

Joke: A frog walks into a bank... and approaches the teller. He can see from her name tag that her name is Patricia Whack. So he says, "Ms. Whack, I'd like to get a loan to buy a boat and go on a long vacation."

Patti stares at the talking frog in disbelief but recovers herself quickly and asks him how much he wants to borrow.

The frog says \$30,000.

The teller asks for his name and the frog says that his name is Kermit Jagger, his dad is Mick Jagger, and that it's OK, he knows the bank manager.

Patti explains that \$30,000 is a substantial amount of money and that he will need to secure some collateral against the loan. She asks if he has anything he can use as collateral.

The frog says, "Sure. I have this," and produces a tiny porcelain elephant, about an inch tall, bright blue and perfectly formed.

Very confused, Patti explains that she'll have to consult with the manager and disappears into a back office.

She finds the manager and says "There's a frog called Kermit Jagger out there who claims to know you and wants to borrow \$30,000. He wants to use this as collateral." She holds up the tiny blue elephant. "I mean, what the heck is this?"

The bank manager looks back at her and says: "It's a knick knack, Patti Whack. Give the frog a loan. His old man's a Rolling Stone"

Let me begin with asking you a question, the question is how many liked that joke? No that's not it, here is the real question: How many advertisements do you think you are exposed to every day?

An article that was written in 2007. Think about that, that was before Instagram had even started, Facebook was just a few years old. And that article told us that in 2007 we were exposed to, are you ready for this? About 5,000 advertisements every single day.

On any given day, you saw around 5,000 ads per day.

Fast forward to today, 2023 and the number of ads you've seen has doubled. With the popularity of social media, with all the bloggers and influencers that are trying to get there 15 minutes of fame and your 30 minutes of attention, we see around 10,000 advertisements everyday.

Think about this, you do a search for an item on Google than you through scroll your Facebook feed and what do see? Ad after ad of what you just searched for moments ago.

And just in case you your wondering, seeing all those ads everyday isn't the best news. Studies also show that the more ads we see, the more miserable we are.

And the reason is, because every waking moment we're reminded of what we don't have, and what we think we need to have in order to be happy.

And the prevalent message of most ads is that to be happy, you have to get more, you have to accumulate, and you can't have the good life without the new technological advances that are out there, or the fashionable shoes, or that designer purse.

Our culture just screams at us over and over again that it's more blessed to get. It's more blessed to acquire. It's more blessed to accumulate.

10,000 times a day it's shouted from the mountain tops, "It's more blessed to get."

Jesus had a very counter-cultural message. In Acts chapter 20 we read. . .

Acts 20:35 (TPT): I've left you an example of how you should serve and take care of those who are weak. For we must always cherish the words of our Lord Jesus, who taught, 'Giving brings a far greater blessing than receiving.' "

Jesus taught what? Giving brings a far greater blessing than receiving.

We've all heard the phrase, "it's more blessed to give than to receive."

Honestly, there are a lot of younger kids that would argue that point, but it is true nonetheless.

The word in the Greek that's translated as blessed, is makarios and it means supremely blest, fortunate, not just happy but happier.

Simply put you're more joyful, happier when you're giving. You're more fulfilled when you give. You're more blessed when you give than when you receive.

And today I'm going to share a message on the topic of giving and most of you know I don't talk about this too often.

And let me start by saying this, I believe most of you would love to give more, but you feel, and I have felt this way myself, you feel like you just can't do it right now.

You would like to give more, but don't feel like you can.

Let me also say this, I'm not sharing this to make you feel like you need to give more, that we need you to give more, none of that. I'm not going to stand up here and make promises that God will give you a house on the lake if you give more, because truth is He might not.

It's also true that He might, It's often times the motive of your heart as to how God responds. But, I will say this before I get started today and that is I truly believe God wants to bless His children so that we can be a blessing to others.

In this series we have been looking at the power of our decisions and we have looked at a few things that we need to determine in advance, decide today, so that we are not side swiped and blind-sighted with our tomorrows.

I mentioned that the problem for many of us, however, is that we're just not very good decision-makers.

