

WHEN YOU

GIVE

**A SHORT GUIDE FOR
CHEERFUL GIVERS**

INTRODUCTION

THERE'S A STORY IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK about rich people giving large amounts of money at the temple.

Along comes a poor widow and throws in two copper coins.

In this moment, Jesus gathered his disciples and said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

I love that story for so many reasons.

FIRST, GOD NOTICES WHAT OTHERS MISS.

Most people would make a big deal out of the big gifts and gloss over the smaller one, but Jesus noticed this humble donation. Today, it might seem like generosity only makes the news when it comes from CEOs or celebrities. But most churches are funded by ordinary people.

No matter the amount, when you give, God pays attention.

AND SECOND, WHAT JESUS CONSIDERS IMPRESSIVE IS NOT ALWAYS WHAT PEOPLE CONSIDER IMPRESSIVE.

The widow's sacrifice was the headline of the story. It wasn't the amount, but her attitude. When Paul later instructed the church on how to give, he said we should give happily, not out of obligation, but out of joy.

As you think about your own personal giving, remember the story of the widow.

Think about how your contribution—whether large or small by the world's standard—can be used to make a difference in our community and around the world.

Think about how your actions might inspire others, how your contribution might impact the gospel, and how your own life might be blessed.

THINK ABOUT

OTHERS

WHENEVER TRAGEDY STRIKES, a lot of people speak up to offer thoughts and prayers.

We should always be grateful for the thoughts and appreciative of the prayers. Yet at the same time, wouldn't it be great if those thoughts and prayers inspired action?

When you gave, you took a tangible step. You didn't just think about doing something, you took action.

You see, we don't ask people to give just to pay the bills. We ask people to give so we can make a difference.

Every single act of generosity toward our church is combined with others to make a very real difference in our community. Your gift is going to be used to make other people's lives better.

Mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, neighbors and co-workers are going to be helped because of your donation.

There was a church in Corinth during the time of the Apostle Paul, commended in the book of 1 Corinthians for acting in generosity. And here's the thing— they were giving faithfully to support a community *whom they had never met*.

Their generosity made a difference in the lives of people they didn't even know.

You might never meet the people impacted by your gift, but you can rest assured God knows them. You might be one step, two steps, or ten steps removed from the people we are helping, but your giving makes a tangible difference.

**GIVING IS A GIANT LEVER
POSITIONED ON THE
FULCRUM OF THE WORLD,
ALLOWING US TO
MOVE MOUNTAINS
IN THE NEXT WORLD.**

**BECAUSE WE GIVE,
ETERNITY WILL BE DIFFERENT,
FOR OTHERS AND FOR US.**

—RANDY ALCORN

THINK ABOUT

OUR CHURCH

THE CHURCH IS MORE THAN a building, more than a collection of ministries, and more than a lineup of programs.

We're here to be a light in the darkness and a place of hope for our neighborhoods. With a deep sense of purpose and an urgent mission in front of us, we're a group of people joining forces to bring the Gospel to our community.

Of course, those things take resources. But we don't just *consume* resources to survive; we *leverage* resources to advance the Gospel. We don't spend money to keep the lights on; we leverage money to be the light.

There's a story in the Gospel of Matthew about an interaction between Jesus and the Apostle Peter. Jesus led the disciples from Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee about 40 miles north to a town called Caesarea Philippi. The city was home to a temple to the Roman god, Pan.

It was here that Jesus asked, "Who do people think I am?" His disciple said, "People think you're Elijah or Moses back from the dead." Then, Jesus asked his disciples directly: "Who do you say I am?"

Peter speaks up and boldly says, "You are the Messiah, the Christ." Jesus praises Peter's answer and then makes a declaration of his own, which

includes the words, “I will build my church.”

This is a powerful statement because Jesus is saying the church belongs to him. Not a person, organization, committee, denomination, synod, nation, group, conference, district, or network.

These modern structures have their place, but when you step all the way back, it’s important to realize the Church belongs to Christ.

He is the head of the Church. He is in charge of the Church. He is the boss. The Church is ultimately His responsibility.

This makes our mission that much more important. And it means that your part in it, no matter the size of it, has eternal ramifications.

No matter what happens in the world, the Church will still exist because it belongs to Jesus.

WE’RE BUILDING SOMETHING THAT WILL OUTLIVE US,

AND YOU’RE PART OF IT.

THINK ABOUT

THE GOSPEL

ALL PEOPLE ARE MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD.

