Series: Believe

Message: “Practice – Giving My Resources”

Text:

Key Verse: 2 Corinthians 8:7

Theme: Believe Chapter 19

Date: March 13, 2016

Location: Christ Community EFC

**If you would, please go ahead and turn in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 8:7**.

As you turn there let me tell you a little story.

There was this $50 dollar bill and there was this $1 dollar bill, and the two of them were talking to each other one day.

As they were lying there side by side the $1 dollar bill said to the $50 dollar bill, “Hey mannnn, where have you been. I haven’t seen you in a long time?”

The $50 dollar bill replied, “Oh man, I have been having a ball!

I been traveling to distant countries, going to the finest restaurants, to the biggest and best casinos, and boutiques. I’ve been to the mall uptown, the mall downtown, and the mall across town.

In fact, just this month I’ve been to Europe, a professional NBA game, an all-day retreat spa, and a top-notch hair salon. I have done it all!”

After describing his great travels, the $50 dollar bill paused for a moment then asked the $1 dollar bill, “What about you? Where have you been?”

The $1 dollar replied, “Well, I’ve been to the Baptist church, the Methodist church, the Episcopalian church, the E-Free church, the...”

“WAIT A MINUTE! WAIT A MINUTE!!” interrupted the $50 dollar bill. “What’s a church?”

Last week we talked about offering our time to serve God and others.

As we continue in our Believe series the topic this morning is Giving My Resources.

You see there on the screen the key idea is:

**Key Idea: I give my resources to fulfil *God’s* purposes.**

This leads us to ask the key question this morning:

**Key Question: How do I uses my resources to *serve* God and others?**

Let’s begin with a very simple, but true statement.

***God doesn’t need your money!***

We believe God created everything. God owns everything. God is not limited by the money you give back to Him.

Of course when we say that “I give my resources” we are talking about everything we have—our gifts and talents and time, and our money.

But this morning I’m going to be talking mostly about our money because the way we treat and use our money says more about our hearts than anything else.

Remember this, God doesn’t need your money, or your resources for that matter, but He wants your heart!

If money is the most important thing in your life, then money will become the focus of your time, your thoughts, and your actions.

But if God has the number one place in your life, then the pursuit of money and the stuff money can buy doesn’t dominate your life.

Let’s read our key verse for this morning. It’s found here in 2 Corinthians chapter 8, and verse 7.

Among other things Paul is writing the church in Corinth to encourage them to take up an offering, a free will gift.

Here in chapters 8 and 9 Paul tells them that he plans to stop there in Corinth, on his way to Jerusalem.

The believers in Jerusalem were under great persecution and the need was great. Paul encourages them give graciously to help meet the needs of fellow believers in Jerusalem.

Listen to 2 Corinthians 8:7:

**Key Verse: But just as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge…** (if you were here last week you know for Paul’s first letter to the church in Corinth that the folks here were boastful their spiritual gifts. But what they should be seeking is the gift of giving.)

**But just as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge,** **in complete earnestness and in your love for us--see that you also excel in this grace of giving**.

Let’s back up to the beginning of this chapter: 2 Corinthians 8:1 where Paul has just written:**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.**

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

**6 Accordingly, we urged Titus** (whom Paul had sent ahead of him to oversee the collection of the offering) **that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace.**

The same Greek word is used here at the end of verse 7: **grace of giving.** The same word is used in both phrases: giving and grace.

**Giving is the essence of grace!**

Consider this. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is God’s free gift to us all.

No one made God love us. No one made Jesus enter into our world to die on a cross to pay for our sins.

He did this because He loves us, because He wanted to.

**Here’s a question for you**: Do you give your resources because you think you have to do it? Or do you give because you want to give? Do you give from your heart or from guilt?

There is a big difference.

Living on the farm, Dana and I **get** to feed the calves and we enjoy it. It is actually kind of fun for us.

Somehow, I don’t think I would enjoy it half as much though, if I “**had**” to do it. Then it would seem more like work and a chore.

Here is an interesting historical tidbit: Historians tell us that when soldiers in the Middle Ages came to faith in Jesus and were baptized, they would keep their right arm out of the water as if to say that the arm used in battle would not be committed to the Lord.

How many Christians do the same thing?

But instead of a sword, we hold our wallet in our right hand as if to say, *“Lord, you can everything except my money.”*

We are not required to give anything. Dana and I began to tithe, give 10% of our income, when we were first married. Over the years God has blessed and we have been able to increase that percentage.

We have been given the privilege of giving. We don’t feel we have to give, but that we get to give.

This grace of given doesn’t just happen. We must cultivate an atmosphere of the grace of giving!

**We need to practice gracious generosity.**

Let’s consider some: **PRINCIPLES OF GENEROSITY**

1. **You become like what you worship**

In Psalm 115:4-8 we read: **Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands.**

**5 They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. 6 They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. 7 They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. 8 Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them**.

It has been said “What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or for restoration.”

We either revere the world, and are conformed to the sinful patterns of the world, or we revere God, and are progressively conformed into his likeness.

