



## **Joy of Generosity – Part 3**

### **Understanding Giving's Big Picture**

**Pastor Mike Fabarez**

Well, here are a few names for you. Chuck Swindoll, John MacArthur, Chuck Smith. How about Corrie ten Boom? How about Joni Eareckson Tada? How about Hudson Taylor? How about William Carey? David Livingstone. Helen Roseveare. Elizabeth Elliot. How about some of the scholars? Don Carson, F. F. Bruce, Carl Henry. Those are like some of the Christian major leaguers right there. Right? Those are the guys and gals whose lives really mattered. Their faithfulness mattered. They're the people we admire; they're people who are quoted. The people who are leaving a major impact, who have left a major impact. Then there's you. The minor leaguers, the Little Leaguers, the pee wee players. You know, insignificant. You know, just no one's quoting you. Maybe your wife every now and then. (audience laughing) I mean, your decisions, your stuff, your ministries, your life, it's just not a big deal.

Does that sound right to you? Someone should be saying, get behind me Satan at this point. That's not right. It's not right. It should not be right. You should not think that way. That is certainly not what the New Testament teaches. Matter of fact, the New Testament would say just the opposite, that your life before your creator is no less significant than any other Christian life. That your decisions, the decisions and direction and investments of your Christian life, they matter. They matter a ton. That how you direct your life, the stewardship of your life, it has a significant impact and that God will one day evaluate your life and that evaluation is going to matter a lot. That's woven throughout the entire New Testament. And you should realize that. And if you don't realize it, it will affect your decisions. And it will sadly keep you from making decisions in light of the stewardship of your life.

By the way, that's how some people view the stewardship of giving, generosity. They think, well, you know, maybe if I ran some big foundation and my gifts could start a missions organization, or if I could launch churches with my checks and, you know, if I could do big things, well then, you know, my gifts would matter. But, I mean, you know, what's my \$75 check going to do? What can I do with my income? I'm on a fixed thing. I can't give much, it doesn't really matter. And sadly, it's the same kind of thinking that can make people really not take their stewardship seriously and that's something that the New Testament would tell you, that's not how you should think. It's not how you should think at all. As a matter of fact, in Luke Chapter 21, we've already quoted it in our series, Jesus very clearly stood there watching people putting money in the coffers of the Temple Mount, the place where they'd come at the pilgrimage feast. This one was the Feast of Unleavened Bread and everyone was putting money as they walked into the Temple Mount and there were a lot of rich people putting their big gifts.

And then there was this widow who walked up and she threw in two copper coins. And Jesus turned and made a statement to his disciples. Do you remember what he said? Here were his words. It's very important that we not forget this. He says, I tell you the truth, "This poor widow has put in more than all of them." Now here's the Son of God, the one whose opinion matters the most. His commentary matters more than anyone else. He says the Father "has given all



judgment to the Son." One day everyone's going to stand before him, including the rich people who just put gifts into that offering box. And he just said that woman right there, she was the top giver today. Did anyone think she was the top giver? Not a single person watching that. And Jesus said she's the top giver today. But "they all contributed out of their abundance," those other people, "but she out of her poverty."

That one statement should remind us all that God has a whole different way to list the major leaguers. Not to take anything away from someone who does great things in Christendom and Christianity. I mean, great. But you do know there are some people who are quoted and people who are on the radio or published or whatever, they may phone a lot of this in. They may work this hard on whatever they do. And just because of the platform or just because of the opportunity it may go all around the world and affect a lot of people. And everyone's going, wow, look at their impact. But what did it cost them? What was the investment? What was their faithfulness? What was the sacrifice behind it all? And then you find someone else and "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch" on everything. Now here's someone else with a very small circle of impact and there was a great level of thought and effort and faithfulness and sacrifice.

God's watching that. And he said, man, there was a ministry today, and it wasn't on a platform and there was no microphone and there were no lights on it. And God says did you see that? And when God seeing that in heaven, I guarantee you there's a list of names that one day I think we're all going to admire that none of us would recognize if I read them now. I don't know those people. It's important that we don't think something is big simply because it's big from man's perspective. If we think something is big only because people on this planet, Christians, applauded it and a lot of Christians applauded it, and the more Christians who applauded, well then it's a big deal, then we don't understand the New Testament. That, unfortunately, kind of thinking keeps many Christians from making the right decisions about their lives. And sadly, it keeps a lot of Christians from making the right decisions about their money.