What we are trying to teach is that instead of waiting until we're in the heat in the moment and letting our emotions drive us, we're instead determining in advance to seek God today so that when we're faced with something, we've already thought about it, already prayed about it, and we've decided in advance when faced with whatever situation, we already have made a course of action because we determined in advance what to do.

Let me briefly remind you of what we have looked at in this series so far. In week one we just looked at learning to make

wiser, better decisions, week 2 we looked at being ready because we have an enemy that is looking to steal, kill, and destroy any and every thing that God has for you. In week 3 we looked at being consistent, consistent in prayer, in Spiritual disciplines, and finally last week we talked about being devoted to God, seeking first His kingdom and righteousness. Giving God more than the left overs of the 168 hours you and I have in any given week.

And today we are looking at determining today to be more generous. I'm talking about a life style not just a Sunday morning only generosity, also not just monetarily although that is my focus today.

We are going to determine in advance to live extravagantly generous.

Why do you need to determine that in advance? Because when life hits and your tempted to be anything but, you have decided no matter what storms may come I will still be generous.

Giving just like I mentioned last week with being devoted it just doesn't happen by accident.

No one ever just by chance stumbles into giving offerings or paying the rent for someone who's in need, buying a meal for someone, or making sure the waitress or waiter gets a good tip.

Let me share a bit about the tip thing. I have always been a generous tipper. I don't care if food was cold, the wait staff was rude, or it wasn't exactly what I ordered. I always tip well. And if service is phenomenal I might tip even more extravagant.

And let me tell you why, it's simply like this. I often will offer to pray for my waiter, I have at times given them a prophetic word,

and I am an ambassador for Christ and so even when I think they don't deserve a generous tip I remember I didn't deserve God's generous grace either, and so as an ambassador for Christ I want to let others know God has richly blessed me so I can be a blessing to others. In so doing I have had waiters that as I left the restaurant ran out the door behind me thanking me for the tip, nearly in tears, and that waiter forgot to bring one of our meals to the table until I mentioned when we half way through ours that he never brought out our sons. So, as an ambassador I simply want to represent Him well.

Back to the message, no one ever stumbles into generosity.

I have heard so many say I want to more generous but. . .

And you know what comes next. . . "When I have more, then I'll give more." Ever heard that. . . ever say that?

And I dare say no you won't. I'm not trying to be harsh or unsympathetic I just understand that generosity isn't about what you have or don't have. Generosity is all about the heart.

Generosity goes beyond just giving. It's a character of the heart. Being kind, generous with time and money, it's freedom from pettiness in character and mind.

And that's nothing you don't already know. Think about it, you've see people that don't have much of anything those that you might consider poor even, you've seen some of them who are stingy and you've seen poor people that are simply incredibly generous.

At the same time you've seen rich people that you couldn't squeeze anything out. And others that change the world with their passionate, wild and extravagant generosity.

And I have learned money doesn't change people it just brings more of their character to light. So, we're going to determine in advance to be generous now. Because if we're not generous now, chances are, we won't be generous later.

In fact, Jesus told a parable, and it illustrates so much more than what I'm going to share with you, but one of the principles it shows is actually what I have been talking about.

It's found in Luke 12 in it there was a rich man who had a big harvest. And so the rich guy just got richer. So, he starts thinking, "What should I do with all of this that I have? I don't have room to store it. Where am I going to put all of this?"

Let me start by telling you what he didn't say. He didn't say, I have so much more than last harvest and so I think it's time for me to be incredibly generous.

I'm going to share with my neighbors, help out another business, share with my laborers, I'm going fund my church expansion plan, help single moms. be a huge blessing to people around me and help people to go to college. Start a savings for my children's children.

He didn't say that. What did the rich man do when he had more? He did what he'd done before.

He said this in Luke 12:18.

Luke 12:18–19 (TPT): I know what I'll do! I'll tear down the barns and build one massive barn that will hold all my grain and goods. 19 Then I can just sit back, surrounded with comfort and ease. I'll enjoy life with no worries at all.'

He said I'm taken care of, I have accumulated stuff and I'm set for life.

I will probably say this again, but let me pause and tell you I am not saying don't plan for the future, or have nothing to show for.

