

# Steward Carefully, Give Generously

VISION & VALUES SERIES 2022 | GENEROSITY SERMON | 05.01.22

Again, welcome to Rock of Grace! I'm Pastor Jordan and I'm the lead pastor of Rock of Grace and also the campus pastor here in Kinsman. God has been doing so many beautiful things through our ministry teams in Cortland and in Warren since launching that campus in January and of course here in Kinsman, what some would call our "sending campus" and I couldn't be more grateful. In fact, two quick testimonies - a man named Larry on our Warren Launch team - he and his wife have been praying for their dad for years and he gave his heart to Jesus on Easter Sunday! Awesome!

Then a healing testimony - a woman had a chronic daily issue that simply wouldn't heal and her doctors didn't know what to do. A young lady and her daughter prayed for this woman in faith believing Jesus could and would heal her and she has been healed ever since! FREE of that daily issue that was getting very exhausting and worrisome! JESUS STILL HEALS!

Today, we begin a vision and values sermon series and I want to talk about our value of Glorifying God in All Things. The purpose of that value is that we who call Rock of Grace our home church understand that everything is worship.

If I am called to be a worshiper than I'm called to a life of sacrifice, a life aimed at giving, not so much ... taking.

## God calls us to a life that stewards carefully and gives generously.

God is calling us out of a life of selfishness as His Spirit changes us from the inside out. God's Spirit creates the FRUIT of the Spirit in us and that fruit - love - patience - kindness - all the fruit are echoes of generosity - a life lived for the benefit of others.

I've always loved trees. There's just something about them. They feel almost eternal to me. I know they're not. I know they do eventually die but did you know that many of them live hundreds of years? Many trees are seen and enjoyed by *multiple* generations.

Shortly after I married Danielle, I remember seeing my father in law out back planting some small cherry and walnut trees. I walked out to say *Hi* and asked.. *Are you going to sell these in like 15 years or what? How long does this investment take?* He said, *Well, they're not for me. They're for you kids and the grandkids. By the time me and JoAnne are gone, these trees could be sold to help support you guys.*

That little conversation stuck with me and I hope it sticks with you as well. I realized lately why that conversation resonated with me so much. It touched on values that my wife and I share, values that I know were passed down to me by my parents, my wife's parents and spiritual parents like David and Shayne Harnett. They all would often speak about the blessing that God has given them and how they were overjoyed to pass down those blessings. Short conversations I had with Dr Harnett in my early 20's taught me to think long-term and how to steward what God has given me, my kids, my money, everything.

I remember a dream I had when I was around 25 years old. It was incredibly vivid and I even wrote it down in the journal next to my bed that morning. I felt it was a "God-dream" for some reason and I definitely don't have many of those so so I wrote it down and wondered if I should write a book where I share the concept of the dream. Here I am, 13 years later, finally writing a devotion about it - maybe a book will come about from this one day too. We'll see.

In the dream, I saw a son walking hand in hand with his dad as they approached a singular small tree in a large field. The tree was about 5' tall and didn't have any fruit on it's branches yet. The son said "Dad, I want a bench to sit on. I brought my saw. Let's cut down this tree and build a bench." As the son took his saw to the base of the tree, the father placed his hand on the boy's hand and stopped him. "Son, you don't need a bench right now. If you'll just wait a while, this tree will grow big and strong. You'll be able to cut just one branch off of this tree and with that one branch, you can build a bench."

"What about the rest of the tree?" The boy asked. His dad replied, "It's going to bear fruit and in each piece of fruit there are eight seeds! Each seed can be planted and it will become a new tree!" As the dad continued, he reached his hand in his pocket and pulled out a little ziplock bag full of seeds. "Son, you brought a saw but I brought some seeds. I want us to find some good spots back here to plant these seeds and years from now, you'll look out and have plenty of trees. Not only will you be able to cut off a branch, you'll see birds coming to rest in these branches of all of these trees! Some trees will be big. Some will be medium and some trees will be small. But if you cut this one little tree down today, you'll lose an entire future orchard. Now, what would you like to

do? Build a bench or plant a tree?"

The son raise his eyebrows in excitement ... Let's plant a tree!