We've reached the next six verses in Second Corinthians Chapter 8 that I think will help us think about our faithfulness as it relates to what we have. And I think it will keep us from making the decision that a lot of people make like, well you know I'm not making a big difference. My giving wouldn't make any difference. Whether it's someone in my small group who has a need, it wouldn't make a difference if I gave what I can give. And to church it's certainly not going to make a difference. We have to take this into consideration. Now, it may seem where we ended last time that the first two verses like we've already covered them. And it's true that we did end with a point last time where we kind of dipped into the discussion here. But since it started as a theme and there's a sentence that begins in Second Corinthians Chapter 8 verse 10, it's going to end in the place where the principle that we're trying to talk about is introduced.

So let's start reading in verse 10, Second Corinthians Chapter 8 verse 10. We'll go through verse 15 and we'll catch the drift of all that I'm trying to introduce right now. Let's start in verse 10, I'll read from the English Standard Version. And here's what the Bible has to say. Here's



what God has to say in this week's installment on generosity. Second Corinthians Chapter 8 verse 10, "And in this matter," and of course, this is the matter of the grace of giving, "this benefits you." Which, by the way, even the title of the series, I tried to say, yeah, it's going to benefit others and clearly the issue on the table, hey, this would benefit the Christians in Jerusalem. They have a famine there it would benefit them if you gave, but it's also going to benefit the Corinthians, right? You Corinthians. I know you're pretty well-off and you're more well-off than the Thessalonians and the Philippians and the Bereans, it would benefit you, though, if you did what you decided to do and intended to do, "who a year ago started not only do this work but also to desired to do it. Now finish it."

Verse 11, "So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it." That right there we've already dealt with last week. That's true. If you intend to do something, I intended to write my mom, I intended to teach that Sunday school class. I was going to give that gift. I was going to do that good work. It doesn't matter if you were going to. The intention doesn't matter. I mean, it's a good thing and you have to have the intention if you're going to do it, but it doesn't really make the effect unless you do the thing, right? "Be warmed and filled" doesn't matter. You have to do something about it. So we dealt with that. But now he adds these words, "out of what you have." Now we're shifting into this, "out of what you have." That phrase right there is what starts to get people thinking, well I'm not going to do it because I don't have much. No, no, it doesn't matter what you have, right? You just do it out of what you have. Your readiness should be out of what you have.

Verse 12, "For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have." Obviously. But that's not obvious to us because sometimes we think, well if I had a significant amount, well then I would do it because our hope and our good intention is to make a big difference. Do you follow me? It would be great. I really want to meet this need. Someone in my small group has this incredible medical bill and their insurance didn't cover it, I would just love to cover it, I would love it, I'm ready, I love them, I want to meet the need, but I can't meet the need. The readiness is there but I can't... I don't have it. See, Paul is arguing for doing something out of what you have, not out of what you don't have. And because if you don't have it, if that stops you from doing something then you've missed the point.

I'm saying I know it is all sacrifice, verse 13, but the sacrifice isn't so that you can be deprived, right? "I don't mean that others be eased and you burdened, but it's a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time," you Corinthians, "should supply their need," there in Jerusalem, "so that their abundance may supply your need." I mean, there may be a time when they get back on their feet and who knows what might happen in Corinth. Persecution might break out, who knows, "that there may be fairness." In other words, you have to know that I'm not trying to make you guys suffer so that they can be on easy street. That's not what we're looking for here. I want you to focus on the need. You're going to meet a need. They have a need right now. You're going to meet that need. I'm not trying to make it to where you're going to help this person with their medical bills so that you can't pay your medical bills. That's not the point. But right now they have a need. And if that sacrifice in your savings



account to help meet their need, if that's going to help them meet their need, give according to what you have.

Now, here's the thing. If that takes the security away of maybe who knows what might happen to you. Hey, don't worry, God is going to meet that need and probably through them if they're back on their feet. And the point is it's really not about them anyway it's about God. And that's why we go back to Exodus Chapter 16 when he now starts quoting in verse 15 the Old Testament, "As it is written." Don't you know the Old Testament taught us this? "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack." What? Gathered what? What are we talking about here Sunday school grads, gathered what? It starts with the letter "M," manna. Because in Exodus there were these weird cornflakes stuff that came like coriander seed, this flaky stuff that was out there.

