

“A Legacy of Grace” // 2 Corinthians 8–9 // Lasting Legacy #4¹

VISION [VIDEO](#) Well, that’s exciting.

2 Corinthians 8, if you have your Bibles...

We’re in our final week of a series we called “Lasting Legacy.” Our key verse has been [Psalm 112:5–6](#): “It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice. For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever.”

Let me tell you something that you may not have heard talked about in church: **God put into you a desire to be remembered, a desire for eternal significance, a desire for your life to count for something beyond itself.** Ecclesiastes says that God “put eternity into our hearts,” which means that desire for a lasting legacy. That’s from him. In this series, I’m showing you *how* you can have that kind of eternal legacy. What we can do now to be remembered literally *forever*.

Now, I realize that *whenever we talk about generosity, people get nervous—as nervous, as my grandpa used to say, as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs.* And you might feel like this is going to end with a big guilt trip and a pressure to give, but I want you to *relax*.

In this 2 Corinthians 8 passage, which is all about giving, Paul goes out of his way to say that he’s not commanding you to give.

- Literally, vs. 8 he says, “I say this not as a command ...”

¹ Works consulted: Chris Hodges, “[Grace Giving](#),” November 6, 2022, Church of the Highlands; Andy Stanley, *Fields of Gold*; Tim Keller, sermon on 2 Corinthians 9:6–15, “Radical Generosity”; Tim Mackie, “[A Generous Gospel](#),” September 6, 2017, Exploring My Strange Bible Podcast; Craig Groeschel, “[Love Gives](#),” November 12, 2023, Life Church.

- And then, in chapter 9, he says: “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).
- So let’s just all breathe a little sigh of relief, ok? Paul didn’t give his instructions here in the spirit of a command, and so neither will I. So if you’re worried about today ending with me pressuring you to give something, or making you feel guilty about not giving something, let’s just take that off the table.
- Paul says that if you feel reluctant or hesitant, God’s not interested in that kind of generosity. He’s not short on cash. That’s not what this is about.

“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

- The word Paul uses here for **cheerful** is “*hi-la-ros*,” from which we get our word “hilarious.” God loves a “hi-la-ros” giver.
- And by that, I don’t think Paul means **that we** get the snorts and giggles when the offering plate goes by ... but the word does imply a lightness, a joyful bubbiness, in giving.³

I think, **deep down, that’s what we** all want, right?

- Haven’t you been around someone before who was just so selfless, so instinctively generous—and you thought, “*I want to be like that!*”

² hee-LAH-ros

³ In his book *Exegetical Fallacies*, D.A. Carson points out that while “hilaron” is the root of the English word “hilarious,” interpreting it as “God loves a hilarious giver” is a semantic fallacy. This kind of fallacy occurs when we read back modern meanings or associations of a word into the ancient text. Although “hilaron” does convey a sense of cheerfulness or joyfulness, it does not imply the modern sense of something laugh-out-loud funny or “hilarious” in an exaggerated way. In short, Carson warns against reading contemporary connotations into ancient texts, emphasizing the importance of understanding words within their historical and linguistic context.

I want to be a cheerful, no-strings-attached giver—because those people just seem so happy—and this passage shows us how we can become like that. Let’s just walk through it.

(2 Corinthians 8–9)

Here’s the context: The church in Jerusalem was struggling, mainly because of all the persecution taking place there. This was the original church that had planted all the rest! So Paul was taking up an offering for them from all the Gentile churches he’d planted, and he was urging the Corinthians to take part in that offering. Initially, the Corinthians had been excited to participate, but as often happens, they slacked off and got distracted. And so Paul says, **2 Corinthians 8:1**, “We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia (this was another bunch of other churches in northern Greece that Paul had planted—by the way, the books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians are written to the churches Paul is referring to here. Verse 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, and beyond their means ... 4 *begging* us earnestly for the *favor* of taking part in the relief of the saints— 5 beyond what we expected. They gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.”

