



**March 1, 2026**

**On Purpose: Give generously to rescue others.**

2 Corinthians 9:6–15 (ESV)

**The Cheerful Giver**

**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. **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.”

**10** 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. **11** You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. **12** For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. **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!

We're exploring what it looks like to be a church **ON PURPOSE**

Four critical action steps everyone takes together:

1. **Attend a service to experience God** (BTW: Good job today!)
2. **Invite a friend to share hope** (Keep praying for your friend.)
3. **Take a next step to follow Jesus** (Hopefully you took one last week!)
4. **Give generously to rescue others** (Today)

Biblical generosity: *God doesn't want something from you, but for you.*

- The text today is not the “how to’s” of giving, but it’s about the results of giving.
- What will happen in our church and in our town if we live this command of God to it’s fullest? What does God have in store “for” us?

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

**1. Generosity doesn't empty the tank.**

- Paul helps by pointing us to the farmer. He goes out to his field and sees into the future. A huge crop. An abundant harvest.
- Here's what every good farmer knows: you can't harvest what you don't sow.
- When we have resources and leverage those things for the kingdom in a generous way, we get to think of it as seed. Seed that will produce way more than we can fathom. Seed that won't produce anything if it's not sown.

*Proverbs 22:9 – Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor.*

- The result of generosity is blessing. We are never depleted like we conclude we will be. Giving never goes down as a loss in the spiritual account ledger.
- When God carried out his plan to give Jesus, was he “less” or “poorer” because of what he gave to us? No. He's all the more richer.
- True giving (being generous just like God was generous to you) never depletes you. But the opposite.
- *We are never less when we give, BUT we are always less when we don't.*

*2 Corinthians 9:10 – 10 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. 11 You will be enriched in every way*

**2. Generosity fills the tank with what really matters. (9:8-11a)**

- God does the work of growing the seed and producing the crop. The farmer doesn't do that.

- The farmer didn't create the plant, or the growth, necessary for a harvest. He has to rely on what God does.
- The principle is that God gives first, before anyone else ever does.
- Generosity starts with God: **long before God ever asks you to give, he first asks you to receive.** Receive hope, love, new beginning, joy, forgiveness.
- God gives seed to the farmer. God gives life to you.

Proverbs 19:17 – *Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he (God) will repay him for his deed.*

- Paul says it this way in our text: (11) *We will be made rich in every way when we live a generous life.*
- Giving fills us with true wealth. You will be enriched in every way.
- We are reminded of what's really important when we give. Always other people.

### 3) Generosity fuels God's mission.

2 Corinthians 9:11 – **11** *You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way...*

- God gives for a purpose. What is it? A: So that we can then also be generous.
- He provides to us so that He can distribute through us.
- When we do: "There will be thanksgiving", "Needs met", "Thanksgiving will overflow", "they will glorify God" "they will long for you...be connected to you" and "they will pray" for you.

2 Corinthians 9:11b-14. – *...which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministry of this service is not only **supplying the needs** of the saints but is also **overflowing** in many thanksgivings to God. 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.*

- Interesting here is Paul's hint in vs 13. He says their contribution will produce "them" to glorify God.
- We think "them" is surely the church, right? Yes, until there's more of "them"!
- Look at the end of 13: they'll glorify because of the generosity of the contribution "for them" **AND** "for all others"
- "They" is more than just the church in Jerusalem. It's also "for all others" which means other people in Jerusalem that aren't believers.
- *When we give, there are more recipients than just the recipient.*

Proverbs 11:10-11

**10** When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices, and when the wicked perish there are shouts of gladness.

**11** By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is overthrown.

- When a Godly person is succeeding, then all those around them, believers or not, get the benefits of that success.
- Paul says that the beneficiaries of your gift are more than just the Christians in Jerusalem, it's all the people in the city of Jerusalem.
- When a church, together and on purpose, lives in an openhanded, generous way = community blessing = better place for all to live = people applauding. Even people who would never consider Jesus as Lord.