They were nomadic out here in the desert. God took them on this circuitous route through the desert because they were rebellious at Kadesh Barnea and so he was not going to take them directly into Canaan. He's going to kill off this generation of Jews who didn't trust him. And then he's going to take their kids through the desert. And he had to feed them, right? But they couldn't dig wells and they couldn't plant, you know, fields of wheat and barley. So what did they do? Well, they had to be fed. What did God do? Well, you can't bake your bread. You can't grow your field. So I'm going to give you cornflakes and it's just going to magically show up. And by magically, I mean magically. It's going to be a miracle. This is going to come down, manna from heaven, and you're going to go collect it every day. But here's the thing. It will be day by day. And Exodus Chapter 16 says if you gather a lot you will not be able to keep it until tomorrow. It'll spoil overnight. And if you gather a little bit, you go out and you can only fill your basket up half, you'll have enough. You'll have enough. That's trying to shift where your trust should be. Not that I hope they're doing well in Jerusalem when famine hits in Corinth. Well, God's going to make sure this all works out. Just like he magically, miraculously did in the wilderness wanderings.

All right, let's deal with this according to what stuff you have in the beginning of the sentence in verses 10 through 12. Okay, according to what we have, this is a key principle. It's often forgotten, these first three verses. We have to understand this. It's something that clearly is illustrated in Luke Chapter 21 that I've already quoted. The widow gave; she gave out of her poverty which made the proportion very impressive. And that's something we need to keep in mind. And that's something that God is going to always honor. It's laudable, it's praiseworthy, it's something God rewards. So let's just put it down straightforwardly. Here it comes. Number one, "Giving Is About Proportion, Not Amount." Okay. Giving is about proportion, not amount. And again, that's all before God. Because you may be thinking, if I'm in a small group and one of my small group members has a \$10,000 medical bill, it certainly is about the amount to the receiver. Well, yeah, that's true. But before God, one of the things that may keep you from giving is the amount you can give. And to God, it's not about the amount. To God it's about the proportion. That's where you need to start.

Jesus added this story for us and it's in the gospels, but I'll just refer to John Chapter 6. And if you remember in John Chapter 6, the story is told before Jesus starts talking about himself as

the bread of life. He tells the story of the feeding of the 5,000. And it starts with these people as Jesus is teaching them staying late, they can't go into the villages to buy food. So he tells the disciples, go get them some food. Feed them. They say, we can't do that. 5,000 men plus their families, whoever they brought with them. So there are thousands of people there. So they go looking for food. They find a little boy and he has five barley loaves and two fish. You remember the story. Okay, now, this is interesting. Jesus could have reached into his cloak, into his pocket, pulled out the little fuzz balls in the bottom, and he could have made bread and fish out of that. He creates something out of nothing. No problem. He could have spoken the word and had food he could eat. He could have had, you know, the Claim Jumper or the salad bar shows up, right? Easy. But he doesn't.

What he does is he has them look for food and one little boy with one little basket of food shows up. And then what do the disciples say? Here's what they say literally, "But what is this when there are so many?" What is this when there are so many? What is this gift if there are so many? It will never meet the need if there are so many. And Jesus says, let's see what happens. And he does what the Bible calls a sign. Now, when you see the word "sign" in the gospels, sign, that's a technical word. That's a miracle. There are not a ton of miracles in the Bible but this is one of them where he does a creative miracle. And that means very early on as he starts passing out this food, he's pulling loaves out that are made of stuff that was never grown, that was never baked, that never had leaven put in it, it was never, you know, baked. He's doing a miracle, fish that were never hatched, that never swam in the water, that never developed their eyes or gills or scales. He had all of this instantly created. Those are miracles.

Some of you even remember William Barclay, I was talking about scholars, who wrote a New Testament commentary. But he, unfortunately, in his commentary says well what really happened there was the boy came and offered his lunch because, you know, he was kind of a bonehead. And he said, here, I'll give you my lunch. And when that happened, other people said oh, what a sweet thing, you know, it's just like a commercial for, you know, some whatever. And everyone just goes, oh, look at that and say well I had one also and I had a basket and someone else also said I know, I do too. And everyone just started giving their food. And so what really happened was Jesus was just provoking generosity and it just spread. Okay. That is not what happened. Why? Because technically in the text it's called a sign, it's called a miracle. Okay. And it's certainly presented that way.

But why didn't he just create this out of nothing? Because he was setting us up for something that I think is the pattern in the New Testament, particularly in the gospels. Let's go back to the beginning. When he brings his twelve, he says, okay, we're going to go into these villages and you're going to go as my heralds before I get there, you're going to go into the villages and tell the Son of Man is coming. And he says when you go, don't take a knapsack, don't take a wallet, don't take a staff, don't take anything, right? Don't take extra sandals. Just go. For three and a half years they go doing this kind of stuff. At the end of his ministry, he calls them together and says hey, when I sent you out without all this stuff, did you lack anything? And they said, no, not a thing. And then he says, okay, now go get all that stuff, get a knapsack, get a wallet, get stuff, get a staff, get an extra pair of sandals. If you don't have a



sword, you know, even if you have two cloaks sell one of your cloaks and get a sword. What is all that about? Total reversal.

