



The Apostle Paul is giving instructions to a young pastor, offering principles of faith and practice he should teach his church. We discover a great insight into the heart of a pastor, the heart of a church and the heart of God. In the Roman world, there was pretty much no middle class. There was the rich and there was the poor, a few of the former and many of the latter. Both rich and poor came to Christ, came to church together (one of the unique things about the early church was often all they had in common was Jesus Christ). The idea of sharing what you had with others was foreign to the Romans, but it was the heart of those who followed Jesus, the most generous person who ever lived.

Why is doing good, being rich in good works and being generous so core to Christianity?

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GPS for Families

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If you have children you have most likely uttered the phrase, “You are supposed to share,” at some point in your parenting. We want them to be giving and kind adults, so we have to teach them to share as children, right? Yes, we do need to teach them the concept of sharing and being generous, but this does not necessarily mean forcing them to share.

Here’s how this works. First, when you share things with others, tell them. You might say, “Mommy loves sharing her ice cream with you,” or “Look how we share our money with others.” This will help them understand what it means to share, and more importantly, you will be modeling generosity. Then when the time comes that they do not want to share their toys with their playmate or sibling, tell them it is okay. The toy is theirs to decide what to do with it. Do not try to make them feel guilty by saying they “should” share or “God would want them to share.” Simply-tell them it is their choice to share or not. You might then find a toy to share yourself with the other child. Those times when they do decide to share, celebrate and let them feel the joy of giving. You might discuss the feelings they had about sharing or not sharing later. Help them understand that God calls us to be generous, and there is great joy in giving and sharing with others.

MESSAGE “Practicing Extravagant Generosity Shapes the Future”

SCRIPTURE 1 Timothy 6:17-19

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- Do not be conceited.
 - Do not fix your hope on money.
 - God richly supplies all things to enjoy.
 - Do good and be rich in good works.
 - Be generous and ready to share.
 - Build a good foundation for the future.
1. Following Jesus Christ is not rocket science.
“Freely you received, freely give.” (*Matthew 10:8b*)
 2. Everybody can participate in the Kingdom equally.
“And Jesus saw a certain poor widow putting in two small copper coins. And He said, ‘Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all out of their surplus . . . but she out of her poverty . . .’” (*Luke 21:2-4*)
 3. Generosity is a promise-based principle of faith.
“Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them; let all who are around Him bring gifts to Him who is to be feared.” (*Psalms 76:11*)

“ . . . take hold of life that which is life for sure.” (*1 Tim. 6:19a*)

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Almighty God, we want to thank you for the many ways you are generous with us. You provide in great and faithful abundance. You forgive with amazing grace. You walk by our side in gentleness and power. You save us, help us, guide us and fill us with hope. We are grateful. May the spirit of generosity represented by your gift of Jesus Christ be reflected in us. All glory and honor is yours. Amen.

By what we believe and how we behave, we are constantly shaping what our future will look like. God gives us the ability to do this, all directed by biblical faith, empowered by the Holy Spirit and made possible by our willingness to live our lives His way. Practicing extravagant generosity is one of the ways we shape that future. Generosity defines the relationships we will have, changes us and changes the world. In this text, we are encouraged to present our lives to God as a living sacrifice and to live in such a way that the world does not conform us into its mold, but that instead we live by the will of God that transcends that world.

What are the concrete ways we might present our lives to God as a living sacrifice?

How can we avoid being conformed to the world's values by living generously?

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In this section of the Bible, the Apostle Paul uses the analogy of taking off one set of clothing and putting on a new set — the old set of clothes being a life without Christ and one that lives by the standards of the world, and the new set being a life in Christ and living a new way by the standards of God. This new life is created as we discover knowledge of God and model life after the image of the one who created us. This example is also the savior, Jesus Christ, Jesus, who was the most generous person who ever lived — generous enough to save us when we don't deserve it and generous in teaching how we should live — compassionate, kind, humble, patient and gentle, forgiving one another and living in love. (verses 12, 13)

What in our life should be laid aside?

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In Corinth, there would be few readers who would not understand that someone who plants a few seeds will receive only a small harvest later, and one who planted many seeds would have a rich harvest. What's powerful about these verses is that the Bible uses this to describe generosity — here specifically, financial generosity, for the Corinthian church was giving to help other churches and Christians. The key idea is "He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiple your seed for sowing and increase the harvest . . ." (verse 10) This is a key, biblical principle and teaches us one of the ways we participate with God as He works in our lives.

Stop for a minute and do an inventory of God's blessings.

Are we planting that which God gives us in the lives of others?

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We are reading today just one verse, but it is an important one, setting the "principle" for the Apostle Paul's entire life and giving us what we need to live the same faith journey. Paul experienced an amazing transformation. This once Pharisee who sought to destroy Christianity became a leader of the very faith he sought to end, an apostle to the Roman world. This he did faithfully, despite the many sacrifices this would call for. He does so under the principles:

My life is not my own. I have a course to finish that God has given me. I have received this ministry from Jesus Christ. I will testify of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The principle that we belong to God and we each have a purpose is fundamental to those who accept Christ.

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