## Communion

- Jesus said it is impossible to disconnect my heart from my treasure. Everywhere my heart goes, my money goes. Likewise, Everywhere my money goes, my heart goes.
- Some people think the church wants our money. God wants my money. No, he doesn't. What he wants is your heart. He wants you to completely release your heart to Him.
- How do I do that? It's here:

## Generosity is a byproduct of gratitude (9:15)

- Paul says: *"Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift"*
- He's pointing us to what God has already given in Christ, and saying, be thankful for that!
- If you want to change your heart, to want to want to give, the best first step is to be thankful.
- **Thankfulness reminds us that it's all God's to begin with.**
- It's easy to be thankful to a God who gives. Who asks us to receive first. Then give back just a little.
- When I'm thankful to God, my grip will loosen and let my heart go towards him.
- When my heart moves toward God, then my treasure has no choice but to follow.
- God's own heart was tied to his treasure too. His son. He gave so we could live.
- God's heart full of gratitude for us led him to generous hands, outstretched, and nailed to a cross.
- He gave to rescue you. All he's asking of you is the same. Gratitude is the first step.
- Come to the table with a heart of thankfulness today. List in your mind all the ways God has made you rich in every way. Note what that does to your heart.

# From On Purpose week #3: Take a next step to follow Jesus.

## Is your next step the practice of prayer? Read on!

Notes from chapter 6 of *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* by Tim Keller.

How do we actually do prayer? St. Augustine and Martin Luther both wrote personal letters to individuals instructing them how to pray. St. Augustine wrote to a widow lady named Proba who was afraid she wasn't praying as she should. Luther wrote to his barber named Peter who asked Luther to give him a simple way to pray. Ideas extracted from both letters are what follow. Except for obvious biblical references, texts in quotes are from the original letters and represent St. Augustine and Luther's own words.

### St. Augustine:

Become the right person.

- Before you know what to pray for and how to pray for it, you must become a particular kind of person. You must see clearly that no matter how great your earthly circumstances become, they can never bring you lasting peace, happiness, and consolation that are found in Christ.
- We must recognize that our hearts loves are "disordered." The things we ought to love third or fourth are first in our hearts.
- Unless we recognize this heart disorder of ours, our prayers will be part of the problem instead of an agent for our healing. (Example: If financial prosperity is our main source of confidence and safety in life, then when our wealth is in peril we will cry out to God for help, but our prayers will be little more than "worrying in God's direction." When we are finished we will be more upset and anxious than before. Prayer won't be the reorienting force it is supposed to be because our first love is our wealth, not the God of the wealth.)
- Settle this matter first...grasp the character of your heart and the desolation of your life apart from Christ. Then, and only then, you can begin to pray.

Pray for a happy life.

- St. Augustine must surely have had a bit of a smile as he wrote this. Everyone prays for a happy life. However, your prayers will be different because you have spent time understanding your disordered heart. You have realized that comforts and rewards and pleasures and fleeting excitement will bring you less enduring happiness the more you rest your heart in them.

- Psalm 27:4 “One thing have I desired of the Lord, one thing will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord to behold the beauty of the Lord.”
- If we have made God our greatest love, and if knowing and pleasing him is our highest pleasure, it transforms both what and how we pray for a happy life. (Example: Proverbs 30:7-9. “Give me a job so that I won’t be poor.” That is an appropriate thing to ask God for. Yet, the Proverbs 30 prayer reveals also the only proper motivation beneath the request. The wrong motivation would pray: “Make me as wealthy as possible.” The Proverbs 30 prayer is different. It is to ask, “Lord meet my needs, and give me wealth, yes, but only as much as I can handle without it harming my ability to put you first in life. Because ultimately I don’t need status or comfort - I need you as my Lord.”)

Use the Lord’s prayer to guide you in the specifics.

- Notice all the kinds of prayer it contains: adoration, petition, thanksgiving, confession. Notice the order and form of the petitions. Think long and hard about this great model of prayer and make sure your own requests to God fit it.

Pray for change and strength.

- Sometimes, even after following the first three rules, “...we still know not what to pray for as we ought in regard to tribulations. Tribulations...may do us good...and yet because they are hard and painful...we pray...that they may be removed from us.”
- Which is right? To pray for change in circumstances or the strength to endure them? Augustine points to Jesus’ own prayer on Gethsemane, which is perfectly balanced between honest desire - “let this cup pass from me” - and submission to God - “nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.”
- Romans 8:26 promises that the Spirit will guide our hearts and prayers when we are groaning and confused.
- Pour out your heart’s desire, but remember the wisdom and goodness of God as you do so.