Well, he set them up with this. When I sent you out without all this stuff, did I not providentially provide everything? Yeah. Okay. Now let's go back to the book of Proverbs and let's have you just be wise about putting all this together. Just like if you're going to go on a camping trip, you get all the stuff together, and I don't want you to go panicked like a lot of people do when they drive away to the national park. Well, did I forget anything today? I want you to trust me. Take this stuff but trust me, because I'll provide. Now, I want you to provide by wisdom. I'm not going to create, you know, your propane tank out of nothing, but I don't want you to be anxious. I'll provide. Providentially provide. Okay. Why did he start with the boy and his lunch? I think because what Barclay says about what happened, he has a naturalistic explanation for what is really a sign, is exactly what I think he's setting us up for after the apostolic period, which is, you know, that's exactly what God does.

When someone does say, for instance, oh, a \$10,000 bill, all I have is \$117, but I can give that, right? Then it is like the little boy saying I have five barley loaves and two fish, and then someone else says, well, you know, I was holding this back, but I have ten barley loaves and I have 14 fish. It does exactly what Barclay says. It's just that it happens outside Jesus doing a miraculous gift. It is a providential thing that God is doing. And the miraculous thing God is doing is providentially having the gift of generosity catch on. It's catalytic. Does anyone follow this?

Like when this church started. Let's just go back to the beginning. No money. Right? Just people coming together. And one of the things we said is we're going to be committed to planting new churches. Now, how much does it cost to plant a church? Well, let's start with this one. It costs money. And then we're going to say we're going to plant churches. And it costs a lot of money for all those churches. Well, someone had to start and we had to start by saying let's pass the plate and we started. Now what is this first offering with so much that we planned to do? Not much. Not much. Just like the apostles said. What is this lunch with so many, so many needs or so many hungry bellies? What is this? Nothing. Right? We had plans, right? We had thoughts. We had dreams. We had prayers. Well, a training institute, right? What building? It's going to cost millions of dollars to buy the building, let alone all the stuff that's going to be done in it. Oh, what's going to happen? It's going to start by giving. How? We're going to have to step up. Someone's going to give the first gift. Someone gives a gift of \$300. What's that? What is that for the purchase of a building? It is nothing. What is this with so many? And yet what happens? There's something catalytic about it. There's something providential.

When God's people are generous there is something about saying you give according to what you have and God takes care of the rest. When David was the king he had a standing army. He had horses, he had chariots, he had armor, he had spears and he equipped his army with that. And then he wrote this in his songbook. We don't trust in horses and chariots. And you might say then why do you have them? Well, because we live under the proverbs that my son is going to write. Yes. Of course. Duh. But how in the world did he have such confidence in



God? Because when he had a slingshot and he was dealing with the most feared warrior of the Philistines, God made sure that stone went right where it needed to go. He trusted in God. "The battle is the Lord's."

What God is looking for is for us to trust him and to know it really isn't about the amount. It's not the amount of armor. It's not the amount of chariots. It's not about the amount of horses. But you should assemble as many horses as you can. You should assemble as many stones as you can, right? You should do all that you can do, but not say what is this when there are so many? Don't say that. Just do what you can do. If there's someone in need you do what you can do. If the church has a project, do what you can do, right? You do what you can do and God will be one who rewards, is impressed with, and loves to bless the proportion. You give according to what you have. The readiness should be acceptable to God if you just give according to what you have. I don't care if it's \$0.25 or to use what Jesus said in Luke Chapter 21 two copper coins.

Do you remember your first paycheck? I was 14, breaking all the California child labor laws, I'm sure. Cleaning bathrooms. I remember getting that first paycheck which does create a conservative early on, right? You see all the stuff taken out, confiscated by the state and the government, but you see what's left over and it's bigger than what they took out and so you're like, wow, look at that. And of course, raised in the Christian home, I was taught even with my allowance you have to give off the top, honor the Lord, you know, with your wealth from the first fruits and I'm like, oh, okay, I have to give it. I have to give some to God. Now, what did I give at 14 with my very first paycheck to God? How much was it? How much did that help my home church, where we probably had 500 and 600 people who went to my church? Did the pastor pick up my offering and go, wow, we're going to build a new educational wing? I couldn't keep the lights on with that first offering that I gave from my very first 14-year-old paycheck. I couldn't keep the lights on for an hour probably at that church.