I never connected that dream I had to the conversation I had with Bob that day a few years later. I think many Christians want to build a bench instead of plant a tree. Our Father God calls us to a life of sacrifice, a life of meaningfulness, a life of love and generosity. Yes, there's time to rest and we all need a bench sometimes. But I wonder how many Christians are still living with a me-first mentality? It's a "build a bench" mindset. I wonder how many Jesus-followers enter their church and still think "What's here for me today?" I wonder how many enter their job and think "I'm going to give it the minimal effort because after all, I'm just getting a paycheck" I wonder how many Christians are stewing over new tax codes that affect the quality of their street but have never considered inviting their neighbors who live on that same street over for dinner? If you entered work instead praying for a certain coworker and maybe paying for their lunch, asking great questions, how much different life would be? If you invited those neighbors over many times over the years, hoping to make an impact on them for Christ, how different life would be. It's like we have a choice, build a bench or plant tree.

When you're a new Christian, this is understandable as it takes time for the Holy Spirit to mature us. Sanctification is a process and learning to put our needs aside to serve others is an attribute that we grow in as "Christ is formed in us" to use the words of the Apostle Paul. But many Christians have been following Jesus for 10 years and are still attending church looking to be served. They go to work, ready to complain instead of contribute. Sometimes we are are like that little boy, aren't we? We want a bench - just somewhere to sit. In the moment, it does seem appealing because of the demands of our work and life. I know I often want a bench - especially with 5 kids! The truth is though, the joy is in the orchard. The joy comes in looking out and seeing lives touched and families strengthened by a diligent effort to love and serve them over time. Orchards take time. Significance takes time.

It takes time to plant an orchard. It takes time to learn how to be significant. How to be sacrificial. How to live like Jesus and GIVE, GIVE and GIVE again.

1 Cor. 16:1-4

Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. <sup>2</sup> On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I

come. <sup>3</sup> And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.”  
ESV

There's that principle again that we saw in the OT now here again in the New T. As well as the book of Acts - where believers are encouraged to come together once a week, not only to worship God with their voices but with their offerings to God - with their finances.

Please understand something when it comes to a pastor teaching you about tithing and generosity.

It's not what I want from you, it's what I want FOR you.

The blessing in the sense of PEACE that comes with trusting God is wonderful!

The practical way that we trust God - that we show God that He is truly LORD and not just Savior - is through our finances.

When we have a windfall, what do we do?

When we have a good tax return, what do we do?

These are the moments that reveal what's most important to us - what our values are - what we worship.

I'd encourage you to do what Danielle and I have done for years. When our level of income increases, instead of raising our standard of living, we try to raise our level of giving.

Who can we give to? Who can we bless? This could be missions. This could be our 10 Cities Mission to plant 10 churches in 10 cities in 10 years to see God transform trumbull county with His love. All that church planting takes money. The missionary in Asia or Africa or Thailand ...it takes money to get them what they need - transportation, sound system, building, sometimes just a roof over their head and Bibles and supplies.

God builds His kingdom through the faithfulness of everyday Christians giving generously.

### 2 Cor. 9:6-15

<sup>6</sup> The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. <sup>7</sup> Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup> And God is

able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. <sup>9</sup> As it is written,

“He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor;  
his righteousness endures forever.”

<sup>10</sup> He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. <sup>11</sup> You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. <sup>12</sup> For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. <sup>13</sup> By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, <sup>14</sup> while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. <sup>15</sup> Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

This passage teaches us so much!  
GOD is the one who supplies seed to the sower!

Look at this line ... “YOU will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way.”

I don't know about you but I want my life to be ENRICHED IN EVERY WAY.

What does this kind of generosity produce?  
THANKSGIVING TO GOD! WORSHIP!  
It's not just supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing!

All of this stems from what - GOD'S GENEROSITY TOWARDS US - his GRACE verse 15 says.

Gratitude for grace produces a lifestyle of generosity. (Repeat that)

Let me state it plainly. The tree we talked about a few minutes ago represents the thing(s) you will choose to do that may seem small but could bring in a great reward years from now - not for you, but for your children. This could be financial decisions - choosing to save and invest a portion of all your income instead of simply spending what comes in. This could be a choice to invite a co-worker over often or a neighbor. This could be a choice to make a positive impact by mentoring a teen once a month that lives in the TCCS housing facility. This could mean fostering. This could mean picking up your grandkids once a week to both give your kids a break and make a meaningful impact on

your grandkids. It always sad to see when grandparents miss this brief opportunity. I'm inviting you into a "plant a tree" mentality; a life that plays "the long game" if you will.