- These Macedonian churches were not wealthy. In fact, Paul says, **vs. 2**, they themselves were in “*extreme poverty*.”
- And yet, Paul says, **vs. 2**, they responded with a “*wealth of generosity*,” and **vs. 3**, they gave “*according to their means*” and even “*beyond their means*.”
- Literally, **vs. 4**, they “*begged*” for the favor of taking part in helping the poor believers in Jerusalem.
- And in doing this, they had joy—**vs. 2**, an “*abundance of joy*.”
- Which, right there, shatters two myths people often believe about money. First, that only rich people can be generous, and second,

that only rich people can be happy. Here you have a church that is very poor but also very generous and very happy. You can be financially rich and yet poor in both generosity and joy, and you can also be financially poor and still rich in generosity and joy.⁴

- Which, by the way, should be an encouragement to you college students, because I know you hear a series like this one and you think, “Well, this doesn’t apply to me because right now all I have is debt and homework.” But let me give you a little life insight from Uncle J.D.: I found it *easier* to be generous *back in college* when I had no money. I know it sounds ironic, but it’s true.
- I mean, when you’re in college, you’re content with a folding chair and a couple of posters on your wall. That’s your furniture. But one day, I promise, you’re going to start thinking, “You know what would be a really nice addition to these posters, this little art collection? *Frames*.” And you’re going to want to buy frames. And then one day, if you get married, your wife is going to tell you that some frames go out of style. And you’ll have to take your posters out of perfectly good frames and put them into newer frames. In our attic we have a pile of perfectly good, just out-of-style frames. Who knew? I used to ask, “What’s wrong with these frames? Why are we buying new frames?” But now I just accept it.
- The point is, as you get older you get more responsibilities and bills. Trust me, I’ve seen this more times than I can count: ***If you don’t establish generous habits now***, it will be much harder to start them later.

The point was, these churches in northern Greece had next to nothing, but they overflowed with a wealth of generosity, and Paul, **vs. 5**, is so emotionally moved by this that he spews out some of the greatest reflections on gospel-based giving found anywhere in the

⁴ “Some people with very limited resources are still open-handed and generous with what they have. Paul says such people are rich.” “Some people have lots of money but have so much anxiety about their stuff or their security, that they’re imprisoned by their stuff. Paul says they are poor.” Tim Mackie

Bible. (By the way, I've always felt that Paul's greatest teachings occur not when he's **trying** to teach us something, but when he's just emotionally moved by something in his letters and starts randomly reflecting on it. This is one of those cases).

So we're back to vs. 8: "I say this not as a command, but to prove ... that your love also is genuine."

Paul says, "My concern here is not your giving; it's your love. What God wants is not a begrudging sense of duty that asks, "What do I *got* to give?" but an overflowing love that asks, "**What do I get to give?**"

Here's an illustration I've used over the years to help you picture this.

When my daughter Kharis was a little girl, her favorite thing in the world was a BALLOON. It was her favorite toy. And her favorite restaurant was Red Robin because they gave out free balloons.

And so, for her 3rd birthday, I thought I would be super-awesome-Dad, and so I covered the whole kitchen floor with balloons. It took me more than four hours to blow up these balloons. It was honestly the most loving thing I'd ever done for anyone in my life. (You say, "Why didn't you use one of those little pumps to blow them up?" I don't know. Maybe this felt more meaningful.) Either way, I had the whole kitchen covered, like, three feet deep with balloons. I'm over hiding in the corner, and Kharis comes in and her eyes get really wide, and I bust out and say, "Surprise!" ... and she picks up a balloon and (drops it) and says, "Daddy, these balloons are broken." I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "They don't float." She said, "I like the Red Robin balloons that float." I said, "Yeah, but these balloons are better; we can play games with these balloons, like 'See who can keep the balloon afloat the longest.' It's called '**Keepy Uppy.**'" She wasn't buying it.

There's two ways to keep a balloon afloat. If it's filled with your breath, in order to keep it off the ground, you have to keep smacking

it. That's how many people are with their generosity. What they need, once or twice a year, is for someone like me to SMACK them. And so, you come in here, and my job is to smack you—*Do you want to be good Christians? You MUST GIVE!!!!*" And I smack you and you feel guilty and you soar in generosity for a few moments, giving out your money (you throw your lunch money in the bucket; you tip big at lunch that day; you might even text "33933" and try tithing for a month). But very quickly, you sag back down, and so this time next year, I smack you again ... and up you go again, and back down.