I just got my giving receipt back from this church and, you know, you don't think about your giving until you get the giving receipt back. Wow. You think to yourself, okay, how did that start? Well, it started because at 14 just by having some good parents, I was committed to giving. And I just stuck with the proportion; I increased the proportion. And just like a lot of you, you just got into the habit of doing proportional giving and God just continues the process and you say it's just about proportional, sacrificial giving. And God does something not only this way and catalytically moving forward in increasing amounts because like the boy's lunch, Barclay was right about what happens post-apostolically. Yes. It's going to catch on. In a giving community it will be that it saturates like a little leaven in a good sense will leaven the whole lump. You will have a generous congregation, a generous small group, a generous sub-congregation. But it will also make you generous long-term. And you will be if you start small when you have small it will make you someone who no matter how much you make; it'll make you generous down the road. I'm just telling you, you have to realize proportional giving. If you just get committed to that, it won't be about the amount. Forget the amount.

Think about proportional giving. It's all over the Bible. First Corinthians Chapter 16 verse 2, "On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he



may prosper." Why? Because I'm coming and I'm going to collect it in the collection as you may prosper. Well, I only made five denarii this week. Okay? Right? That's not bad. Right? That's pretty much what a basic worker would make. Five to seven denarii a week. Well, put one denarius aside. It's not much. It's not what a big landowner would make. It's about proportion. Deuteronomy 16:17, I quoted this last week. "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord." Well, I was really blessed this year. Well, then give a good amount. It's all over the Scripture. It's about proportion, it's not about amount.

Back to our text, Second Corinthians Chapter 8. The readiness is there and if the readiness is there it doesn't matter what the amount is. What matters is just proportionally give. Verse 13, "I don't mean that others should be eased by you burdened, but just as a matter of fairness." In this case, this is again horizontal giving. We've talked about vertical and horizontal. Horizontal giving. There's a famine in Jerusalem. I just want you to give, they're in need and I want your abundance at the present time to supply their need. They have a need. I want you to meet the need. I want you to focus on the need. At this point in the passage focus on their need so that will happen. And if down the road "their abundance may supply your need," they'd be happy to meet your need. I want you to be happy to meet their need. There will be this fairness down the road. Number two, let's just put it this way, because this passage right here is having us focus on the good that your gifts accomplish. Number two, "Think of the Good Your Gifts Accomplish." There's a time for that, a time to think of other things. But there's a time also to think about what's the good that's being accomplished here?

In Acts Chapter 20 verse 33 Paul is saying goodbye to the Ephesian pastors and he reminds them, "I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak." Now we have to see what he's saying. I worked hard, hard enough not only to meet my needs and my team's needs, but also enough for a surplus so that I could also help those who were weak. Okay? To help the weak. And then he says, why? Because I "remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Now what's the blessedness of giving? That's where we need to start thinking about meeting the needs. Is there any, I mean, just think people, is there not any blessing in meeting a need? And maybe it'll help you by turning around. Have you ever been blessed by someone meeting your need? Paul is thinking that in a reciprocal way in the passage. Maybe one day they'll meet your needs. Think about that. But right now you should meet their need.

In college, my undergrad in Chicago, and I lived here in Southern California, and I had no money. Right? And my parents were just normal, you know, blue-collar people. And so, you know, I wasn't jumping on planes back and forth, occasionally I was. But, you know, if I want to go home for Christmas, I'd have to figure out a way to do it. And one of the ways to do it is the rich people who lived on the Gold Coast of Chicago would want to get out of there before they were snowed in, and they want to get their Cadillacs out to the desert where they had their condos in, you know, Palm Springs. So they were called snowbirds, as you know. And so they would instead of wanting to put their car on the 18-wheeler semi they would have



college students, they'd post it on the bulletin board in the basement of my dorm and say hey, does anyone want to drive my car out to California? Which was perfect for the few of us who lived in California. And so, of course, I would look for those before Christmas break. And I found one.

The problem was I had to work past the normal time when people would go, and I found one who was willing to go a few days later. And so I wasn't able to get out early. But anyway, I grabbed this one. No one else could go with me, so I was going to do this one on my own. And so I have this guy's caddy. I have the keys from his, you know, Lakeshore Drive condo or his high rise, whatever. And I said, great, I'm going to deliver it to Palm Springs, Palm Desert, whatever. And he gave me, back in the day, there were the gas credit cards. Remember that, Shell Texaco, whatever. And so I get his gas card. Now, I'd done a few of these and sometimes they'll give you a credit card. But, you know, this guy was a little cheaper than the other people. So all I have is a gas card, and I don't even remember if there was a payment. Maybe there was a little cash payment on the side. So I start and I'm all by myself and I just want to get home.

