

Generosity

In Matthew, Mark, and Luke 1 out of every 10 verses deals with money. Of all the parables Christ told, 16 deal with a person and his money.

Percentage of personal income the poorest households in America gave to charity in 1992: 5.5 percent.
Wealthiest households: 2.9 percent.

Youth worker Update, quoted in *Signs of the Times*, March, 1993, p. 7.

2 Corinthians 8: 1 – 15

1) Generosity – the example of the Macedonian churches (1 – 7)

- We are given grace to be generous.
 - We are selfish by nature and it's a work of God in our hearts that puts others needs before our own.
- The Macedonian church did not give out of their wealth, but out of their poverty.
 - The poor widow in Mark 12: 41 – 44 that gave all she had to live on.
 - Mark 12:41-44 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.
Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."
 - If you give what you do not need, it isn't giving. **Mother Teresa.**
- They gave:
 - As much as they were able (v. 3)
 - Beyond their ability (v. 3)
 - Entirely on their own (v. 3)
 - Pleaded for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints (v. 4)
- They gave themselves
 - It is sometimes easy to give our money and not ourselves.
 - They gave themselves first to the Lord then to His people.
 - We need to understand that our giving is primarily to the Lord.
 - Proverbs 19: 17 He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done.
- From the Macedonian example Paul exhorts the Corinthian church to excel in the grace of giving as they excel in everything. (v. 7)

2) Generosity – the example of Jesus (8 – 9)

- Paul was not commanding the Corinthian church to give.
 - This type of generosity is different to that of tithing which is commanded.
 - This is taking Christian living to a higher level than that of tithing.
 - By using others as an example Paul was testing the sincerity of the love of the Corinthians (and ours) against the earnestness of others i.e. the Macedonian church and that of Jesus.
- The grace of Jesus:
 - He became poor even though he was rich so that through His poverty we might become rich.
- Who is Jesus?
 - He is God.
 - He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.
 - He is the owner of all things and all things are subject to him.
 - Hence he was rich

- Being rich he became poor. How?
 - He gave up the comforts of heaven to live on earth
 - He gave up his right to rule to serve
 - He gave up his wealth of all things to live a life of poverty.
 - He gave up his security to be persecuted, slandered, harassed and crucified
- Why did Jesus become poor?
 - That we might become rich through His poverty
- Does this mean that Jesus died so that we can be rich in this world? No
- The riches that Jesus spoke about are eternal, not temporary riches
 - Matthew 6: 19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
 - I have tried to keep things in my hands and lost them all, but what I have given into God's hands I still possess. **Martin Luther.**
- The generosity from the example of Jesus is one of sacrificial giving.
 - This type of generosity gives until it hurts because it is the love of God and love for people that motivates us.
 - When it comes to giving until it hurts, most people have a very low threshold of pain.
 - Jesus gave because he loved us.

3) The heart of generosity (10 – 15)

- Giving generously starts with an inner desire to do so. (v. 10)
 - If we have to be told to give then we aren't being generous no matter how much we give.
- What starts with an eager willingness needs to be carried through in action – matched by our completion of it.
- We give according to our means
 - The gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. (v.12)
 - God judges what we give by what we keep. **George Mueller.**
- The purpose of generosity is that there may be equality.
 - It shouldn't be that some have much in the church whilst others do not have their basic needs met.
 - Acts 2: 44 – 45 All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

Leftovers are such humble things,
 We would not serve to a guest,
 And yet we serve them to our Lord
 Who deserve the very best.
 We give to Him leftover time,
 Stray minutes here and there.
 Leftover cash we give to Him,
 Such few coins as we can spare.
 We give our youth unto the world,
 To hatred, lust and strife;
 Then in declining years we give
 To him the remnant of our life.

Author Unknown.