



CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

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Giving is a Grace from God

By Rev. Donovan Myers

Please read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

For many people, giving represents an appeal to altruistic feelings. We give because it's the human thing to do. If others are in need, our duty is to 'help out' where we can. But also, many see giving as a necessary outpouring of their excess. I have more than I need, so I should share. While those two motivations might be reasonable, the letter from Paul to the Corinthians speaks about giving in a way that challenges some commonly held assumptions. On the one hand, for him, giving fundamentally challenges the concept of ownership, the right we have to possess 'stuff'. It asserts that what we think is ours, is only ours on loan. We are not really owners but rightly managers. Giving, then is an outworking of the responsibility of our management of those resources. We don't lay claim to things in a way that ties us to them and them to us. On the other hand, when Paul wrote in the way that he did about the giving of the Macedonian Christians, he was challenging the Greco-Roman worldview that wealth was the result or sign of divine approval. That somehow, it is in having a lot of stuff that we demonstrate our strong connection to God or that God likes us. Both people who have a lot and people who have a little are blessed by God.

It seems then, that Paul is framing the discussion about 'giving' as essentially a matter of character. For him, our outlook on 'giving' or our disposition towards 'giving' speaks to who we know ourselves to be. It is an indication of our quality or our nature. You might have heard it said that, "...when it comes to giving, some people stop at nothing." So, whether we take the minimalist approach or give sacrificially might have something to do with our understanding of who we are and the nature of the person that we have become.

Paul is unashamed in making a case for giving and does so by appealing to the example of Macedonian Christians. He does three things in outlining his case.

Firstly, he examines their **Motivation for giving**. Why is it that we give? Giving should come from an understanding of grace. In verse 1 he asserts that their outpouring of love came from the grace that God had given the Macedonian church. The ability to give beyond getting back or building up 'good will' only

happens because of the supernatural deposit of grace in a person's life. It is an understanding of the unmerited and undeserved favor of God that we receive in Christ's sacrificial giving of Himself on the cross. Giving then becomes a virtue, an act of grace that we offer without the promise of anything in return or the hope to 'cash in our chips' at a later date. This requires that we embrace grace, live into grace, and then offer grace. So, in verse 7 he exhorts them to "...see that you also excel in this grace of giving". He seems also to employ another 'unlikely' method of encouraging this kind of giving. He suggests that they do a comparison of their giving with the giving of others. But it is not the quantity of the giving with which he appears interested. Instead he wants to "...test the sincerity of (their) love (against) the earnestness of others." He wants them to give out of their heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for the grace they have received from Christ.

Secondly, he **Expresses their Maturity in giving**. He uses the takeaways from their demonstration and experience of giving in order to teach the principle that giving is an expression of the maturity of our faith. Their giving was not limited to or restricted by hardship. For it was

"in the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity"
(v2).

They didn't use their challenging circumstances or their meagre resources as an excuse to hoard or to refrain from reaching out to others. In the face of severe trials, their joy transformed their

poverty into generosity. This maturity of faith inspired them to give not only according to their ability, but also motivated them to sacrifice [to give beyond their apparent ability]. They gave as able yet even more than they were able. And this giving was not coerced but was an outflowing from this depth of faith which provided the internal motivation for their act of service. They did it all

"...entirely on their own..." (v3), they *"...pleaded for opportunity to give"* (v4) and gave of themselves *"...first of all to the Lord, and then ... to (the apostles)"* (v5).

Thirdly, he **Encourages the adoption of their Mindset in giving**. By Paul's application of the Macedonians' approach to giving, he is offering to the Christians in Corinth as well as to us who read his something of a blueprint for giving. In matters of giving he seems to suggest that we must recognize that good intentions are good, but not good enough. There is a need to follow through. So, in verse 11 he admonishes them to



Crises Preparedness and Response Capability Guidelines for Congregations and Council

"...finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your ability."

In other words, don't let good intentions be the enemy of action.

"Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have" (v12 - NLT).

Additionally, he gives a word of warning that helps to guard against exuberance or the idea that our giving should leave us 'worst off. He indicates that the goal of giving is to relieve not redistribute hardship. The objective is equity. In verse 12 he says,

"I don't mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves. I only mean that there should be some equality."