So I'm cruising back to California in this big Cadillac, this big boat on wheels. And as I'm coming across the country I got to Flagstaff on whatever that is, the I-40, the I-60, whatever the interstate is. And as you get through Flagstaff and you start coming toward the West Coast it's a big downhill for miles. I don't know how many miles. Well, as I'm at the, you know, just the crest coming through the town. I'm about to go downhill for miles and miles I noticed I couldn't steer the car anymore and lights lit up on the dashboard. Now, I'm not used to lights coming on the dashboard because I drove a '67 Volkswagen Bug and I didn't have any lights on the dashboard, so I just knew something was massively wrong because I couldn't steer the car anymore. Well, I could, but I needed everything in me to steer the car. And then I realized my car is going really fast. I'm doing 90 miles an hour now, and I'm trying to step on the brake and nothing really is happening. Then I realize, well, something is happening if I put both feet on the brakes. And so now I'm using, you know, the steering wheel as leverage and I'm thinking I'm bending the steering wheel. This is crazy. I'm trying to keep the car on the road, and I'm trying to stomp on the brakes and the car is just dead weight down this long hill for miles and miles.

So obviously I get to the bottom of the hill, and young people this was before cell phones and the Internet and wiring money and all that. But the point is, I got to the bottom of the hill, finally got the car stopped. Long series of things, you know, hitching a ride, finding a phone, you know, calling this guy in Chicago, telling him what happened. He said what'd you do to my car? I said, you know, nothing. What did you do to me? But he said, well, you know, have it towed back to Flagstaff. There's a dealer there. Just have it parked there. I said, well, it's the holiday weekend, it's not going to work, blah, blah, blah. Just leave it. You know, you can get home and just fly home from there and whatever. We'll figure it out.

So I go through all the rigamarole, I remember, you know, this is an experience, right? You're sitting in the tow truck with the driver next to you, and we get it back to the place. We drop it off. I try now to look at the money I had left to try and see if I could figure out a place to stay,



and then the next day get to the airport and figure out if I had enough cash to get home. So I get in this tiny little, really seedy hotel that obviously hadn't been used for decades. And I turned the water on and it's just rust coming out. It was just a terrible night. Had my mother known what I was going through, it was really a bad scene. The next day, I take everything I have in my little backpack and I go to the Flagstaff airport, and I get there and I go up to the counter. I have no idea what it's going to cost to fly to LA. And I say I need a ticket to LA. The cheapest you have, you know, please, you know, let me fly from here to L.A.

And they gave me the number. I don't know what it was back in the day and let's just say \$87. Let's just say, why not, \$127, whatever. And I look in my wallet and all I have left, the last penny I have, and of course, I'm like 19. I have no credit cards. Right? And then I had like, I don't know, \$60 or something. And I sat there thinking what am I going to do now? Right? No one's wiring me money, right? I was stuck, right? This is before cell phones were invented, but not before begging was invented. Right? (audience laughing) So I thought I'm just going to have to beg. And I turned around from the counter, and I just started looking at people's faces like, who do I ask for money right now? And I had never begged before. Well, I begged my parents before, but I'd never beg strangers for money. And here I was with my backpack over my shoulder. Yeah, do you happen to have \$47? Which is really weird. And people look at me, you know, ladies would hide their children from me. (audience laughing) It was just weird.

And finally, some dude wearing a sports coat looked at me, kind of furrowed his eyebrows and like said all right. I said, really? And I pulled out my pen and I took out my yellow tablet, and I said please give me your address. I promise you I will send it to you as soon as I get back home, I will repay you. And he was like, nah, it's okay. No big deal. Do you know what that felt like? It was amazing. I looked at him and I tried to argue with him about paying him back. No, I'll pay you back. I'll pay you back. I'll pay you back. He said, ah, kid, forget it. And he met my need at the lowest point of my 19-year life. And I was like, I can't believe it. Now, that guy probably told his wife the story when he got wherever he was going, but he probably forgot about it. This businessman probably forgot about it, and it may not even have been some proportional sacrificial gift. But what was that like to have my need met? It was amazing. I got a ticket, got on a plane, and flew home. I'm just telling you, if you can put yourself in the shoes of getting your needs met and then turning around and saying, what kind of blessing is it to know you've done that for someone? That's huge. And Paul's just saying can you just give to meet their need? "It's more blessed to give than to receive."

