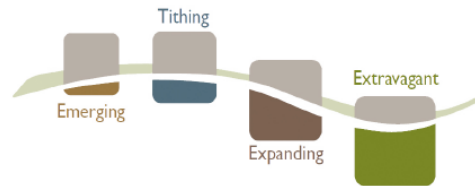




In God We Trust

Building our theology of money and generosity

Expanding Generosity



Think of someone you know who is generous with their resources. What made them different in their attitude and how do they compare to someone who watches every penny or is selfish with their things?

OPENING DISCUSSION: READ MATTHEW 25:14-27

In this parable, who did the wealth belong to? *The wealthy owner*

What was the basis of his choice of how much to give to each servant? (25:15) *In proportion to their abilities. Thus our economic position isn't the issue, but what we do with our entrusted wealth.*

What was the expectation of the master that his three servants would do with his money? *Invest his money into something that would make more money.*

When the master returned, what did he expect from his servants? *A report of what they had done with his money, he expected them to have some return on their investment.*

POINT OF THE STORY: God gives everyone resources to invest for Him. He expects some return on His resources, but in order to get a profit, we have to take a risk with His stuff (which we steward). Getting a return on God's resources means investing His resources into efforts that expand God's Kingdom and purposes. Growing in generosity means accepting that the resources we control are God's who put them under our control, and risking in order to grow God's plan rather than our own.

READ: 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

What are the two circumstances that the Macedonians were in (8:2)? *Trials and poverty*

What is the contrasting attitude that doesn't seem to fit their circumstances (8:2)? *Abundant joy!*

Moyer Hubbard gives some helpful information on what Paul meant when he refers to the Macedonian's poverty. It is important to remember that the distribution of wealth in ancient Mediterranean society was enormously lopsided compared with modern Western societies, and Paul's report of the Macedonians' "extreme poverty" needs to be understood in this light. Considering that there was virtually no middle class in the first-century Roman world of Achaia and Macedonia and that the vast majority of the population lived at or below the subsistence level, the colloquialism "dirt poor" would not be an inappropriate description of the Macedonian communities responsible for this generous gift.¹

Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary Volume 3: Romans to Philemon.*, 233 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).

After Vern's message on generosity I (Tim) had someone come to me in the Lobby and ask me to pray that they would win the Lottery so they could be more generous to the Church. **Based on Paul's description of the Macedonians, why is the idea that we will be more generous when we are wealthy untrue?**

Notice that while Paul uses the Macedonians as the example for generous givers who gave out of their poverty, the Corinthians were not poor. Paul seems to use the Macedonians as the model, showing that you don't have to be rich to give (the Corinthians were better off and reserved givers), generosity is not tied to income level!

What attitude preceded the generous Church's financial gift (2 Cor 8:5)?

Why do you think the Macedonian attitude of first giving themselves to God and also to Paul made them generous?

READ: 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15

Paul uses a common Proverb in 9:6, state it in a catchy, short phrase that would make a good bumper sticker. *e.g. Give away your wealth to the poor and never be poor again! Keep all the wealth you make and never be rich! The best way to enjoy your wealth is to give it away.*

READ: 2 Corinthians 9:7-11

List as a group as many proverbs of giving as you can find in this text.

Which "proverb" that you found applies best to you and your giving choices.

When someone becomes rich, what is the attitude that makes their wealth bring joy? (9:11)

Giving not only provides the needs of God's people, what else does our giving do at the end of 9:12?

Paul returns to the need to develop the generosity lifestyle in 9:13-16. What does our generosity express or reflect? (see 9:16)

ACTIONS

Review the proverbs from 9:6-11 and identify the one(s) that need to be put on your bumper sticker this week.

Does your wealth bring you joy, or do you still consider yourself among the poor? That is a sign of bad money-management.

Harvest is called to rally God's people toward extravagant giving and extravagant service to our community, region and to the world. Our Church reflects the generosity or stingy attitude of its people.

How is Harvest expressing generosity to our world - Pool project, Satellite Campuses, Ethiopian Adoptions, work teams, child sponsorships – this weekend Harvest families sponsored 50 kids from Ethiopia, plus the 75 already being sponsored = 125 Ethiopian children being sponsored by Harvest families!