There's another way, of course, to keep a balloon afloat. Fill it with helium and it soars on its own, no smacking required.

Paul says, "**What I want for you is for your love to be so genuine that you don't need my commands or anyone's commands to give ... You don't give reluctantly or hesitantly but cheerfully and freely, without any compulsion, because an abundance of love just overflows in your heart and makes you soar, no smacking required!**"

And so **that's what Paul focuses on in the next few verses:** giving that just overflows from the heart. Get this: In these two chapters, Paul uses the word "grace" 10 times, which is more than in all the rest of his New Testament writings *combined*. Let me say that again: **Paul uses the word "grace" more in these two chapters than in all his other New Testament writings combined.** The focus of these chapters is not money; it's grace,⁵ and the kind of instinctive generosity that grace creates in the hearts of all who experience it. So let me give you...

Seven Essentials of Grace-based Giving

(They're pretty punchy and will move quickly) Essential #...

⁵ Tim Mackie

1. Gratefulness replaces guilt (8:9–12)

“9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”

The gospel is not about a God who approaches us with needs. We were unimaginably poor; he was indescribably rich. He’s the giver; we’re the receiver. It is by grace you have been saved through faith, and even that is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God ...

Christianity is not God asking something from us; it’s about God giving something indescribable to us. And so just banish out of your mind that Christianity consists of God asking things from you.

And that changes how we think about generosity. **Namely, that it’s never about the amount of money we give, as if God has projects he’s trying to fundraise for.** Notice vs. 12, Paul says directly: **For if the readiness [to give] is there, [our attitude before God] is acceptable. It’s not about the amount. We give according to what we have, not according to what we do not have.**⁶

What God cares about is **readiness**—the eagerness to give. I love that phrase, **“We give according to what we have, not according to what we do not have.”** A lot of people feel guilty that they don’t have much to give. Maybe you hear people tell these stories about giving and you think, “Well, I can’t give like that. I can’t even dream about giving like that. I’m so poor that even my dreams are on a budget. I’m so poor that the first item on my bucket list is ‘to save enough money to buy a bucket.’”

⁶ My translation

God could care less about that. It’s never about the amount, because God has no needs. It’s about the heart. **You can’t give what you don’t have.** You should always tithe, of course, because that’s giving God the firstfruit. **But beyond that, you can’t give what you don’t have:** Maybe you should ask God for prosperity, so that you can give more. (There’s nothing wrong with that; Paul actually *commends* that thinking in the next chapter!) **Essential #...**

2. You give to the point of sharing in suffering (8:13–14)

“13 For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness 14 your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.”

Paul is saying, “I’m not asking you to take on the responsibility for someone’s needs. I’m saying that when you love someone, you want to share in their needs.” Love-based giving is giving to the point that you share the pain of someone else’s need.

Think of it **like emotionally ministering to someone** you love who is hurting. You *enter into their pain*. You hurt *with* them.

- When I’m in emotional pain, I don’t just need someone with the right answers. I can get that from books. I need people around me who hurt when I hurt because they love me.
- That’s literally what the word “compassion” means: *Com* (which in Latin means “with”) + *passion* (which means “suffer”). You *“suffer with”* someone.
- **Love-based giving is when you give to the point that you share in the person’s hurt, or their need.** Love feels the pain of need and wants to share in it.

- Which is what inspired what **C.S. Lewis** called **“the only safe rule of giving” = “Giving more than you think you can spare.”** Because see, only then are you sharing in someone’s pain, which is the essence of love: *taking some of the pain of the need into yourself.*

Essential #3 of Grace-based Giving...

3. You stop thinking like an atheist (8:15)

“15 As it is written, ‘Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.’”

This is a quote from Exodus 16, which tells the story of how God provided manna for the children of Israel in the wilderness. Here’s the CliffsNotes version of that story in case you’re unfamiliar with it: The children of Israel were in a place in the wilderness where they couldn’t procure food for themselves. And so every night, God miraculously rained down from heaven this stuff called **“manna.”** Each morning, when Israel woke up, the ground was covered with it. Manna in Hebrew is *man’hu*, and literally means, “What the heck is it?” (Based on the description Exodus gives, it seems like a mix between a Twinkie and a protein bar.)