I wonder if you'd begin to ask God "What is the tree I can plant today that will outlive me? What is it, Lord, that you want me to start doing today that will benefit future generations? Who is it Lord, that I can impact for Your Kingdom?" Lastly, "Lord, how can I use my finances differently so I'm not just building a bench for me, but instead planting a tree for others to see Your goodness?"

**You might have guessed now that this is a message about finances** and if so, you'd be right. I felt as I prayed about which angle to take on "GLORIFYING GOD IN ALL THINGS" I couldn't help but think about the fact that MONEY is one of those "ALL THINGS" With money, it touches every-THING.

**Truly, almost every decision we make considers cost, doesn't it.**

Dad, I want to go to the game

*How much are the tickets?*

Dad, let's get pizza tonight.

Well I have a coupon for Papa Johns that makes a large only \$6. Bucks (glory!)

Cost - there it is.

Mom, I want a candy bar.

*No. They're \$1.25 and we have some candy at home. I can get a box of those for .55 cents each - plus you already had ice cream! I see what you tried to pull there!*

Honey, I need a new lawn mower.

Your wife's like... "Is ours broke?"

Well, I mean... it kinda works but it's only a 42" deck and baby I really do need a 48" deck.

She gives you that look - guys - you know that look. The one where the the side of the lip goes up just a little bit? That's the one. It's the look that says "I'm not an idiot. You don't *need* to spend that money. You don't *need* that new lawn mower."

Everything in our life considers costs - money - moolah - dolla dolla bills!

I wish it didn't. But it does.

**WHO'S THE SPENDER?**

So let's have some fun with this. For those of you that are married, you have to know that in every couple, one of you is the sender and the one is the saver. If you are the

spender, raise your hand. Like, be honest. OK you're in church. You shouldn't lie ever - but really? In church!?! Don't be lying!

If you see a big red sale sign that says "40% OFF TODAY ONLY" You're like "Babe, we're gonna LOSE money if we don't buy this right now!" LOL

You're spouse is like "You're gonna make me lose my mind if you spend one more dollar of OUR money!"

Now we laugh now, but let's be real. Money can be a SORE SPOT - a touchy subject. Why? So many people are not good with their money. The data is in. 70% of Americans don't know where their money goes. So you're in good company - well - you're in ... company if that's you. I don't know that it's good company, but it is company.

The Bible talks alot about money. In fact, Jesus taught more about money than He did on heaven and hell. Read the Gospels and you'll see what I mean. He made it clear that where we spend our money reveals what we care most about. Where our money is, there we will discover our hearts - what we care about - what we love - even what we worship.

Let me put it this

HOW and WHY does God want us to give?

The Bible indicates that God doesn't want us to give from the wrong motive. He doesn't want us to give from a place of compulsion or guilt OR from a place of manipulation where we give to GET something from God.

He wants us to give simply out of a heart of gratitude - thankfulness for His generosity towards us. Two motivations should drive your generosity - gratitude and obedience.

Gratitude

Obedience

Some might argue that it's hard to find tithing in the New Testament and I can see your point. But if it's so apparent in the OT (Abraham tithing to Mechizach whom Hebrews calls a clear sign of Jesus as King and Priest) then Micah 3 and other places, we can't really see Jesus calling us to something less than the tithe. I mean Jesus' sermon on the mount, He's calling us even higher in every area!

You've heard it taught in the law that a man can't sleep with another woman other than his wife - I say now that you can't even lust - lusting is adultery.

You've heard it taught to love - I teach you now to love your enemies!

You've heard it taught ... each area, he increases what we are to do - why? - because our HEART is changed.

Did you know that you can become so generous that it's simply a way of life for you!?!

Paul is teaching the Christians about money and generosity when He says ...

### **Philippians 4:17**

**“Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account.”**

Again, as your pastor, it's not what I want FROM you. It's what I want FOR you.

I want you to experience God's blessing.

That blessing is simply expressed in 2 ways for the sake of teaching (it's MULTIPLE WAYS) but for the sake of learning, let's break it down into two ways.

That Blessing is 1) Internal The JOY and PEACE that comes with truly trusting GOD

That Blessing is 2) External God really does multiply and bless a cheerful giver.

SO MANY STORIES to illustrate this!

