

PASSIONATE LIVING 10

“Leaving a Legacy after this Life” (part 2)

We come finally to the end of the Passionate Living Series. These past weeks have been filled with principles and shapes designed to increase our living from merely existing; to Passionate Living. Last week we began this conclusion by considering some principles of Giving that might help us leave a Godly Legacy After this life is over. We explored how Godly giving in this life helps prepare us for leaving a Godly Legacy as we “pass on” from this life. We noted that Godly living involves learning, as most of us are not by nature Godly givers. We discussed that most of us grow into Godly giving; we study, experiment, and finally arrive at a place of Giving that honors God. We explored also how we gain in our lives, our spirits and sometimes even our resources as we practice God honoring giving principles.

This morning we’ll conclude the Leaving A Legacy message by again considering the wheel, and it’s essential hub. We note again, that the source of all giving is **God**, and the attitude with which all giving ought to be conducted is **Joy!** From a center of God-filled Joy, comes spiritual giving; a natural and expected part of life for those who love Jesus! Today we’ll consider three “Do’s and Don’ts” that regulate Godly Giving, and ensure a God Pleasing Legacy. We’ll consider our text in a minute, but there is one more thing I want to say about the whole subject of giving before we begin.

I want you to know I am not up here this morning to tickle your listening ears with some novel thoughts designed just to make you think, I’m here today trying to deliver God’s Word regarding our relationship to and with our money and other resources.

This is not an academic exercise or fanciful oration designed to impart knowledge...(as helpful as that might be) but an attempt to relay truth; that might change your life! And all I really want to say about all I’m about to say...is that I am 100% convinced that it will not change your life negatively.

Many people upon hearing another tithing, giving, stewardship sermon, simply tune it out...to the detriment of their souls. God does not want to fleece His sheep, but to inspire them, instruct them, and engage them in habits of holiness that will positively alter and affect their lives! You may think you know all you need to know, you are doing all you are willing to do, maybe even all you are able to do. If that is factual and accurate, then sit back, relax and pray for your brothers and sisters around you. But if you are not doing all you can, or should be doing in this spiritually vital area of your life, then please don't discount that God may have a new truth in store for you, and please remember...God doesn't want ill for your life...He wants good.

What I am about to share with you is not designed to make you feel guilty, but as I have often said..."if the shoe fits, then you have to wear it", and likewise...if it doesn't, then legitimately leave it for the 'Cinderella' who owns it. All I'm really asking is for you to suspend what you have long believed and long practiced...long enough for God to speak to your heart. You don't have to believe a word from my mouth or heart...but please be open to what God might want to say to you today. If what I am about to say is confirmed in your heart as nonsense and frivolous, then simply dismiss it and pick up your former belief and go on living the way you have. But if what I have to share with you today rings true as from the heart of God, then faithfully pledge and dedicate yourself to learning, growing, and moving toward that more faithful life. Deal?

Here then is the text from the Apostle Paul, 2 Corinthians 9:

"But I want your gift to be a willing one, not one given grudgingly. Remember this – a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure.

'For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.' And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. As the Scriptures say, 'They share freely and give generously to the poor, their good deeds will be remembered forever.'

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. Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous...

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.”

2 Corinthians 9: 5-11, 13

Using the metaphor of farming, Paul instructs these Macedonian Christians (and us!) with a number of valid principles. Here are three:

1. DON'T GIVE GRUDGINGLY – GIVE CHEERFULLY

This truth is not relegated to just the situation in Macedonia, but I believe relates to all who give, in all situations; because Paul (and other Biblical authors) repeat it again and again. Give cheerfully, God loves a cheerful giver, it is better to give than to receive...etc. The base line point of this principle is that God is way more interested in the condition of our soul, and the attitudes of our heart, than He is about the amount of money in our wallet or pocketbook!

