

E X O D U S

v o l u m e 3

Generosity (Exodus 35-36)

Bottom Line: Generous giving of our time, money, and talents should be done joyfully as a result of finding joy in Christ.

Have you ever heard the statement, “If you love what you do, then you’ll never have to work a day in your life”? How does joyfulness affect the activities we engage in? Have you ever been forced to do something you didn’t want to do? How did it affect your performance?

How we use our time, money, and talents reveals a lot about what we value. We tend to invest these three resources into things we believe in, things we love, or things we enjoy. But if forced to give any of our time, money, or talents to something we don’t believe in, love, or enjoy, it can feel meaningless and joyless. Our investment of these resources is best done when it is done free of compulsion and with joy rather than contempt.

Read Exodus 35:5-9; 21-22; and 29. What were the people motivated by in their giving? What all did they give? What was the mission or project they were giving to? How important do you think their mission was in encouraging them to give?

The people of Israel were stirred by the Spirit to give out of the overflow of their hearts to the Lord’s work. The people knew that what they were giving their time, money, and talents to was of immense importance: they were contributing to the building of the tabernacle, the future dwelling place of God. They were giving of themselves to something that was greater than themselves, something that would set them apart from the rest of the world and would serve to make not only Israel, but the world a better place. When motivated by such a compelling vision it makes sense that people would *want* to give to this.

Read Exodus 36:2-7. Have you ever thought to yourself “I’ve done enough. I’ve given enough. I’ve served enough?” Compared to what we see in this passage, do you think is a right mindset to have?

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15.

Sacrificial generosity was a practice of the church from its very conception, and in these verses we see Paul reminding the Corinthian church that generosity should be fundamental in their ministry to one another and to the world. He encourages the Corinthians by telling them about the generosity of the churches in Macedonia who—despite their own poverty—had raised money for poor Christians in Jerusalem. Even though they themselves were poor, they gave generously to those in need. The point for us is that we should protect ourselves from thinking “I’ve done enough, I’ve given enough, I’ve served enough” as there is always something more that God is calling us to.

What is the “grace” that God had given to the Macedonian churches that Paul mentions in verse 1? Read verse 3 again. What is significant about the Macedonians giving not only

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“according to” but also “beyond” their ability? What did this say about the motivation of the Macedonians? What does this say about their beliefs?

Read verse 10 again. What is the correlation between “doing” and “desiring”? What is the danger of having one without the other? According to verse 9, what is our motivation for both doing and desiring?

The danger in thinking “I’ve done enough, I’ve given enough, I’ve served enough” is that that kind of thinking can lead us to “check-out” and give up on doing what God has called us to do. Jesus spent His entire life giving of Himself for our sake, and our example is that we should do the same for Him. But the danger also swings the other way, where we can think, “I can’t do enough, I can’t give enough, I can’t serve enough” and our doing, giving, and serving becomes a legalistic burden rather than a life-giving joy. As we talked about a few weeks ago, the way to avoid this dilemma is to rightly understand that our doing, our giving, and our serving are not meant to be *ends* in and of themselves, but they are meant to point us to Jesus, who encourages us to keep fighting the good fight, even when it’s difficult. And when we find our joy in him, then we find that what we *should* do becomes what we *want* to do, and our doing, giving, and serving, becomes a means to a greater end: delighting in Christ.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-8. Do you feel led to do, give, and serve more by compulsion or by cheerfulness? For either answer, why do you feel that way? If by compulsion, how can you minister to your own heart in a way that changes your desire to do, give, and serve into one of cheerfulness and joy?

Of course, we should also note that there are some people who genuinely have the desire, but not the ability. (Ex: shut-ins, poor physical health, etc.) How can those who are physically unable to serve, financially unable to give, etc., still be generous? Does generosity only apply to finances, time, and talents? (See 2 Corinthians 8:12)

Reflection: Read these aloud, using your discretion about which questions should be pondered and which questions should be discussed.

The deepest evidence of salvation in someone’s life is not a change in behavior, or even a change in beliefs, it’s a change in desire. If you haven’t truly been saved, then it may be that doing, serving, and giving aren’t appealing to you because your desires have not been changed by the Gospel. Once you’ve been made aware of the generosity of God toward you in giving you His most Precious Son, Jesus, then it becomes a joy to be generous in return. Have you received this generous gift?

Are you giving, serving, and doing out of cheerfulness? Even genuine believers can sometimes feel burned out or a lack of desire to be generous. This is an indication that our hearts may not be fully set on Christ. How can you restore Jesus to the rightful position He deserves as supreme in your life?

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Are you NOT doing, giving, or serving in a way that you feel God may be leading you to? What fears do you have that are keeping you from doing these things? God promises us provision (2 Corinthians 9:10-11), He promises us meaningful work to do (Ephesians 2:10), and He promises us strength and ability to do it (1 Peter 4:11). Which promise do you need to cling to? How can you increase your faith and take steps of obedience to do what God has called you to?