### **Martin Luther: “A Simple Way to Pray”**

Cultivate prayer as a habit.

- “It is a good thing to let prayer be the first business of the morning and the last at night.” Luther proposed praying twice daily.
- “We are as strictly and solemnly commanded to pray as in the others...not to kill, not to steal, etc. We must pray whether we feel like it or not.”

Prepare your heart and mind to pray.

- It is wrong that believers should be “cool and joyless in prayer,” and therefore Luther proposes a preparation for prayer that he calls “recitation to yourself.”
- The recitation is a form of meditation of the Scripture, but also not mere Bible study. It is taking the words of scripture and pondering them in such a way that your thoughts and

feelings converge on God.

- By this practice, “I want your heart to be stirred and guided...rightly warmed and inclined toward prayer.”
- How to practice “recitation to yourself” from a passage of scripture:

1) What is the instruction of the text?

2) In light of the text, what do I have to praise God for or thank him for?

3) In light of the text, what in my life do I need to confess?

4) In light of the text, what should I pray for? What should I ask for?

- By this practice, Luther is teaching us how to generate a small but rich spectrum of insights that can be immediately lifted to God as prayer. It ingeniously forces you off the theoretical plane to consider what the biblical truth you are pondering should actually do to you and in you...how it should lead you to praise God, to repent and change your heart, and also what it should lead you to do in the world.

Luther’s own example of using this method to meditate on the first of the Ten Commandments:

“I am the Lord your God, etc. You shall have no other Gods before me,” etc. Here I earnestly consider that...my heart must not build upon anything else or trust in any other thing, be it wealth, prestige, wisdom, might, piety, or anything else. Second, I give thanks for his infinite compassion by which he has come to me in such a fatherly way and, unasked, unbidden, and unmerited, has offered to be my God, to care for me, and to be my comfort, guardian, help, and strength in every time of need... Third, I confess...for having fearfully provoked his wrath by countless acts of idolatry. I repent of these and ask for his grace. Fourth, I pray...preserve my heart so that I shall never again become forgetful and ungrateful, that I may never seek after other gods or other consolation on earth or in any creature, but cling truly and solely to thee, my only God.

Utilize the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)

- Pray through each petition of the Lord’s Prayer, paraphrasing and personalizing each one using your own needs and concerns.
- Luther insists that in doing this, the persons praying should personalize each section, putting their own needs and aspirations into their own words.
- Luther’s own example: “‘Give us....our daily bread,’ I commend to thee my house and property, wife and child. Grant that I can manage them well, supporting and educating them.”
- This exercise addresses one of the things that plagues us in prayer - distracting thoughts. We turn from planning an event to prayer, and find that we are still thinking only about the event. Ordinary prayer, which is usually extemporaneous, or based on a list of prayer needs, often cannot draw the mind’s attention away from what occupied it previously. Praying the Lord’s Prayer in our own words commands the mental faculty, and helps greatly with the problem of giving God full attention.

- This exercise also forces us to pray for more than just the items that most trouble us at the moment.
- Addressing to God, with the authority of Jesus' own words, all our most pressing concerns, is actual prayer. Praying the Lord's Prayer brings boldness and comfort, and, of course, warms up the heart to slide right into the most passionate prayer for our most urgent concerns.

Luther notes that this exercise need not be burdensomely time consuming, often taking only two or three minutes. However, this prayer could "catch fire" and last quite a long time too.

Pray from the heart.

\*\*Luther does give one more piece of advice that is not really a step or practice to go with the others, but something to be kept in mind: the Holy Spirit.

- He writes: "If an abundance of good thoughts come to us, we ought to disregard the other petitions, make room for such thoughts, listen in silence, and under no circumstances obstruct them. The Holy Spirit himself preaches here, and one word of his sermon is better than a thousand of our prayers. Many times I have learned more from one prayer than I might have learned from much reading and speculation."
- Again, he writes: "If in the midst of such thoughts the Holy Spirit begins to preach in your heart with rich, enlightening thoughts, honor him by letting go of this written scheme...remember what he says and note it well and you will behold wondrous things in the law of God. (Psalm 119:18)"