

The Joy of Giving

Philippians 4:4-9

The Berenstain Bears and the Joy of Giving is one example of the way we expect children to grasp that “*it is more blessed to give than to receive.*” As adults, do we believe it? This was Paul’s closing exhortation to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:35: cf. Luke 6:38 “*give and it will be given to you...*”



Today we come to number eight of nine sermons in our series “**Joy for the Journey**”. We are studying Paul’s thank you letter to the Philippians. Today’s text centers on Paul’s appreciation for their financial support. Building upon his gratitude, Paul shared his hope that they would grow in the **joy of giving**.



Last week our topic was the **joy of resting** from anxiety of heart and mind. We considered [Philippians 2:15-16a](#) which feels counter-intuitive. Yet there is a vital connection between resting and reflecting. Last Monday while paddling in Indian Arm, I saw a wonderful picture of this in the shimmering sunlight. Every tiny bit of flotsam glistened. They could not produce light but reflected the light of the sun!

Today, we are thinking about reflecting the generosity of God. Do you find joy in giving? When I was part of the MB family of churches I appreciated this thought from the **Confession of Faith**...

*Christians do not claim any of their possessions as their own,
but manage all their resources, including money, time, abilities
and influence, in generous ways that give glory to God.*

Christian giving can be any selfless contribution which supports God’s purpose of making disciples of all nations. Our church budget is for the goal of “**living and sharing the life of Jesus**”. There are various ways to give to Cornerstone. But stewardship is not just money. And it is not just outward. It flows from faith in Christ. In our text, Paul offers six qualities of joyful giving. Let’s read [Philippians 4:10-19](#).

1. Concern – v. 10

Paul “*rejoiced in the Lord greatly*” because the **concern** of the Philippians for him was “revived” (“to sprout new shoots”; “bloom again”). That church had supported Paul already but then had a new opportunity to help. We do not know the details of this opportunity, but we have a sense of their motivation. The gift came from relationship and caring connection (see I Thessalonians 2:8). When we give to God it will become meaningful and impactful when it is fueled by genuine concern for people.

2. Contentment – vv. 11-12

Do you live with **contentment** (“self-sufficient”)? Paul was not “self-reliant” in his contentment, as in stoicism or fatalism. Paul had learned serenity about his circumstances. He grew in this grace by experiencing “little *and* prosperity”; “filled *and* hungry”; “abundance *and* need”. Contented Christians become generous and learn to push back against the consumerism of our age [you might want to check out the article: [How Can The Bible Guide Our Consumption](#)].

The phrase “*Happiness is quality of life minus envy*” is attributed to Jimmy Carr, a British comedian, whose world view is anything but evangelical. This is very thoughtful, but better is the plain, Biblical truth: “*godliness with contentment is great gain*” (I Timothy 6:6). As Jesus taught in Luke 12:15, life is not defined by what one possesses, even when that might be a great deal!

3. Conviction – vv. 13

In verse 12 Paul said he had been “initiated” (as when initiated into a cult) into a foundational **conviction**. So, his contentment was based on the reality of God’s power at work in the believer to overcome anything! As we grow in this conviction about God’s omnipotence (“all power”) we are more at peace about the giving process. We accept our inadequacy – specifically, God is not in need of money! Yet He has invited our participation – we need the growth that comes from giving.

“Not what we say about our blessings, but how we use them, is the true measure of our thanksgiving.”

- W. T. Purkiser

4. Commitment – vv. 14-16

Paul further assured the Philippians that even though God is not in need of our resources, it is good to invest in His Kingdom purposes. The Philippians were **committed** to supporting Paul. They “shared”, or “together partnered” (v.14) in “giving and receiving” (v.15). I Timothy 6:17-19 teaches intentional and deliberate giving. But giving is far less about “place and percentage” and so much more about divine “prompting and practice”.

The question “how much?” will inevitably surface. Yes, a 10% tithe is pattern from the Old Testament (Gen 14:17-20;28:22). But combined, the tithes in the Law came to 23% (***Sneakers From Heaven***, Ron Blue, 136). Commitment in our giving occurs when we give selflessly, not legalistically (see II Corinthians 9:6-7).

5. Commended – vv. 17-18

Paul also **commended** the Philippians for financially supporting his ministry. This commendation had three components. *First*, Paul was passionate that they would benefit from giving – “*the interest which is accruing to your credit*” (v.17, Moule’s translation). *Second*, the support they sent had arrived via Epaphroditus and had helped. *Third*, their gift was a “*fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.*” In sum, when we make an *earthly* investment, it will earn *eternal* dividends. In Deuteronomy 14:23 we learn that giving is a way of learning to fear God – to worship Him. Is your giving commendable?

6. Confidence – v. 19

Finally, joyful givers have **confidence** that God will faithfully supply all that is needed. This confidence is illustrated in Leviticus 23 in the festival of first fruits. This was an offering of barley and wheat, according to the harvest season. No grain was to be consumed until the offering had been present to God. This was an act of faith that the balance of the harvest would supply one's physical needs. Such assurance prompts us to give joyfully and strategically.

Ron Blue writes about three ways of giving...

should give – proportional – I Cor. 16:2

could give – sacrificial – II Cor. 8:2

would give – faithful – Phil. 4:16

Conclusion

Reading that giving can be joyful might be all well and good for the **Berenstain Bears**! But the thought of parting with our money is not comfortable. Is giving and generosity an intimidating topic for you? At Cornerstone we do not want you to be overwhelmed by giving! But like Paul, we do long for you to know the joy of giving! There is no wisdom or blessing for you in staying on the sidelines of giving!

As Paul wrote in II Corinthians 8:7 we can all learn to “*excel in the grace of giving.*” Or as John Wesley encouraged:

“Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.”



Consider that communion is corporately saying thank you (*eucharist*). It is our collective response to God's greatest act of giving – providing His only Son as the sinless sacrifice on Calvary.

Priceless – II Cor 8:9

Indescribable – II Cor 9:15

Victorious – I Cor 15:57

Remember to check out worship songs of joy – see “[Paul's Picks](#)”