But there has been a teaching in the body of Christ that I think has been misrepresented. First is that if you give, God is going to give you everything you want. They call it the prosperity gospel. The other is that you need to barely live and have nothing to please God. Both are wrong.

Truth is I believe God will bless, wants to bless when we live life generously. He truly wants to bless us so we can be a blessing to others. But for some God needs to hold back all He desires to give because if He blessed us in abundance it would ruin us. We haven't learned to steward the little well why should He trust us with the much.

Money is not bad, we need it to survive. Amen! Here's what Timothy tells us:

1 Timothy 6:10 (TPT): Loving money is the first step toward all kinds of trouble. Some people run after it so much that they have given up their faith. Craving more money pushes them away from the faith into error, compounding misery in their lives!

Loving money, and for some money has come their god. Their life support, they trust in it. And if you trust in it over God it can steal your devotion to Jesus.

And so, the reason why this rich man did what he had always done and just stored up what he had, is simply because of his love for stuff, for money, and the truth is, more money doesn't make you more generous.

And he had such a love of money.

There's another one we read about. . .

Matthew 19:21–22 (TPT): Jesus said to him, “If you really want to be perfect, go immediately and sell everything you own. Give all your money to the poor and your treasure will be transferred into heaven. Then come back and follow me for the rest of your life.”

22 When the young man heard these words, he walked away angry, for he was extremely wealthy.

His love for money stopped his pursuit of Jesus.

Understand church, more money just makes more of what you already are. More money doesn't change who you are, it just reveals who you are.

That's the point I want to bring home today if you want to be generous when you have more, learn to be generous when you have less.

I have always given to the church. Always. And truthfully I didn't always have much to give. And often felt like I couldn't give.

I remember when I worked at JWI someone asked me how I can afford to give 10 percent or more to my church. I simply told them I can't afford not to. My God makes my \$.90 go so much further than my \$1.00 ever could.

And when I got laid off from a different job still gave my church. My landlord hired me I'm sure by just coincidence to paint the apartment downstairs because the other family had just moved out. Oh, and by the way he paid me more than I made at my job and basically lived rent free for a month or two until I was back to work.

So, what I want to do today is help you do what I believe you want to do, because I know all of God's people really want to be more generous. At least you should.

It's just sometimes we just don't feel like we can.

And so I want to show you a couple of principles I think generous people have.

And today my prayer is that you will determine in advance, decide today that giving isn't just something you do, but being generous is part of who you are.

Two qualities of generous people. Number one: Generous people plan to be generous.

But pastor I thought generosity was like just randomly blessing people. You see a guy on the side of the road with a sign, and you just randomly give him something, or you buy someone's groceries because you're prompted to, or you spontaneously pay for the food of the person behind you in the drive-through line.

I thought that was generosity.

Truth is that's how most of us give most of the time. You hear of a need and you do what you can to meet that need.

You watch the Jerry Lewis telethon and send in your help. You see the poor children and want to help out so you send what you can. You go to some fundraising event and some motivational speaker pops up behind the mic and try's to inspire you to give, or worse yet you go to church and the pastor stands up and guilts you into giving.

By the way, never give anything, anywhere out of guilt. That is not generosity. If you give in bitterness, or frustration just because that's not a blessing to you or the receiver.

But with any of the things I mentioned those things are simply giving, not necessarily generosity.

And giving is good, you should want to give. And I do that often. But giving is not the same as generosity.

Funny story, we were walking I believe it was in Boston and there was a guy sitting along the sidewalk with a sign. That's not the funny part, the sign didn't read like so many others. Hungry please help, or work for food. No, the sign said, "help me get drunk tonight." I appreciated his honesty, but I didn't give nor was I generous.

Here's the difference between the two. . .

Generous people, don't need to be guilted to give, or inspired to give. Generous people, don't just give whenever they see a need or whenever they have something extra. They don't just give whenever they're prompted by the spirit. Although don't miss those opportunities. But generous people just give, they have a plan to give.

Look what the prophet Isaiah told us in Scripture. . .

Isaiah 32:8 (NLT): But generous people plan to do what is generous, and they stand firm in their generosity.

I'm not waiting until I have more. I'm not making excuses as to why I cannot do anything now because giving is not what I do, generous is who I am.