This manna was provided daily. But of course, people back then were just like they are today, and so they wanted a little extra stockpile of it, just in case one morning it didn’t show up—God forgot or overslept or something. But God says, *“That’s not how I want you to think. I want you to trust that I’ll be there tomorrow to provide for your needs then, and you express that by gathering only enough for today and sharing any excess with those who don’t have enough today.”* And to drive home the point, God caused whatever excess they stockpiled to rot, breed worms, and stink.

So think about being in this situation: Say you’re a dad or a mom who goes out and collects a bunch of manna for the day, and by lunch it’s

clear that you have more than enough for your family. You’ve made everything you can make with manna: manna-cotti, peanut butter and manana sandwiches, manana bread ... But still, you have some left over. And you notice there’s some other family over there that for whatever reason didn’t gather enough for the day—maybe the dad was sick or there was some other emergency. Well, you might as well go ahead and share the extra manna you have with them, because **a) tomorrow, God will again supply whatever you need for that day, and b) whatever you gather will just go bad tonight anyway.**

When you trust that the God who provided for you today will be there to provide for you tomorrow, that’s how you think. But when you don’t—when you hoard and refuse to share because you’re afraid that tomorrow there won’t be a God to provide for you ... **well, functionally, you’re thinking like an atheist.** So Paul says, don’t think like an atheist. The God who provided for you today will provide for you tomorrow, and he wants you to use whatever excess he’s given to you to meet needs around you **TODAY.**

- **Quick illustration on this to drive the point home: Parents, suppose you learned** that in your 3rd grader’s class at school there’s a kid who is so poor he never brings his lunch. And so one morning, as you are packing your kid’s lunch, you put two sandwiches into his bag. But you forget to tell your little Johnny why you did that. And so later, at lunch hour, he discovers he has two sandwiches. And let’s just say that somehow you are able to observe what he does when he discovers that—you’re looking through binoculars or something. And you see he discovers he has two sandwiches, and he looks over, and sitting near him is this hungry kid with no sandwich. Are you disappointed if he just instinctively shares his sandwich? Are you disappointed that he doesn’t go shove it into his locker in case you forget to pack his lunch tomorrow? Are you gonna say, “Well, there it goes. My kid doesn’t know how to save for a rainy day! Better make him listen to some Dave Ramsey”? No. You’d feel proud that he instinctively

knew that he can use any excess you gave him to share, because he's confident that you will faithfully supply his needs tomorrow.

Paul is saying that God is no different. When he gives us more, it's so we can meet the needs of those around us TODAY, because we are confident that an ever-faithful God will be present tomorrow to supply for our needs again then.

Now, let me be clear: The Bible is not against wise savings. The book of Proverbs commends it in at least six places,⁷ and people like Joseph in the Bible illustrate the wisdom of it. It's certainly wise to save for retirement. But the Bible **also says** you should respond to the needs and kingdom opportunities in front of you.

Let me just say it straight: For many of you, saving has become a replacement for trust in God, and that's evidenced in how you ignore the needs and opportunities God puts in front of you today. You won't give generously today because you're afraid you might be in a situation tomorrow where God won't provide.

You're only comfortable when you have so much money in the bank that you can say, "I don't even need God for the future; I have all that I need *right here*."

See? Functionally, you're an atheist.

And, as with the manna, that has a rotting effect on your soul.

So, you say, "Well, what are you saying, Pastor? Should we save or not save?" Yes, save, but **not in a way that keeps you from meeting the needs and opportunities God puts in front of you TODAY.**

Opportunities and needs like the ones in front of this church that I've presented to you. Bible translations and new campuses and training facilities and camps.

Fourth essential of grace-based giving...

4. You grasp that giving is the gateway to greater graces (9:6, 10–11a)

Let's go to chapter 9 now. Paul says "(6) He who sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully ... (10) [The God] who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and **multiply** your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness [as you give]. [11] You will be enriched **in every way ...**

Obedience in giving, Paul says, is **the means by which God grows and multiplies the richness of grace in our lives.** Giving is like a seed, he says, that you put into the ground and it multiplies into enrichment.

