When used properly, our resources bring the kingdom of heaven and life change to neighbors, strangers, and the world!**

**Giving is a now event that looks to a future return. Jesus spoke of laying up treasure in heaven. We can’t take anything with us, but we can send it ahead in the souls of others.**

1. **No one can out-give the generosity of God.**

**15 Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! (Paul made up a word – first time used in Greek lit. = unspeakable and hard to explain, wonderful, indescribable!)**

**On this matter, he writes – never forget that God is the greatest giver of all time! The inexpressible gift of Jesus!**

**\*\* The gift of salvation is given by God’s grace and mercy. A gift unearned and undeserved. It is the very motivation for our giving!**

**This act of grace (giving) is a reflection of God’s great gift – Jesus.**

**4 results of Living Generously: People's lives are changed / You are blessed / We are connected and knit as believers / God is glorified!**

**Learning to be generous shapes us, transforms us, and makes what we have been given - count for eternity.**

**So, we have in these two chapters – the challenge to give:**

**Generously / Sacrificially / Willingly / Excitedly / Equally / Proportionally / Expectantly / Cheerfully / Joyfully / Consistently / Worshipfully.**

**Tithing Statistics**

* **5% of churchgoers tithe (Church Development).**
* **Out of the 247 million U.S. citizens identifying as Christians, 1.5 million people tithe (Sharefaith).**
* **77% of tithers give more than 10 percent (Health Research Funding).**
* **If every Christian tithed 10 percent, faith organizations would have an extra $139 billion each year (Health Research Funding).**

**Source -** [**https://www.vancopayments.com/egiving/asset-church-giving-statistics-tithing#:~:text=Churchgoer%20Giving%20Study).-,Average%20Giving%20Per%20Person%20in%20Church,income%20(Health%20Research%20Funding**](https://www.vancopayments.com/egiving/asset-church-giving-statistics-tithing#:~:text=Churchgoer%20Giving%20Study).-,Average%20Giving%20Per%20Person%20in%20Church,income%20(Health%20Research%20Funding)**).**