Here's another reason it should be a blessing to you. Hebrews Chapter 13 verse 16, "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God." That's an amazing verse. Do not neglect to do good and share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. I have no idea if this guy was a Christian, but if he was and out of his love for God to this poor, gangly 19-year-old needing money to fly home on the holiday, it pleased God even if he was a pagan, it pleased God. This is an amazing thing. You right now can change the disposition of the God of the universe and put a smile on his face, so to speak. Think about that. Why? By sharing and sacrificing what you have. That should be a



blessing, by the way, that is making YOU feel good. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." You will feel good knowing you make God happy. It's pleasing to God.

How about Matthew Chapter 6? We quote it all the time. "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth and rust destroy and thieves do not break in and steal." Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Lay up for yourself. You know what's implicit in that? I'll reward you. And all the parables he tells about if you treat your earthly money in a particular way, I'll give you true riches. Glendale Federal Savings. Does anybody remember that? It was my first bank account; the Chipmunk Account is what they called it. My parents took me down there. My branch was at Bellflower Boulevard, Los Altos shopping center, and they marched me down there even before I got my 14-year-old job. I was just a little kid. My allowance money, all my crumpled bills. And they took me down there. Dad marched me into Glendale Federal Savings to open my Chipmunk Account.

So I walk in there, walk up to the window, and I open up my Chipmunk Account and I take my money out and it's all crumbled up. And I slide it to this woman and she pulls out the chipmunk passport card, and she opens it up and she starts writing numbers down in it. And after a couple of minutes of card filling out, she slides the passport back to me. And I open it up and I look and there are numbers in it. And then she's like, bye. And so I'm like, okay, so you get my money and I get this book with numbers in it. I can't take this to Thrifty next door and get an ice cream with it. I can't do anything. What? This seems like I lose, right? You get my money; I get a book with your handwriting in it. Seems like a lose. But in a weird way, my little capitalistic heart, it wasn't a lose, because dad said and the lady said you're going to make interest on this money. And I at least was smart enough to know as a little kid, that sounds like a good thing. I'll be able to buy more ice cream than I could buy now if I just kept this in my little bank at home.

So putting it here in my Chipmunk Account like chipmunks do, collecting all the little acorns or whatever they collect, I'm going to have more if I give it to you and you give me the book back. And I thought it felt good. I walked away with less money and felt good about it. What's that? Well, it's the blessing of letting my money go knowing that I'm going to get something better down the road. The blessing is not just helping. The blessing is not just I'm pleasing God like I pleased my dad putting money in the bank. The blessing is I know this is going to pay off. There's something about this that we need to realize that's so good for us. Think of the good that your gifts accomplish.

And even back to overlap with the first point, I thought about the first time I participated in a building program. Now, for me I was a young pastor so I was the pastor of the church, but I had already from the youngest age gotten used to proportional giving. And I've been giving to the church. And now all of a sudden we started this building program like, oh man, now I have to give to that. And I'm like, ah... And here was one of the things I anticipated when I gave extra on top of what I normally give to the church building program. And I didn't have a lot of money. I was a young pastor, the church was relatively small, so to speak, and I was like I think I'm going to be more critical about the building. That's what I thought. I'm going to look at



everything differently. I would have chosen a different paint color and I'm not going to like that and I'm going to think this is bad. I really thought I would be more critical.

And I really also thought, to go back to the first point, what is my gift going to do? I don't have a lot here to contribute to this. I saw the numbers and what it was going to cost. What I realized is even my little amount to that building by the time it was done, I was less critical of the final product because I felt a participation in it and an ownership like I had a part in this. So almost like if you criticize this building, I'm going to be defensive, right? And do you know what I found is the people who didn't give that were the most critical. And I felt like this is so good. The blessedness of giving on so many levels is a good thing because needs ultimately are getting met.

First Timothy Chapter 6 says life indeed. If we are people who are, here's how it's put, people who are "rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for [ourselves] as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life." There's something in that that just reminds us that there's something... Like the inverse is buyer's remorse. Have you had buyer's remorse? I have had buyer's remorse. You go to Best Buy on a Monday and especially if you gravitate toward the Magnolia corner, where everything is four times the price of everything else in the store, and then I think, oh, I'm going to buy myself something. And if I spend money to spend it on my own pleasures as James Chapter 4 lofts into my head and I buy something nice, I go home and I struggle, not just for the rest of the day, for the rest of the week. I am always looking at where I could have bought it for less or go to Consumer Reports and find out how there are ten other brands that are better. Do you have buyer's remorse? It's horrible. But the inverse is when you're ready to share and you're generous, what's interesting is you rarely have giver's remorse. I don't think I've ever had giver's remorse. There's something about taking hold of that which is life and deed, "generous and ready to share."