You say, "What kind of enrichment are you talking about?" Well, look at **vs. 11:** Paul says, "You will be enriched **in every way ...**"

What does "**in every way**" mean? Would "**every way**" = **financial enrichment**? As in, if you give, will God increase you financially?

- **Yes**, that is included in the word "**every**." Every is a big, expansive word.
 - It's a promise repeated throughout Scripture: We saw it in **Malachi 3:10:** "**Test me in this,**" God says... Test me. Put me first and see if I won't make you overflow with blessing!
 - It's what we call "**God Math**" = 90 percent with his blessing goes further than 100 percent without it!
 - **God says, literally,** "**TEST ME** now in this, and see if I won't multiply your provision when you put me first."
 - **I appreciated what Pastor Bryan said last week:** If he had to list out a short explanation of why he believed in God, God's faithfulness to this promise would be in that list—how God multiplied and blessed him when he put God first in his giving.

⁷ Prov 6:6–8; 13:11; 21:20; 27:23–27; 30:24–25

- I've heard **that from so many people in so many ways**. I'd invite you, today, to test him.

So does he mean financial enrichment? Yes. But does he **only mean financial**? No, "in every way" implies there are other ways God blesses you through your generosity.

- In fact, I love the image of **sowing a seed** here.⁸ The fruit of many seeds looks wildly different from the seed itself. For example, have you ever seen a peach seed? **It's this hard**, ugly thing you'd never want to eat—it looks like a **little rat brain**—but from it comes these luscious fruits.
- **Money is like a seed you plant** that harvests in multiple fruits much better than itself.

What are some of those other things? How about greater contentment? Would **"every way" = greater contentment**?

- Yes. Many have said that the secret to a happy life is not having all you want, but wanting what you have.
 - And one of the things **God does in your life as you give is he works contentment** in your heart. That's part of being enriched in every way.
 - **My family has seen that**. When my wife and I give, we find that we grow really content with what we have left. **On the contrary**, it's when we don't give generously that we always find ourselves wanting more.
 - **Listen, every study ever done on this**—secular or Christian—shows that THE happiest people in the world are generous people. It's why I said you can be poor and yet rich, or rich and still poor.
 - Hey, for some of you wealthy people: Maybe the reason you're unhappy is not because you don't have enough ... And I know

that's what you think: *Oh, if I could just get a little bit more! If we could just afford the lake house, or to go on vacation*. But that's not why you're not happy. We're getting into Christmas season ... You're like the Grinch. The Grinch is up there on the mountain hoarding all his stuff; he's fabulously wealthy but he's unhappy, and I love Dr. Seuss's explanation for that: **"It could be his head wasn't screwed on just right. It could be, perhaps his shoes were too tight. But I think that the most likely reason of all, may have been that his heart was two sizes too small."** You think the reason you're unhappy is because you need new shoes or a new job, but what you really need is an enlarged heart. A God-like heart. And God uses generosity to produce that in you.

- **How about this: Would **"every way" = spiritual anointing**?**
 - **Yes**. If you're a connoisseur of the biographies of great Christian leaders, you'll know that some of the most anointed people in the world in Christian history became that way through extravagant generosity.
 - **Count Zinzendorf**, who launched the modern missionary movement, only experienced that power when he began to liquidate his estate so he could send out missionaries.
 - Or I think of **John Calvin**, one of the fathers of the Protestant Reformation. When he died, **Pope Pius** groused in disgust about him: **"The strength of that heretic was his utter disregard for money."**⁹
- Would **"every way" = power in prayer**?
 - Yes, yes, yes. "In every way" is a big word. God uses generosity to enrich you in every way.

⁸ Tim Keller, "The Power of Generosity," 2 Corinthians 8:8–15; 9:6–12.

⁹ Pope Pius IV upon Calvin's death: "The strength of that heretic consisted in this, that money never had the slightest charm for him. If I had such servants my dominion would extend from sea to sea."