The generous plan to do what is generous. They have determined in advance to stand firm in their generosity.

And I find it rather funny that when it comes to finances most people have a plan. You may be thinking, "I don't have a plan," Oh yes you do.

You may not have a written budget. But if there's something that we want, we will research to find the best deal? What's the best model? Where can we get the best price?

And generous people simply plan to give.

In fact, when you become generous by nature, and by that I mean your designing your life around generosity. It's not something you do as a reaction, it's a mindset that you're prayerfully asking God, "How can we make a difference? How can we be a blessing to people around us?"

It's not just spontaneous. Sometimes yes, but not all the time, it's more intentional.

We have determined in advance. I have determined in advance to give a very generous tip any time I go out. Bad service doesn't matter. Bad food doesn't matter. I have determined I want the wait staff to be blessed and I want to be someone that makes them feel blessed. I want them when I go to their place to say I want that table where I'm sitting because he blesses me. not please someone else take it because he doesn't appreciate the service anyway.

Look at this. . .

Proverbs 22:1 (NIV): A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.

And here's what happens oh so often. Because we live in the instant gratification culture, With the Burger King mentality, you know the one, have it your way. All because our culture teaches us that stuff is what matters.

In the words of Will Smith, We spend more than we have, to impress the people we don't even like.

And because we spend more than we have we worry about money more and even if we want to be generous with our money you can't be because you'll worry more.

And it's this vicious cycle.

And church, what we need to understand is this, it is not just a money problem, it's a spiritual problem. We're trusting in things rather than putting our faith in God.

Generous people break that cycle. Not accidentally, but strategically, intentionally.

They break the cycle by choosing to put God first. Jesus said it this way.

Matthew 6:33–34 (TPT): 33 “So above all, constantly chase after the realm of God’s kingdom and the righteousness that proceeds from him. Then all these less important things will be given to you abundantly. 34 Refuse to worry about tomorrow, but deal with each challenge that comes your way, one day at a time. Tomorrow will take care of itself.”

Not seek first the shoes, not seek first the car, not seek first the watch, but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, put him first, and then all those lesser things will be given in abundance.

Listen I have some nice things, a decent house, drive a nice vehicle (yes Randy it's a Ford) but I try to remember to honor God first.

We seek God first.

And church hear me I know you have all heard about giving the 10 percent. And I give at least that, but I'm not talking about just giving 10 percent. Look what Scripture tells us. . .

2 Corinthians 9:6–11 (TPT): Here's my point. A stingy sower will reap a meager harvest, but the one who sows from a generous spirit will reap an abundant harvest. 7 Let giving flow from your heart, not from a sense of religious duty. Let it spring up freely from the joy of giving—all because God loves hilarious generosity! 8 Yes, God is more than ready to overwhelm you with every form of grace, so that you will have more than enough of everything—every moment and in every way. He will make you overflow with abundance in every good thing you do. 9 Just as the Scriptures say about the one who trusts in him: Because he has sown extravagantly and given to the poor, his kindness and generous deeds will never be forgotten. 10 This generous God who supplies abundant seed for the farmer, which becomes bread for our meals, is even more extravagant toward you. First he supplies every need, plus more. Then he multiplies the seed as you sow it, so that the harvest of your generosity will grow. 11 You will be abundantly enriched in every way as you give generously on every occasion, for when we take your gifts to those in need, it causes many to give thanks to God.

Hear this church, this is not the prosperity gospel, I heard way to much of that. If you will just give your 10 percent if you will just empty your bank account God will give make you rich.

And He might, but He might not. A lot depends on your motivation. And if you feel guilted into giving you are going to get bitter, angry, frustrated, and may stop giving altogether.

Now here's the truth, I believe God wants to bless you so you can be a blessing, but He sometimes can't bless you the way He wants because you haven't stewarded well what He's given.

This isn't a prosperity gospel, with empty promises, this is generosity gospel and there's huge a difference between the two.

What I am telling you is God proves himself faithful. He has proved Himself faithful to me time and time again.

The prosperity gospel says give and God will make you rich. The generosity gospel is one that says, for God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son.

When you seek God first, God supplies. You put him first. You honor him and you give to him. You determine in advance to give to him first. And then God provides. God blesses you. God proves himself faithful. And that builds your faith.