What you desire determines what you will become. And if you set your desires on anything other than the true God, you will become like that, and it will not be pretty.

You become like what you worship. We worship God and:

1. **God is a generous God**

John 3:16: **For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life**.

2 Corinthians 9:15: **Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift**!

*One paraphrase adds – “a gift too wonderful for words.”*

In Romans 5:15 Paul writes that **“…the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!**”

(TLB): **And what a difference between man’s sin and God’s forgiveness**!

God is so generous with His forgiveness!

1. **God loves generosity**

Look over at: 2 Corinthians 9:6-8:

“**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**.”

You can’t out give God. We are to give bountifully.

But don’t miss this: **GIVING IS NOT AN ACTION – IT’S AN ATTITUDE!**

Let’s break verse 7 down:

**Who**? “**You must each**.” This letter is written to Christians. It applies to each of us.

**What**? “**must give**.” The money, the time we give are personal decisions.

**How**? “**as he has decided in your heart**.” Giving is a matter of the heart, not of compulsion.

Our relationship with God determines what we decide.

**When**? “**not reluctantly or under compulsion**.” If that is your motivation, put your money back.

**Why**? “**God loves a cheerful giver**.” God loves us all. He wants us to love Him back.

I don’t think any of us want to just get by in life. We want to do something that is meaningful, significant.

God gives us the opportunity to give our time, our abilities and our resources to make a significant eternal, life changing difference.

When we give to the church or to missionaries, or ministries to help feed the hungry, house the homeless, or shelter the abused.

Giving means doing something.

2 Corinthians 8:1-7 “**excel in the GRACE of giving**”

Jesus talked about **HEARTS ‘n’ TREASURES** –

Matthew 6:19-21 (ESV) “**Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also**.

This reminds us that your attitude to what you have is vitally important to how you use it.

GIVING starts in the heart and becomes an action that is driven by what you feel or see.

That is why Paul urges CHEERFUL giving – because giving can be a hugely enjoyable experience.

**Proverbs 21:26 (NLT)** 26 Some people are always greedy for more, but the godly love to give!

**Psalm 37:21 (NLT)** 21 The wicked borrow and never repay, but the godly are generous givers.

See yourself as a River and not a Reservoir.

1. **Generosity means giving your best**

We read in Proverbs 3:9-10 “**Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; 10 then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine**.”

After all, God gave His Son. Give of your first fruit, not your left overs.

1. **Generosity can be a way to point people to Jesus**

Acts 2:45-47: “**And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved**.

Here’s the lesson in Luke 16:9 (NLT) “**Use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends. Then, when your earthly possessions are gone, they will welcome you to an eternal home**.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 9:12 “**For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God**.

Two good things happen as a result of your gifts—those in need are helped, and they overflow with thanks to God.

1. **Giving is at the heart of the Christian lifestyle**

Jesus explains the greatest kind of giving – Matthew 10:8 (NKJV) 8 … **Freely you have received, freely give.**

He taught his disciples that giving is a way of life – Matthew 5:42 (NKJV) “**Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away**.”

Acts 20:35 (TLB) **“…It is more blessed to give than to receive.’**

In life there are GIVERS and there are TAKERS!

There are those in whose nature it is to GIVE and those who by nature TAKE!

Givers never seem to struggle for friends and takers don’t seem to have friends for long.  
  
Characteristics of a GIVER- Thoughtfulness, consideration, compassion, sensitivity, generosity, kindness.

Characteristics of a TAKER- Ingratitude, selfishness, self-centredness, thriftiness, insensitivity.  
  
Even in the Church there can be givers and takers! Yet God wants us to be GIVERS!  
  
God is the greatest Giver!

2 Corinthians 8:7: **But just as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us--see that you also excel in this grace of giving.**

**KEY APPLICATION:** What difference does this make in the way I live?

• We intentionally give a percentage of our financial resources to fuel the purposes of God and his kingdom.

• We intentionally make available the material resources God has entrusted to me (home, car, clothes, tools, food) to fulfill God’s purposes in the lives of others.

Here is a valuable exercise. Take out your checkbook register and last month’s credit card bill.

Walk through the past thirty days and categorize your expenses. While potentially painful, I can promise it will benefit you in the days ahead.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. What patterns or tendencies do I see?

2. What priorities are evident in my spending?

3. Where am I pleased with regard to my money management?

4. Where am I disappointed with my findings?

5. What changes should I consider making?

As you lay your finances before the Lord, ask, “Am I using the resources you’ve given me to accomplish your purposes?”

If the answer is yes, thank God for his wisdom and provision for you, and continue to grow in giving.

If the answer is **no**, then self-condemnation and regret are not the proper responses.

The very good news is that God, who is faithful and just, will forgive you, and he is ready to help you direct your energy to the transformation of how you use your money.

**So where do we start?**

We go back to the heart. This is a heart issue.

There’s a decision to make. **Whom will we serve**?

Ponder again these words of Jesus:

Matthew 6:24: “**No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money**.

One man stated it well in his financial testimony: “***I used to think I couldn’t afford to give to God, but once I started, God blessed me so much I could no longer afford not to!***”