Giving is a conscious choice, and so is the attitude with which we give it. I am so convinced this is true, that I'd be willing to go on record that if you never increased your amount of giving, but just choose to begin giving it cheerfully, your life would be different...and so would your giving! What do you think? It is at the very least the easiest place to start, just start seeing that your giving is an opportunity to remind yourself that all you are and all you have are gifts from God. Our giving is an opportunity to invest in the Great Kingdom work of winning souls and making disciples. Our giving is an extension of our priorities, and can continue to support those priorities long after we are gone from this earth.

I hope that each of us has a will, and in that will someplace are provisions for the priorities we held in this life. Susan and I will leave part of our inheritance to Asbury Seminary, Dakota Wesleyan University, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes,

the Dakotas United Methodist Foundation; and the boys can fight over what's left! I hope you make similar arrangements, but mostly I hope each of us might begin seeing that any giving, all giving ought to be done cheerfully, from a deep seated center of God filled joy!

2. DON'T GIVE RELUCTANTLY (OR UNDER PRESSURE) – GIVE GENEROUSLY

No body likes to be bullied in this area. None of us like being pressured to do anything for that matter. But I think there is a direct correlation between this and the prior point. One of the reasons so many don't give cheerfully is likely because they feel they have been pressured to give. I want to take the pressure off.

If you are giving faithfully, and giving proportionally to your income and God's blessing in your life, then stop feeling guilty! We need always to remember that unless our name is Bill Gates, there will always be people with more than we have, and people with less than we have. That's why the standard for giving is proportion, not amount!

This is the area where choosing to trust God, and choosing to give cheerfully and choosing to grow toward faithful, God pleasing, Legacy Leaving giving is most essential. Sometimes God may ask some of us to make some sacrifices, to do more than just a tithe, to take a risk or two with some of the resources He has given us. It's often a matter of faith. I remember writing tithe checks while in seminary, when I knew we didn't have the money in the bank to cover them, and praying like a madman, that God would come through, (and Susan wouldn't find out)! I confess I bounced a couple checks back then, but I also learned an important lesson; God can be trusted, and God is not trying to fleece his flock, but to teach us all to trust!

I'm not espousing that we make pledges based on some skewed hope of winning the Lottery. Nor am I expecting that you withhold increasing your pledge because you expect the stock market to depreciate! It's about faith. God has been generous and faithful and we ought to be too!

3. DON'T GIVE SPARINGLY – GIVE OBEDIENTLY

Here is where the lesson of the farmer comes home to roost so to speak. Whether it's been a wet winter and spring or dry one, most farmers sow that expensive seed anyway. I remember both, planting in mud so goopy the planter blades would continually clog with mud. And I remember planting in dust so thick and dirt so dry, nothing would have even sprouted...were it not for the grace of God, and a timely rain or two. Just for the record...farmers have way more faith than the general population, their livelihood depends on it. And that is probably why Paul singled out that occupation to teach us some important lessons about giving.

We reap in proportion to what we sow. If we sow just a few seeds out of fear or disobedience, then we can't expect a windfall harvest. We reap according to what we sow. We can't sow wild oats and expect to harvest Durham wheat. We can't give meagerly or miserly, (when we know we could do more) and expect any profitable harvest. Again it has nothing to do with the amount, but often with the amount of sacrifice. Remember the widow and her two pennies? She was lauded as a saint for her example of Godly, Legacy Leaving faithfulness. Even these amazing Macedonians, they begged Paul to allow them to give, even when they had little money, and big troubles!

My friends, the last word may be the hardest. Giving is a matter of obedience. Believe what you want about tithing, and proportional giving, about sacrifice and risk, about sowing and reaping, but ultimately giving is a matter of the heart, and a matter of obedience. None of us are probably doing all we can, but I hope all of us will settle this issue of God pleasing, legacy leaving giving by being obedient to God. God has set the standard, and God has set the table. What will you give? What will we pledge? What will we dedicate our lives for? What will we give our fortunes too? What will be the legacy that lives after we leave?

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1. **LEARNING** how to Give

2. **GROWING** in our Giving

3. **GAINING** from our Giving

4. **DON’T GIVE GRUDGINGLY – GIVE _____**

5. **DON’T GIVE RELUCTANTLY – GIVE _____**

6. **DON’T GIVE SPARINGLY – GIVE _____**