And **when you realize that**, Paul says, you'll go from **"What do I have to give?"** to **"What do I get to give?"** because you'll be asking: **"Where do I want to experience the blessing of God?"**

- Let me predict what heaven is going to be like for some of you. I heard this great little story about **Alexander the Great**. I don't know if it's true or not, but it goes like this: Alexander the Great was riding back into Athens after one of his big victories, and as part of the celebration, he was giving out baskets of rice. There was a poor, crippled Athenian man on the side of the road, and when he was given his basket of rice, Alexander the Great saw him and felt compassion, and said to him, "Give me that back." The poor man looked alarmed. This would feed him for a month. So not wanting to disobey Alexander's orders, he reached in the basket and gave back two kernels; Alexander waved his hand at his treasurer, and the treasurer gave the poor man two silver coins. At which point, of course, the poor man tried to give the whole basket back, but it was too late. Alexander had moved on.
- That's going to be some of you in heaven. You'll say, "Look at what God could have done in and through my life!" But it will be too late, and you will have forfeited all the spiritual blessing that could have been yours had you trusted.

5. You understand *why* God prospered you (9:11b)

Real quick: Look at the last part of vs. 11. Paul says, "[11] You will be enriched in every way ... to be generous in every way ..."

- Why does God enrich you? So that you can be even more generous. He blesses you to be a blessing!
- Ponds that just collect water and have no outlet become stagnant and dead. Think of the Dead Sea. Or the great Salt Lake out in Utah. Beautiful and huge, but dead.

- That's some of you—which is why you're not happy. You've had so many streams of income, but you're like the Dead Sea. God didn't create you to be a stagnant pond; he created you to be a river, and that's when you'll be happy.
- You say, "Well, I'm not rich." *Listen: If you make more than \$45K/yr in total household income*, you are in the richest 1 percent of people in the world. Some of you dream about winning the lottery; just by the fact you were born here, in America, means statistically you won the lottery!
- **Which is awesome. Be thankful for that. But just know that with that prosperity comes the responsibility to use it for his kingdom:** You are *enriched in every way* to be generous *in every way*.

Which is why we say: Greater financial capacity ought not just to lead to an increase in your standard of living; it ought also to increase your standard of *giving*. ** *Sixth essential...*

6. You love seeing God's work in people more than you do collecting stuff (9:14)

Paul says that your generosity **"will produce thanksgiving to God"** (2 Corinthians 9:14).

- One of the ways you become a joyful giver is when the thanksgiving toward God that your giving produces in others thrills your heart more than anything else you could do with your money.
- Not long ago, I got a letter from a guy who lived out on the West Coast, **who talked about the impact our church's online ministry had** had on him. He said, "I've struggled with SSA for many years, and I just didn't know where to turn. Some were telling me to forsake Jesus and pursue my lifestyle, and then I heard what you all taught at the Summit Church, and it was like finding water in the desert to my parched soul."

He said, “Through the Summit, I found grace and truth. The *truth* about what God’s word said about the sinfulness of homosexuality, and the grace to know that he had never stopped loving me even as I struggled, and never would.”

He wrote, “The Summit Church’s ministry has *changed my life*. This is no understatement either. Through the mercy of Christ and the ministry of the Summit, I heard for the *first time* that I was *loved* and *accepted* by God. Thank you, thank you, thank you! You have helped me—a man who has been hiding underneath years of shame and feelings of disqualification by the church because of my temptations—you’ve helped me find *new life* and *hope* in the gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ.”

- **Summit! Your generosity produced that.**

Or just a few weeks ago, I got a **letter from a guy in one of the local prisons** where we have a ministry. He was writing me to thank me for our church’s involvement in his life:

- He said, “First, I don’t miss an episode of Summit Life on 105.5 FM, and I have read all of your books, and I send my tithes to Summit ... not to mention the rate in which you quote Tim Keller in your sermons is the same rate I quote you in my weekly sermons in the prison chapel.” “Summit has ‘a big name,’” he says, “here in the prison (I love that) ... Summit’s name carries a lot of weight as it has touched the lives of many men.” **You want to be famous somewhere, Summit? Let’s be famous in the prisons for the message of salvation and the power of the gospel!**
- He then went on to tell me the heartbreaking story of how he ended up in prison. He said, “I had this amazing wife, kids, parents, career, home, but I didn’t have Jesus.” Then he describes a series of pretty severe financial and health challenges he went through, and said, “Sadly, instead of turning to God, I turned to the lusts of the flesh: meth, sex, porn and gambling, and other things, etc. Since my marriage wasn’t built on Jesus, it began to unravel. I watched as my family and career slipped through my

