

## “Giving Generously”

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*Sixth in a series about Discipleship Practices*

Matthew 6.25-34; 2 Corinthians 9:5-15

February 16, 2020

If you're reading this online, you can see the Scripture selections  
[by clicking here.](#)

Paul wants the young Christian community in Corinth to give money to those in Jerusalem.

The Christian movement started in Jerusalem. The first followers, like Paul, were all Jews. The movement grew. Christian cells soon existed throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Most of these new converts were not Jews, which created some tension within the Church.

The Jerusalem church (Jewish) was poor. Because we are one in Christ, the other churches (increasingly Gentile) had a responsibility to help it.<sup>1</sup> The Corinthians had agreed. Now Paul is coming to see them. He is going to pick up their gift and head to Jerusalem. He has sent some colleagues ahead, to get things ready. Why? “*I want it be a real gift from you,*” he writes them. He wants them to give for the right reasons.

II

Giving generously is what Jesus' people do.

These winter weeks, we are working our way through 6 of these things Jesus' people do.

*Using Spiritual Practices*  
*Worshipping Together Weekly*  
*Discovering Authentic Community*  
*Serving with Our Gifts*  
*Giving Generously*  
*Sharing Christ*

Debbie Johnson and Jamie Holtom describe these in their book Bullseye.<sup>2</sup> A bullseye is what you aim for. It's our target, our goal. We don't always hit it, but the bullseye keeps us aiming the right way.

This is all about following Jesus. When we travel with him, he gives us his life. Jesus' life is the life we are made for. These discipleship activities are practices his Spirit uses to shape us like Jesus.

We've already heard about the first four on the list. (You can find my reflections on these on our church's website). Today: *Giving Generously*.

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<sup>1</sup> For other references to this collection, see Galatians 2:10, I Corinthians 16:1 and Romans 15:25-26.

<sup>2</sup> Jamie Holtom and Debbie Johnson, Bullseye: Aiming to Follow Jesus (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 2015).

Remember Paul wrote, “*I want it be a real gift from you.*” Generosity is not about the magnitude of our gift. It is about the attitude of our giving. Why do we give?

### III

When we follow Jesus, **we generously give to sow seeds.**

Paul uses this farming image. Sow a few seeds, you get a small crop. Sow seeds generously, you get a generous crop. When farmers sow, they are not losing the seed. They are counting on it becoming more and more.

When we give our wealth, it might feel like we’re losing something. Realize we are sowing, though, changes how we see it. When we give, we invest.

You give \$100 to our congregation. That helps pay the heating bill. That means a toddler can be cared for in our building. It means someone can come to the AA group here on Friday evening for support as they heal from addiction. It means I can meet with a family to share their grief and prepare for their loved one’s funeral. It means all sorts of people can come this evening and share a potluck supper and games.<sup>3</sup>

What happened to that \$100? Is it lost? Or is it sown?

Everything you have is God’s gift. God gives to you, so you can invest it in God’s work.

### IV

When we follow Jesus, **generous giving is a decision.**

Paul wrote, “*Everyone should give whatever they have decided in their heart. They shouldn’t give with hesitation or because of pressure.*”

When we hear “heart,” we think of emotions. But in Biblical cultures, the “heart” was a way of talking about, not just our feelings, but also our will, our decision making, our conscience.

We give generously not when we are pressured or guilted , but when we’ve thought about it, prayed about it, and decided.

Jamie and Debbie wrote this:

*[Generous giving] does not rely on our hearts being captured by an emotional response — we give as a whole life’s response to God. It is a practice that invites us to think about and reflect on what it means to be a steward of God’s gifts. It is a deliberate prioritizing of our money so that we share, save, and then spend.*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Bullseye, 110.

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Notice that order: share, save, spend. The order matters.

When Barb and I were students, newly married, and not making much, we decided what we would give. We set our bullseye target: 10% of our income. We'd give first, not from whatever we had left over (we never had anything left over). We've done that ever since. Half, we give to our church congregations, and half to other groups doing God's work. We think about it. We talk and pray about it. We decide.

How do you decide what you give?

## V

Barb and I have found that our feelings flow from thoughtful giving.

Jesus's followers **generously give with delight**.

Paul wrote, "*God loves a cheerful giver.*"

As a child, I pictured people putting their offering in the plate with grins on their faces. Not a bad image. The Greek word Paul used (which gets translated as "cheerful") is *hilaros*. "Hilarious" come from it. It is delight. When you see your seed burst into a crop, it's hilarious! When you see our seeds pooled together, growing so much, it's hilarious.

*God loves people who love to give. God loves it when the giver delights in the giving.*<sup>5</sup>

Dave Toycen was World Vision Canada's president. He has met with many, many donors. He noticed this. They are happy people. Grumpy people tend not to be generous. Generous people are delightful.<sup>6</sup>

Why? God is generous. You're never going to out-give God. Still, God has made you in God's image. When you give generously, you are doing what you are made to do. That's why it is a joy.

## VI

Remember, generosity is not about the magnitude of your gift. It is about the attitude of your giving. Give to sow seeds. Give thoughtfully and decide. Give with delight.

Jesus talked about money a lot. Why? How we think about the wealth God gives us and what we do with it, is either part of following him, or it holds us back.

Here is a bullseye target. What about setting aside 10% of your income, for a month, and then give it away? If 10 sounds like too much, try 5%. One month. Here's how one woman

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<sup>5</sup> Translations of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 9.7 from, respectively, the Contemporary English Version and The Message.

<sup>6</sup> Harold Percy told about his conversation with Dave Toycen in his workshop, [How to Preach About Money Without Leaving Town](#).

found that experience.

*At the end of the month, she was amazed. She had experienced a freedom in giving that she had never experienced before. She had moved from duty and obligation to delight. Delight that she could make the commitment and keep it. Delight that she had a really strong sense that her commitment was responding to God's generosity. Delight that although she had worried there would not be enough . . . there was an abundance.<sup>7</sup>*

Giving generously is about trusting God. God is generous. God delights to give. God is always sowing seeds, always producing an abundance. When you follow Jesus and give generously, you experience this.

That's the bullseye.

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<sup>7</sup> Bullseye, 114.