Life Under Construction:
"Generously Committed"
Part 7

Intro: Many of us have had negative experiences when it comes to generosity. Maybe it was in a church, from a religious leader, another Christian, but sometimes these experiences can result in us resisting something God wants us to build our lives with.

- Here's one of my negative experiences. Share story.
- But it did cause me to start asking; "What does really want from me?"

The bible talks a lot about money. Much of what it says is negative if we do not view money properly and use it in the way that God intended.

- One of God's protections that He has put in place to keep the influence of money in check is generosity. Generosity is another indisputable quality to build our lives with. If we resist this building material, we will allow the negative influence of money to control our lives rather than Jesus.
- Today, I want to share with you about how to build our lives being generously committed.

1. God wants us to excel at generosity

II Cor. 8:7 "Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving." (NLT)

- Here is a fact: God has never asked us as His followers to excel at accumulation. He has never commanded us to excel at acquiring material possessions. He has never commanded people to excel at creating wealth for themselves. Ever!
- What He does want us to build our lives with is exceling at financial generosity. What I love about this passage is it's not just being generous God wants. He is asking His followers to excel at this. He wants us to be extraordinary givers.
- WHY? Building your life with accumulation rather than generosity will result in a weak life. Placing your security and trust in the things of this world is building your life on the sand. It is not the foundation Jesus wants you to have.
- Generosity is connected to what you and I really trust. Trust is the foundation for all relationships to be built upon. Our relationship with Jesus is no different. Generosity is a trust indicator. It indicates where or who I truly put my trust in.
- If by my talking about money and generosity makes you uncomfortable it is only because you have a high value and trust in it. There would be no emotional response if I didn't threaten something you love.

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- When we can excel in generosity, we can excel in our growing trust in Jesus. This is why generosity is a relational issue more than it is a financial issue. It really comes down to who you trust.
    - Some people will say, "Well, I am generous with my time." That's admirable and we all should aspire to this. BUT, this is not what the passage is talking about and nowhere in the bible does it say you can trade one virtue for another. You might as well say you are generous with your time but refuse to tell the truth. No, both are important.
- Some of you really struggle trusting Jesus to take care of you in this life. Your faith is still compartmentalized. You believe in Jesus, yet this belief has not transformed how you view and handle money. You still look at it like the world does. It's all about protecting it and accumulating more. Generosity actually threatens you internally.
- So here is a question I want to ask: Are you excelling in generosity? If the answer is no, why? What is the barrier that is keeping you from following Jesus in this way and keeping you from using this quality to build your life with?
- The irony of this is most people think they are building a strong life by accumulating wealth when Jesus said just the opposite. A strong life is built on generosity. If this is true, then it would make sense to excel in something that makes your life strong.

Let's understand even more why excelling at generosity is so important. How does it make our lives strong?

2. Generosity results in more resources not less

The entire chapter is about financial generosity.

II Cor. 9:8-10 "And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. [9] As the Scriptures say,
"They share freely and give generously to the poor.
Their good deeds will be remembered forever."
[10] For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you." (NLT)

- One of the main reasons we struggle with generosity is we believe that giving away resources results in less. It's just simple subtraction. The problem with this is we serve a supernatural God. In God's kingdom, giving results in more. I know…crazy.
- Until we actually experience God as our provider, this concept will never make sense to us. Since generosity is a quality that God wants us to excel in, why then would God bankrupt us if we practice it? Why would He punish us for doing the very thing He has commanded us to do? God's not that mean!

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- Let's read II Cor. 9 again with this understanding. (read) Can you see that as we practice generosity, God increases our financial resources so we can continue to excel at generosity? Generosity actually results in more rather than less.
- I know this sounds crazy to many of you but let me remind you that as followers of Jesus we operate on the principals of another Kingdom. God's Kingdom has supernatural power for us to live in this world.
- Lisa and I have experienced this principal countless times over the years. We have experienced God's miraculous provision and blessing in so many ways that exceling at giving is actually a joy. WHY? Because you get to see God.
- I believe this is one of the reasons God continues to bless Foothills. We practice generosity corporately. We give away a tremendous amount of resources to our own community and to Guatemala. (explain)
    - Backpack buddies – dollar amount
    - Food Pantry – $
    - Guatemala – over $202,000 – (sponsorship / trips / food and medical program)
    - FSM - Feeding 100 middle school kids every week
    - All this and more happened while we also raised over $500K for our parking lot We didn't stop generosity to do a parking lot. We gave away even more!
- There is no shortage of resources in the Kingdom of God. There is a limited amount of resources in this worldly kingdom, but not God's. Which kingdom are you operating on?
- How many of you want to see God in a tangible way in your life? Here's how.