This doesn't mean that we physically look like God, but that we share similar moral, spiritual, and intellectual qualities. It's one thing that makes us different from all other creations.

We are image-bearers.

One of the most famous verses in the Bible is John 3:16. It reads, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

God gave His Son.

God gave.

Generosity is at the heart of God's character.

When you act in generosity, you aren't just meeting a need—you are reflecting the very character of God.

In a small but very tangible way, you're telling people that God is good and God is generous.

**EVERY ACT OF GENEROSITY
IS A MINI-SERMON
PROCLAIMING **GOD'S GOODNESS**
TO THE REST OF THE WORLD.**

THINK ABOUT

THE FUTURE

THE NEXT TIME YOU DRIVE DOWN A ROAD, think about the people who built that road.

The work they did in the past made it possible for you drive somewhere in the present.

Generosity works like that, too.

Sure, your gifts help meet immediate needs. But you're also making a difference in the days to come.

You're paving the way for future blessings for people you may not even know.

In Genesis 12:1-2, God told Abraham that he would be the "father of a great nation" and all the nations of the earth would be blessed through him. Abraham's faithfulness to follow God meant countless generations would be blessed.

There's no way Abraham could have wrapped his mind around that promise.

While we may not fully realize what our generosity means for the future, most of us can look back and see how other people's generosity and kindness has impacted us.

We are where we are because of others.

And people you may not even know will be blessed because of your generosity. That's because your giving doesn't just impact today; it impacts tomorrow.

YOUR GIVING DOESN'T JUST IMPACT TODAY;

**IT IMPACTS
TOMORROW.**

THINK ABOUT

YOURSELF

THERE ARE A LOT OF REASONS PEOPLE GIVE.

Some people give to a big, bold cause. They are inspired by huge vision and want to make a difference.

Others give to specific needs. They see an opportunity right in front of them and want to meet the need.

Many Christians give because the Bible says to give. The Bible has more than 2,000 verses about stewardship, money, and generosity, including these two:

“But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?” (1 John 3:17)

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35)

There are plenty of reasons to give, but here’s one you might not have considered before . . .

Giving is actually good for you.

Whether you're giving your time, your influence, or your resources, studies show that giving is good for the giver's physical and mental health.

- Lower blood pressure
- Less depression
- Lower stress levels
- Greater happiness
- Even a longer life

GENEROSITY, IT SEEMS, IS GOOD FOR

THE SOUL & THE BODY

THINK ABOUT

OUR FAITH

IN THE 3RD CENTURY AD, a plague swept Northern Africa, Italy, and most of the western Roman Empire. History tells us that 5,000 people per day were dying in Rome. The sick were left in the streets.

In the city of Carthage, Christians were falsely blamed for the epidemic and were told by the Emperor to make sacrifices to their gods to end the plague. The Emperor obviously didn't understand how Christianity worked.

Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage at the time, instructed Christians to take care of the sick and the dying. And not just their own family

members—the Romans, too. Christians in the Roman Empire began burying the dead and caring for the ill, at the risk of their own health. They showed concern for all people, even those with different beliefs, and even as they were blamed and mocked.

In the year 362, the Emperor Julian wrote, “The impious Galileans [Christians] support not only their own poor but ours as well.” Even as he derided Christianity, he noted it was spreading across the empire partly because of “benevolence to strangers.”

Rodney Stark, author of *The Rise of Christianity*,

argues that some of the growth of the church in the early centuries can be attributed to the care and compassion Christians showed for the sick. During this plague, an earlier plague in the 2nd Century, and a later plague in the 6th century, he notes increased conversion rates.

There have been times in your life when you've been looked down upon for your faith.

But throughout the history of Christianity, the world has noticed our generosity.

Your contribution to our church may not feel on par with caring for the sick during a Roman plague, but rest assured, you're contributing to our collective witness. You're standing with Christians everywhere who love God with all their heart and love their neighbor as much as they love themselves.

IN TOUGHER TIMES, CHRISTIANS WERE

**MORE CARING,
MORE LOVING,
AND MORE GENEROUS.**

CHRISTIANITY IS ABOUT GIVING AND RECEIVING.

Because God gave His Son, we can receive the free gift of salvation.

That's the heart of the gospel.

But because God has been so generous toward us, we want to be generous to others.

That's the heart of loving our neighbor.

Giving truly is an amazing thing. It reflects the very heart of God, makes a tangible difference in our church and in the world, and helps expand the Kingdom of God.

THANK YOU FOR GIVING.