Lastly, verse 15, just to make sense of this, and I kind of read it and said it. But back to our passage, "As it is written," he's going now to the Old Testament back to Exodus Chapter 16, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack." And the point is this: it's not just, you know, we're kind of hoping that Jerusalem will be doing well if persecution or famine ever breaks out in Corinth. It's that it's really not about, you know, geopolitics or weather patterns. It's about God. God makes sure he takes care of his people. As David said in Psalm 37, "I have been young, and now I'm old, yet I've not seen the righteous ... begging for bread." Maybe for a plane ticket here and there, but never for bread. No, no chuckle on that one? (audience chuckles) I had enough for a sandwich but not enough to get home.

Yeah, the promise of God's provision, it's there, it's there. God always provides, even in the lean years. Did you have the experience that most young couples have when you think back to the early days when you couldn't afford a regular, you know, meal. You couldn't afford regular grocery stores; you couldn't afford the regular brands. You weren't even buying, you know, blue wrap mustard. All the stuff you bought was just junk. And you thought how are we going to survive? You're eating Top Ramen and all the rest. Here's the interesting thing about



the first five years of my marriage in that cracker box, you know, little apartment we lived in, that was 325 bucks a month. Think about that. Do you know what happened in the first five years of my marriage when I had, like, no food and everything was on the cheap? Do you know what happened in the first five years? I got fat. (audience laughing) I gained weight the whole time.

It reminds me of this, God provided for them in the wilderness where they had no farms, they weren't digging wells, water was coming out of rocks, geysers were coming up, and cornflakes were everywhere. And all their caloric stuff was met, Not only that, their feet didn't swell. It talks about in Scripture that their sandals didn't wear out. God took care of his people. If he's going to lead you into the desert he's going to take care of you. You just have to trust him that he's always going to provide. Number three, "Always Trust In the Father's Provision." Always trust in him. If he is your Father's, he will provide. He's going to do it. That's what the Bible continually says.

Nehemiah Chapter 9 and looking back, and this is hundreds of years later, speaking of the wilderness wanderings. Nehemiah 9:20, "You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst. Forty years you sustain them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing." Did they have everything they wanted? No, but they had everything they needed. "Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell." That's how I look at the first five years of my marriage and I had hardly anything. And most of us have a story like that. And it will be the same. You have to stop worrying. Did Jesus not say that in Matthew Chapter 6? Stop worrying about your clothes and what you're going to put on, what you're going to eat. Stop worrying about that. You need to be generous and ready to share.

I hate to bring this up but do you remember the pandemic? Does nobody remember that? You remember that. Think just before the pandemic broke out. If I were at your house using your downstairs bathroom, and I said, oh, man, I need another roll of toilet paper in here. You'd be, like, coming right up. If I went through that roll. I said, I need another one. I bet you'd be so generous with your toilet paper. You'd wonder what's going on in there but you'd be like, oh, yeah. (audience laughing) How many do you need, pastor Mike? Give me two more. But then the pandemic hit. Was that weird that when you went to the store you could not find toilet paper? People were hoarding toilet paper. I mean, there are options. And they were hoarding toilet paper. That was just the weirdest thing ever. I mean, Kleenex wouldn't work? I just thought to myself, don't think too hard on that, but I'm thinking to myself this is really bizarre to me. And all I'm trying to illustrate is fear does weird things to people. And when it comes to giving that's the problem, fear. And the Father's saying, I will take care of you. Don't worry about what you can put on. The pagans chase after all those things. Look at the lilies of the field. Look at the birds of the air. Just trust me. If you want to be blessed be ready to share. "It's more blessed to give than to receive." You couldn't hoard manna. You know that, right? If you tried to hoard manna it would go bad. Hoarding in Scripture, that's the only place you see in Scripture where God, in Jesus' parables at least, calls someone a fool because he just wanted to hoard. "Fool," he says, "this night your soul is required of you."



Let's pray. God, help us in an age of storage units when people just keep things and we just hold on to what we think is our security. And yet we'll hear of needs this week in our small groups and our sub-congregations and I just pray that we would be more generous. I know this passage, certainly in the text we just covered, is about horizontal giving, and if we see needs I pray we would be more generous, certainly even with our church. Just give us the joy of generosity that it might please you. Let us be the kinds of people who show our trust in you by honoring you with all that we have. It's a weird, paradoxical kind of life. Just like when I was a little kid sliding my money and coming away with a little book, having less in my pocket but feeling good about it. God help us, please, with just the practicalities of our generosity to trust you knowing that you're a God who cares for us. You've made that clear. Let us believe it. Let us celebrate it. Let us thank you for it in every way.

In Jesus' name. Amen.