



Paul writes these words from prison where he was for serving God and sharing Christ with his world. Paul had seasons of life where things went very well, he even had abundance and more than he needed. He had other seasons, such as the one he was experiencing as he wrote this, where it seems he had lost everything, everything, that is, but Jesus. This was the core of Paul's strength, not only to know that Christ was where you could get strength and courage, but since Jesus was the greatest treasure of his life, every other priority fell into place.

*How did Paul's priorities during abundant seasons keep him on track in times of less? How do we learn to live in "prosperity"?*

*Why is having a priority of living for God and serving Christ the balance for both seasons?*

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## GPS for Families

*GrowPrayStudy.org/family*

We live in a world full of covetousness and immediate gratification. The craze for more money and more stuff surrounds us and consumes most families.

Teach your children contentment by being contented. If you feel like you could use a new home or a new car or a new job and find yourself always looking at homes, cars and jobs that others have, stop yourself each time and thank God for what you do have, even if it seems inadequate. Share your thankfulness out loud with your family. Share with them that you sometimes wish you had more, but you know God will provide all that we need when we need it.

If your children long for more, bigger, better stuff, explain the difference between needs and wants. Tell your children that we already have what we need even though we may want more. Explain that when we look at what others have and wish we had the same, that is called coveting. When we covet something, it can consume all our thoughts and keep us from focusing on our work, school, family, etc. Coveting more can even cause people to steal and commit other crimes to get what they want. To remind ourselves not to covet, we should daily thank God for what we have. We also should give to others (our church, a family in need, a good cause). Remind your children that everything we have comes from God, so when we give to Him, we are only returning what He let us have in the first place.

MESSAGE

**"Practicing Extravagant Generosity Changes the World!"**

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:42-47

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**"You are like the salt for everyone on earth . . . You are like the light for the world. A city built on top of a hill cannot be hidden, and no one would light a lamp and put it under a clay pot. A lamp is placed on a lampstand, where it can give light to everyone in the house. Make your light shine, so that others will see the good that you do and will praise your Father in heaven."**

*Matthew 5:13,14-16 (CEV)*

The Acts 2 Church

1. The early Church was generous with seekers.
2. The early Church was generous with each other.
3. The early Church was generous with worship.
4. The early Church was generous with all they had, all they were and all they hoped to be.

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.*

Here the Bible makes an intimate connection between the person of Jesus Christ and the work of the Church. The verses remind us that Jesus was rich in all the ways wealth is measured, but He gave this up and became poor in all the ways poverty is measured for our sake. The Son of God made a conscious decision to give Himself for us. In verse 7, the Bible tells us that we abound in everything because of this — in faith, in love and even more — giving direction that the follower of Christ should also abound in the gracious work that God calls us to do and involve ourselves in the work of Christ’s Church through generosity, not out of “command” but in “the sincerity of your love.”

*Why must love for God include love for Christ’s purpose and work that changes the world?*

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Worship is one of the most special practices of the Christian life — pure worship — experiencing God in and through that worship, remembering clearly who we are, people absolutely dependent upon God, a God who is more than willing to give life and care to those who trust Him. The Psalmist sees worship as a response to the benefits and gifts of God, a season of giving thanks for His salvation and an active response to those gifts and that salvation. One of the things that verse 14 offers is the idea of making and paying a vow to God, a promise made to God. Promises define and form the future.

*What are the ways that calling upon the name of the Lord daily might please God?*

*Why is making and paying a vow to God important to us and honoring to God?*

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The Corinthian church was anything but perfect. The letter was written to address some of the concerns the Apostle Paul had about the church but also to celebrate how God was at work in the church. This passage talks about one of the ways Paul knew God was at work; the church was very generous and full of generous people. Even though many of its members struggled, their “abundance of joy . . . overflowed in the wealth of liberality.” In fact, Paul writes that the people of the church begged to be a part of helping others, first by giving themselves to God and then to others by “the will of God.” There are three principles taught here:

1. *They gave of their own accord, out of love for God.*
2. *We are expected to be generous according to our ability.*
3. *There is a partnership with God and others in giving that changes the world.*

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In the time these words were spoken by Jesus, the inheritance of a father typically went to the older son. This son could choose to divide or share the inheritance with his younger siblings, but it was not required. It seems that one of the listeners of Jesus was in this situation and wanted Jesus to tell his brother to share the inheritance with him. The heart of the matter could be that someone actually has a short audience with the Son of God — with Jesus Christ — and given this opportunity, the focus is only on getting money from his older brother. Jesus sees quickly to the heart of the matter and reminds the man and all who are listening, “Be on your guard against every form of greed . . . even when one has abundance, life does not consist of his possessions.”

*What really matters in life?*

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