hands, too proud to admit I needed help, pushing further and further into sin. At the time, I blamed everybody else but me, but I take full responsibility now.” He then describes how he found God in his isolation cell, reading Psalm 38 and Psalm 51. He said, “I was literally living out those psalms on the floor of my solitary confinement cell. I confessed hours worth of sins to God, crying out, begging him to change me, and change me he did: I spent the next 3.5 months in solitary, reading the Bible ... Everything about me *changed*. I began calling and writing those I’d wronged, to apologize for my past and to share Jesus with them. I was reconciled to my father, my children, my ex-wife ... I began to have peace, love, patience, and compassion instead of hate and lust and rage.”

- And he said, “I want to thank you for the vital roles the members of Summit have played in that transformation.” He mentions two volunteers in particular—Scott Jablonski and Bryan Galloway—and he says, “They treated us like real people, and showed us the love of Christ. They went ‘above and beyond.’ So please recognize them for their service to Christ; they are living, breathing examples of Christ’s command not to forget those of us in prison.”
- **Your generosity produced that!**
- *Right before this service started, I talked with a college girl who just got saved here a few weeks ago. She’d grown up in the home of two addicts; someone invited her in here a few months ago, and God saved her; now she’s feeling called to ministry, and she’s doing City Project this summer. She’s telling me this story, just overflowing with thankfulness to God; she’s got tears, I’ve got tears. And I think, “THIS is what I want to invest in.”*

Amen? Grace-based giving is when you give because there’s more joy for you in seeing people’s lives changed than there is in collecting stuff.

Which, by the way, was the secret of Jesus’ generosity. The writer of Hebrews, urging the Hebrew Christians to keep pressing forward in

their journey of faith said, “[Keep] [2] looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame ...”

What drove Jesus to pour out his life on the cross? Duty? *“Oh, I better do this or the Father will curse me?”* No. JOY. What joy? What was Jesus thinking about as he went to the cross that brought him joy?

You. ***The joy set before him was the thought of you saved and with him forever in heaven***—the thought of you giving thanksgiving to God—that joyful thought is what moved him to make that sacrifice on the cross.

Now you, go and do likewise. The secret to soaring-balloon, no-smacking-required generosity is when the joy of seeing lives changed exceeds any superficial tingle you get from shiny toys or new purses. **And that brings us to the last and most important essential:**

7. You just can't get over what Jesus did for you (8:9)

Let's bring this back to **2 Corinthians 8:9**: **“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”**

The gospel is not about a God who approaches us with needs. We were unimaginably poor; he was indescribably rich. He's the giver; we're the receiver. It is by grace you have been saved through faith, and not even that is of yourselves. It is ALL the gift of God ...

Christianity is not God asking something from us; it's about God giving something indescribable to us.

This is the secret of the heart of the Christian who SOARS in generosity. You just can't get over what Jesus has done for you.

Count Nicolas von Zinzendorf was born into a noble family of privilege in Dresden, Germany in the early 1700s. His life was destined to be one of leisure, pleasure, and prestige. But shortly after his 20th birthday, he was visiting a famous art museum in Dusseldorf, where he was gripped by a painting called *Ecce Homo* that depicted Jesus just moments before the crucifixion—beaten, bloodied, wearing a crown of thorns. **The painter, Domenico Feti**, had inscribed these words just below the painting: *“All this I have done for you. What have you done for me?”*

- **These words gripped Zinzendorf in ways he was never fully able to articulate.** “All this I've done for you. What have you done for me?” He knew the answer to that was that he'd be lost forever without Jesus. So Zinzendorf began to leverage his great fortune and his life to bring the gospel to others. He started the Moravian missionary movement, the first Protestant missionary movement in the world.
- One of those churches the Moravians planted was in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, the place I grew up. The Moravians started a gospel movement in America that affected me. Part of Zinzendorf's joy, the joy that compelled his sacrifice, was you and me.
- He was an amazing guy whose sacrifices changed your life. And I bet you've never heard of him, and I doubt whether many of you will consider naming one of your kids after him—Zinzendorf. Zinzie. Zen. That's not bad. You should consider that.
- It all began with that question: “All this I've done for you. What have you done for me?”