And suddenly, rather than being worried, you find yourself simply living life more generous. You don't even have to have a lot or give a lot. Giving is not what you do; generous is who you are. It's a mindset that takes place when you put God first.

And let me also say this, let me heed you a warning. I have learned to live my life generously, but I also have learned I'm not the provider for everyone. I have helped people also have told them no. Be generous not foolish.

Determine today, we're not gonna give only when it's convenient. We're not gonna give to God when we have some left over.

Give God your first and your best, and we trust Him to bless the rest.

It's a decision.

I love some of the Facebook reels. Now listen I know much of it is staged, but there's a guy that goes through the store and offers \$20.00 if they can quote a Scripture. Somebody else asks for help and when someone finally agrees to help he blesses them with like \$1000.00.

And listen church maybe you can't do that. Start with being faithful in your giving at church, let God prove Himself faithful. Pray for that person in the restaurant or the grocery store. Leave a tip that blesses. And as He blesses and I promise you, if you, are generous with the right motivation, He will. That's in the Word and I love this check this out. . .

Isaiah 55:10–11 (NIV): As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

How about this. . .

2 Corinthians 1:19–20 (TPT): Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and he is the one whom Timothy, Silas, and I have preached to you—and he has never been both a “yes” and a “no.” He has always been and always will be for us a resounding “YES!”
20 For all of God's promises find their “yes” of fulfillment in him.

And as his “yes” and our “amen” ascend to God, we bring him glory.

And God has promised you will reap what you sow. He will prove Himself faithful.

The second thing that generous people do is this: Generous people don't hold back.

Don't just give what we can, or expected maybe round up is a better way to put it.

In fact, I love this verse. It's so rich. Solomon said in Proverbs 21:26. He said this:

Proverbs 21:26 (NIV): All day long he craves for more, but the righteous give without sparing.

All day long the lazy and the selfish craves for more, but the righteous gives without sparing in other words he doesn't hold back.

You see it over and over again in scripture. . .

The good Samaritan is walking along, and he sees a man beaten and left for dead. And he cleans him up puts some bandages on him and takes him to a hotel, looks at the guy and says "Good luck. I took care of you. Get better. See ya, wouldn't want to be ya."

No, scripture says, "he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, told him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher, I love this. . .I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'

He rounded up. He went the extra mile.

Zacchaeus, even better example. If you don't know the story, he was a crook who stole from people. Collected more tax than was required. But he met the life-transforming grace of Jesus and decided not just to give back, but to give back and to round up. He said, "If I've cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

Jesus taught this principle. If someone demands your shirt, give him your designer jacket as well. If someone says, "Go one mile," round up and go two miles.

So the next time you're contemplating, "Should I give a lower amount or a higher amount on a tip?" just be a blessing and round up.

That's what generous people do. They determine in advance to be generous.

And listen church I don't want you to get the impression that I've always been a generous person. Truth is that just isn't true, but in the past 10 or so years, and it wasn't a money thing it was a spiritual problem, God showed me that I was trusting what I could see, the little bit of savings, the empty gas tank, the lack of things rather than trusting in what God says.

And so here's the thing. If you want to be generous when you have more, learn to be generous when you have less.

Generous is who we are, you are happier. It's more joyful when you give.

But it's never going to be accidental. Generous people, plan to do what is generous, and they stand firm in their generosity.

We're not waiting till later. We're not making excuses as to why we can't. We stand firm. We've already decided. We plan for it, and we round up. Why? Because we serve the most generous God who determined before the foundations of the world to send His Son and give us the ultimate gift of life and forgiveness in Christ.

So Father, we pray today that we would be a church known for our generosity, God, help each of us to be incredibly generous. Help us to prayerfully and strategically design our life around a spirit of generosity. Papa, help us to start by trusting you, by putting you first, give us eyes to see and wisdom to know how to make a difference in the world around us. Help us determine in advance to always be generous. To be a blessing to others not just when they deserve it, but in spite of them deserving it. Father we didn't deserve salvation, we didn't deserve Your grace, but you were generous in Your mercy and love. Help us to do the same. Let Your spirit speak to us today. In Jesus name.