3. Generosity is God's way to meet needs

II Cor. 9:12 "So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God." (NLT)

- Our generosity is an extension of God's care and love to others. Our generosity is God's way of distributing resources to those in need. Our generosity makes a difference in the lives of others. Our generosity fuels the mission of transformation in this world.
- To refuse to excel at giving is to miss out on God using our lives to be His hands and feet to a broken world in desperate need of hope.
    - Generosity allows us to operate a Food Pantry for our community
    - Generosity allows us to feed hundreds of kids in our school district every week
    - Generosity allows us to make a difference in Guatemala
    - Generosity allows us to run programs for kids seeking to influence the next generation for Jesus (kids church)
    - Generosity allows us to minister to students every week (FSM)
    - Generosity allows us to run classes, groups, and places for people to learn, grow and be encouraged.
    - Generosity allows the MACC to provide critical care to Seniors.

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- Generosity allows us to improve our building so we can do even more kingdom ministry.
- Generosity allows us to keep the lights on, the heat / AC / so we have a place to do Kingdom work. (I love that we are busy 7 days a week)
- Generosity allows us to employ almost 30 people at Foothills – It allows us to pursue economic transformation. That's 30 people who don't have to travel to Portland to find work.
- Generosity allows us to dream and dare to follow Jesus into even more. Generosity allows for movement and resources to chase the vision Jesus gave us.
- Generosity overcomes obstacles and inspires faith in others. Many obstacles we face require financial resources to overcome. You do not meet tangible needs in a community with only good intentions. It requires resources.

- When our generosity meets the needs of others there is joy that is expressed to God. It is through the generosity of God's people where people see Jesus. Generosity is a good deed that others see and ask "why"?

4. Generosity is proof we are obedient to the gospel

II Cor. 9:13 "As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God. For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ." (NLT)

- Generosity is connected to our commitment to the Gospel. The word Gospel simply means the good news about Jesus. Generosity is connected with our participation with His work and forgiveness on the cross and seeing this message of hope communicated in our world. How so?
  - I want to see the Gospel advance; therefore, I am generous.
  - I want to see the Gospel demonstrated in tangible ways, therefore I am generous
  - I want to see the Gospel make a difference in my own community; therefore, I am generous.
  - I want to see my church continue to grow in its influence in our community, therefore I am generous.
  - I want to see 1000s of unchurched people in our area come to know the hope that is in Jesus, therefore I choose to be generous.
- Advancing the message of Jesus in our world requires resources. It is the greatest cause on earth worthy of our support, our sacrifice, our time and our energy. How can I not be generous to the most precious thing on Jesus' heart…people finding a relationship with Him?
- The giving power of a church this size is incredible. We demonstrate this every week. What if we became even more consistent? What if we could excel even more?
- Our mission is to Reach – Equip - Transform. The success of this mission is dependent upon the generosity of God's people.

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What should we do? How can we grow in this as a church?

- Let me throw out a challenge. Can we get 100 individuals or families to either begin to give $100 a month or to increase their giving $100 per month? $100 by 100 people challenge.
- What will this do? It will excel our generosity an additional $10K per month and will provide an additional $120K per year for Kingdom work in our own community. Jesus calls us to excel, so let's have a goal worthy of that call. If we aim at nothing we are sure to hit it.

- So how do we grow being generously committed?

<u>6 Action steps</u>:
1. Pray, making a decision to excel at giving
2. Decide on an amount and frequency. ($100? – For some it will be less – That's OK.)
3. Utilize tools to help stay consistent (online or envelope) – Please start by giving to your church rather than some special need. explain
4. Trust God despite your fears. This is how we experience God as our Provider.
5. Tell others of God's provision – Share your stories to encourage others to excel at giving.
6. Choose to excel in your giving not remain static – I say this to all of you who have been faithful givers for years. Thank you! BUT, can we all continue to excel?

- One final thing, if you are a guest here or very new to Foothills, please know that I am not directing any of this to you this morning. We do not want your money. We want you to get to know us, our mission, connect relationally with others and decide to become part of what God is doing here first.

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