2 Corinthians 8:9: **“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”**

This is the secret of the heart of the Christian who SOARS in generosity. You just can't get over what Jesus has done for you.

I've had people say to me, *"Well, Pastor J.D., this is the problem. I'm a Christian, but I just don't love Jesus like you do. I don't feel it. You tell us, 'Fall in love with Jesus,' and that kind of frustrates me because I'd love to be as in love with Jesus as you are."*

Ah, but don't you remember? The way God produces that love in you is through *giving*. Giving is the gateway to greater graces. Through giving, God makes *all grace* abound to you, so that you are enriched *in every way*—which includes your love of Jesus.

It's the **same thing Jesus said in Matthew 6:21**: *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Wherever you put your time/ talent/ treasure, your heart will follow.*

- So where do you want your heart to be? **Put your time and treasure there, and your heart will follow:**
- If you **don't love missions**, go on a short-term trip and you'll learn to love it.
- If you want to love heaven more, to love Jesus' mission more, give sacrificially and watch how it transforms your heart!

The Holy Spirit uses your obedience of giving as a means of pouring grace out in your heart, so that you are enriched IN. EVERY. WAY!

Which brings me to this card:

We've talked about this for weeks, and now it's time to fill it out.

Now I told you, don't think of this like a contract. You're not promising anything to us. This is a discipleship tool. (It's written right on there: *faith commitment*.) You say, "Why do we do this?" We've learned that tools like this help you think this out and commit to it. It also helps us, honestly, in our budget projections for the coming year.

It's relatively simple. It says, **"To leave a lasting legacy, the Lord is leading me to ..."** either:

Box (1): start giving. (That's a big step. Don't feel ashamed that you haven't given before. You're about to make a big, life-changing step that's going to reshape your whole eternity.) You may not be wealthy, but literally everyone who has experienced the grace of God should do something.

Box (2) tithe—that is, give 10 percent. Maybe you've been giving, but you aren't yet giving 10 percent. This could be when you commit to that number or ask God to help you get to it. I challenge you to TEST him. Learn firsthand how **"God math" works**. His blessing on the 90 percent is greater than the 100 percent, which is true EVERY. TIME.

(3) give beyond the tithe—that is, consider how you can invest in eternity. Some of you have assets—property, savings accounts—and you've been holding onto it, but you realize that God has multiplied you so you could invest it into his kingdom *today*.

- **Can I tell you something mind-boggling? Many rich people don't tithe.** Studies show, and this is so discouraging, that the greater your wealth, the lower the percentage you give. It's like many rich people still don't believe they have enough.
- But see, God enriches you in every way to be generous in every way. And that's the key to happiness. *I'll say it again: **The reason some of you wealthy people aren't happy is not that you don't have enough, but because you're a stagnant pond, and God created you to be a life-giving river.*** Like the Grinch, you need to enlarge your heart, and that happens through giving.
- You need to check right here and commit to becoming a river!

Now, a few notes before I have you fill this out:

- First, all of our **staff and leaders are making this commitment**. We aren't calling you to do anything we haven't already done ourselves.
- **Second, the number you're putting in here is for one year**. You're not saying you'll give this right away. If you have a monthly amount in mind, that's fine. Just multiply it by 12 and put that there in the blank. Easy.
- **Only one card per household**. If you're single, you get your own card. If married, you have to share.
- **For right now, don't worry about splitting out "Legacy Lanes" or other giving like that**. We'll give more instruction on that in December. Just put the **total number** the Lord is leading you to give *through* The Summit Church.
- **Finally, if you're a guest with us today**, I know you're like, "Well, I picked the worst weekend in the world to visit this church for the first time." Yeah, I get it. I do. But actually, I'm glad you're here. If you're new here, we don't want anything from you, but I'm glad you can see what we are all about—and maybe one day, you'll join us in this mission. But for right now, **like I said, NO COMPULSION**.