



**Gracious Generosity Part 2
Administering Generosity
2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5
Westport Christian Church
January 17, 2010**

I thank God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men.

In addition, we are sending with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confidence in you. As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it.

There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints.

For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to say anything about you—would be ashamed of having been so confident. So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given. (2 Cor 8:16-9:5 NIV)

Money is a sensitive issue and frequently sparks controversy. In our text Paul reminds his readers that this fund, this money that was being collected is a “grace” that is “being ministered.” The purpose for it was to bring glory to the Lord and to show the good will of the people. Then he explains that he is taking every precaution to be above reproach in the distribution of it. By having these well-known representatives from Macedonia accompany Titus, Paul makes it clear that he does not intend for this project to line his own pockets. ? With someone appointed by other churches and not by Paul, there can be no doubts about his own honesty regarding what will happen to the funds. Paul recognizes that the power of one’s witness corresponds directly to one’s reputation for integrity. He cannot allow the project to become shrouded in malicious rumors that all is not above board. He therefore takes steps to ensure that there is not the slightest hint of any impropriety.

It’s been said that Mark Twain once attended a church and a man stood up to give an offering appeal. The man kept going on and on. At the beginning Mark Twain had taken out \$100.00 to put into the plate. As the man continued on and on, he put the \$100.00 and replaced it with \$50.00. Then placing the \$50.00 back, he got out \$20.00. When the offering plate was finally, came around, Twain took some money out!
(Source unknown)

Today as we continue looking at the concept of gracious generosity, I want to look again at what generosity means. It has this concept of ‘nobility of mind,’ a willingness to share, being unselfish, liberal in giving, bountifully . . .

There are a few things about generosity that we must understand . . .

Generosity happens in spite of our circumstances. It is always accompanied by contagious excitement.

Is based upon a personal surrender to Jesus Christ.

Is framed in two special words, willingness and completion.

Generosity will not result in hardship!

This week we want to examine, “Administering generosity.” “How do we give back what God has given us?”

I. What qualities are necessary for handling God’s resources Generously?

It must begin with a Godly desire to serve. Paul said Titus had a heart for sharing in this offering. His heart was in it because he understood the importance of sharing with others what God had blessed us with. He welcomed the appeal and was ready to do his part. He was enthusiastic about it. He was one of those who was eager to give and share. You see, Titus was growing in the grace of giving because he understood that everything belongs to the Lord. How are you handling God’s resources? So many today think that what they have is theirs, when in reality it all belongs to the Lord. Tom Gardner writes, “A steward is someone who has been entrusted with the resources of another... A steward stands in stark contrast to the consumer or user~. The basis of stewardship is the recognition that God owns everything and we own nothing.” (Purses with Holes).

I saw a bumper sticker that said, “Give if you love Jesus, any idiot can honk!”

To handle God’s resources we must have a Godly desire to serve.

In administering generosity we must have . . .

II. A Burden for The Lost.

“And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel.”

We don’t know who this brother is but what a great way to be known as a

servant of the gospel. Paul says in Romans, "I am not ashamed of the gospel." This good brother that traveled with this group was not ashamed of the gospel. When we give to help the Kingdom to expand, then we too are claiming, "I am not ashamed of the gospel."

We need to recapture a "BURDEN" for the gospel—for the lost. That is the first purpose of the church, to reach out to lost people. The church is not a club resort for the saved, but the church is to be a hospital for the hurting!

How many of you are glad that someone took time to tell you about the saving gospel of Jesus Christ? That was the easy question, here is the tough one. How many of you that acknowledged your joy for someone sharing with you have shared the message with someone else?

Some of you who have studied the book of Revelation should have discovered something very important about the church at Ephesus--they lost their first love. They had lost their focus on Christ and had lost their burden for the lost.

When Bishop Philip Brooks, author of "O, Little Town of Bethlehem," was seriously ill, he requested no friends come to see him. But when an acquaintance of his named Robert Ingersoll, a famous anti-Christian propagandist, came to see him he allowed him to come in right away. Ingersoll said, "I appreciate this very much. Especially when you aren't letting any of your close friends see you." Bishop Brooks responded, "Oh, I'm confident of seeing them in the next world, but this may be my last chance to see you." (From a sermon by Nathan Johnson, "A Faith that Gives Hope") We must have a burden for the lost.

In administrating generosity there must be . . .

III. A Desire to Honor the Lord Himself.

What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. (2 Cor 8:19 NIV)

This man that was chosen by the church trusted him. The church knew his motive and his intent. Here is a question we all should ask ourselves,

“Is my motive for giving a desire to honor the Lord?”

Now, I know we don't have a prayer before we take up an offering, but have you ever wondered about some of the prayers people pray? “As we return a SMALL portion” . . . “Giving as we can” . . . “Lord, take this and multiply it.”

Where does the concept of 10% come into your scheme of giving? Is it something you are working toward? Is there no consideration to it and you're satisfied with the \$10.00 or \$20.00. Or do you have the mentality, “that'll never happen?” Do I have a desire to honor the Lord?

The fourth quality of generosity is . . .

IV. A Spirit of Cooperation

As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it. (2 Cor 8:23-24 NIV)

Are there things in this life that bug you? What about—People parking where they shouldn't? People in live at a traffic light? People at gas stations? I believe people don't want to cooperate.

Paul is writing about a spirit of cooperation. Cooperation with partners, fellow workers? For our brothers and sister in Christ? Representatives of this congregation?

The spirit of cooperation suffers when . . . gifts are given with strings attached! The treasurer runs the church. Big givers believe they own the church. Ministers/elders/deacons/finance committees don't remain in check and want to have it their way!

Conclusion; Too many times when we talk about generosity we think about money and giving, but it is far more than just those two things. All of us must be administers of generosity.

In order to be administering generosity it all boils down to really two things, character and your relationship to God. Your character is defined as who you are when no one is around! Your character is determined by who you truly are and to whom you belong!

Soon after her brother was born, little Sachi began to ask her parents to leave her alone with the new baby. They worried that like most four-year-olds, she might feel jealous and want to hit or shake him, so they said no. But she showed no sign of jealousy. She treated the baby with kindness and her pleas to be left alone with him became more urgent. They decided to allow it.

Elated, she went into the baby's room and shut the door, but it opened a crack—enough for her curious parents to peel in and listen. They saw little Sachi walk quietly up to her baby brother, put her face close to his and say quietly, “Baby, tell me what God feels like. I’m starting to forget.” (Dan Millman)

It is so important that we never forget what God feels like!

Amen.