MY STORY

Me and Danielle set out to increase our giving annually. In fact, 3 years ago, I wrote down in my prayer journal that I'd like to give 20% of our income to ministry. We've always tithed

GOD HAS BEEN SO FAITHFUL

7 Year Mortgage Testimony

Kings Home Properties

God can move mountains ... literally.

On Wed the pastors went to an area meeting for Assemblies of God pastors and we heard a couple share a testimony from one of the churches they planted in the bush of Africa. They've planted over 40 churches now and seen thousands come to Christ! Btw it started with the woman - single woman - leaving America after having a vision of Jesus



holding out his hand standing in her bedroom saying ‘Will you trust Me? Will you go with Me to Africa. There are people I want you to meet.’”

She left her corporate WELL paying job and left with nothing but faith!

She lead the town drunk to Jesus and his radical salvation story spread far and wide.

They began planting churches and they told many stories of God’s miracles on Wed morning to us pastors. Here’s one of them.

One of their pastors preached from Mt 11. In fact I’ll read it now - I’ll read what he read to his church that day.

“Have faith in God. <sup>23</sup> Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. <sup>24</sup> Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. <sup>25</sup> And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”

[The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Mk 11:22–25). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

So this woman comes up to this new pastor and explains that her husband recently died and she needed to farm this 19 acres of land but could only farm 1 because the other 18 acres are a mountain - no way to farm it. Solid rock, WAY to hard.

The pastors tells her “look that’s a metaphor...” But she persists ... “NO! I believe God can help me with this problem and get rid of that mountain!” The pastor kinda rolls his eyes thinking “she doesn’t get it”

She prays - She prays for 2 months straight believing in faith that GOD would take care of this mountain problem. So she could farm her land and make enough income for her and her kids.

After 2 months of praying the local government came to her house and knocked on her door one day ... We’ve been searching and taking samples of every mountain in this entire region (hundreds of these mountains) and YOUR mountain is the BEST one filled with the hardest stone and we need to create a new road -a new highway. Can we level off this land for you - remove all the rock and pay you monthly for it?

## **The Power of a Moment**

**Giving should be part of our finances**

**Giving Should cost us something (BUDGET)**

**Giving grows our hearts as much as the recipients heart (guitar gifts, etc)**

**Giving to the poor is part of God’s desire for us (Missions Trips, etc)**

**Kingdom Building across the world Acts 1:8-10 Jerusalem, Judea, etc**

**Giving should drive other finical priorities and somethings cost us...**

If it's not costing us something, we're just "Tipping" the pastor. Let's move from "tipping the pastor" to becoming an intentional sacrificial giver - someone who is being used of God to build the Kingdom of God. Unity in a household around giving is essential (want God to bless your marriage? Get on the same page when it comes to generosity!) Giving in obedience requires faith (Building Campaigns, Missionaries ...)( Money reveals our idols and where we place our trust (control)

## WHAT IS YOUR GIVING STORY?

God can move a mountain literally!

What if God wants to move you forward in your giving journey?

What if you went from initial giver and "tipper" to a Lifetime Giver? Someone who gives weekly but also generously as the Spirit leads you?

READ AGAIN 2 Cor 9:6-15

Let's talk 2022

**Inflation**

Are we able to save money?

How can I keep learning?

**Keep Learning!**

Podcasts

Books (my "book" is available on your way out today. I only printed like 40 copies so only take one per couple please) but you can download it as well from my website [JordanBiel.com](http://JordanBiel.com)

Podcasts, Books, Seminars (FREE)

Spending time with people who are good with money and asking questions/advice.

Did you know that THRIVENT offers 3 FREE BUDGETING / COUNSELING sessions!?!?! Amazing!

**Until the pain of staying the same exceeds the pain of change, you will never change.”**

**I want to see MIRACLES in my life!**

#### **Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand**

<sup>13</sup> Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. <sup>14</sup> When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. <sup>15</sup> Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” <sup>16</sup> But Jesus said, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” <sup>17</sup> They said to him, “We have only five loaves here and two fish.” <sup>18</sup> And he said, “Bring them here to me.” <sup>19</sup> Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. <sup>20</sup> And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. <sup>21</sup> And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

**Mt 14:13–22**

**Jesus can’t multiply what we don’t give Him.**

**For your offering to be multiplied and a blessing to others, it must first be broken and offered to Jesus.**

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