God's distribution of the manna in the wilderness set the standard that

*"...the one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little."
(Exodus 16:18)*

In all of Paul's discussion about extending self in reaching out to serve others who have needs, we hear the underpinning of the Hebrew scriptures understanding about wealth, possessions, or stuff. It is this:

*"the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it"
(Psalm 24:1).*

Our participation in ownership of any portion of it is but a trust from God. Humans are really empowered managers of the abundance of God's earth. Whatever amount we have in our care and keeping AND however we gain wealth, our stewardship has accountability. It is to utilize being fundamentally aware that it is God's and therefore should glorify God in all of its usage. And that awareness should propel us to sharing it – so that all of God's creation are benefited by God's provision. Freely you have received of the grace of God, and freely then should you give out of that grace to others.

It has been said that there are three kinds of givers -- the flint, the sponge and the honeycomb. To get anything out of a flint you must hammer it; and then you get only chips and sparks. To get water out of a sponge you must squeeze it; the more pressure, the more you will get. But the honeycomb just overflows with its own sweetness. Which kind of giver are you?

**You can give without loving,
but you can never love without giving.**

Robert Louis Stevenson

Part 4. COMMUNICATION WITH COUNCIL

Council members – at least the Minister and 2 others from each Congregation - all have a list with contact details of each other. Normally the Chair of Council and the RDGS will initiate calling the Ministers and/or Council together to assess the situation in each Congregation/District. However, any other member of Council is able to begin this process if these two individuals are not heard from in a timely way, as this may depend on the extent of damage to communication systems as well as personal circumstances.

PERSONAL/FAMILY EMERGENCY PLANS

The Church should also ensure that all its Members and Adherents are aware of the need to have a plan and to have the necessary preparations in place throughout the (normal) Hurricane Season. Such plans may be made available by the Cayman Government agencies from time to time, and those should generally be used. The following list from (largely) the National Hurricane Centre in the US may also be followed:

- Know your Emergency Shelter. There will be at least one Emergency Medical Shelter in each District for persons eligible for these because of their frailty, mobility, functional and/or medical condition. If in that category, ensure you know the EMS for your District.
- Water – at least one gallon daily per person for 3 – 7 days. When a hurricane warning is issued, tubs and other larger containers may also be filled with water for flushing toilets, bathing, etc. BUT care: depending on the level of a tub (and other factors), when the water table rises waste water may come up through the drain and ruin the water stored. The atmospheric pressure changes during a storm may also cause stoppers to come loose in tubs, basins, etc., and the stored water to be lost.
- NB – for water and food, store as much as you are able to, even if more than 7 days' supply. But if you will need to move to a shelter you will only be able to take a 3 -4 days' supply because of storage limitations.
- Food – at least enough for 3 to 7 days:
 - Non-perishable packaged or canned food, juices, milk
 - Foods for infants or the elderly
 - Snack foods
 - Non-electric can opener
 - Cooking tools/fuel (care!)
 - Paper plates and plastic utensils
 - Plastic bags etc. for waste (disposal may be a problem for some time)
- Rain gear, sturdy shoes
- First aid kit/medicines/prescription drugs (adequate for a possible extended period)/list of food/medicine/etc. to which any household members are allergic.
- Special Items for babies (formula, bottles, sanitizers, diapers, something to keep them occupied, etc.) and the

elderly – including walkers, wheelchairs, canes etc. that they need.

- Toiletries/hygiene items/moisturised wipes
- Flashlight(s) and batteries
- Battery Radio and extra batteries
- Cash (with some small bills) – stores etc. may reopen before banks/ATMs
- In the event of a warning – ensure your KEYS (car, house, etc.) are on you securely, if you have to move quickly!!!
- Secure Important Documents in waterproof containers – and take them with you if you have to evacuate before the storm. These include Passports, Insurance details, inventories, medical records, bank account numbers, Academic, Professional and Vocational Qualifications, credit cards, etc. Note- family pictures are also important to us and at least some should be made secure and watertight as possible.
- Tools – keep a set with you during the storm – hammers, nails, pliers plus any drills, screws, saws, etc. you may have.
- Ensure vehicle fuel tanks are kept at least half-full during the season and are filled when there is a warning. Beware the dangers though of storing fuel, especially gasoline, in a house etc.
- Cell phones and their car chargers are desirable.
- Any Pet needs. (Pets are not allowed in shelters, if you need to evacuate.)
- Details of what to do afterwards and the precautions to take as advised by the Government each year and during the emergency.

It is best to have hurricane supply storage (preferably waterproof containers) and keep the above supplies ready throughout the hurricane season, to avoid panic buying when a warning is issued and the stores are filled with shoppers.

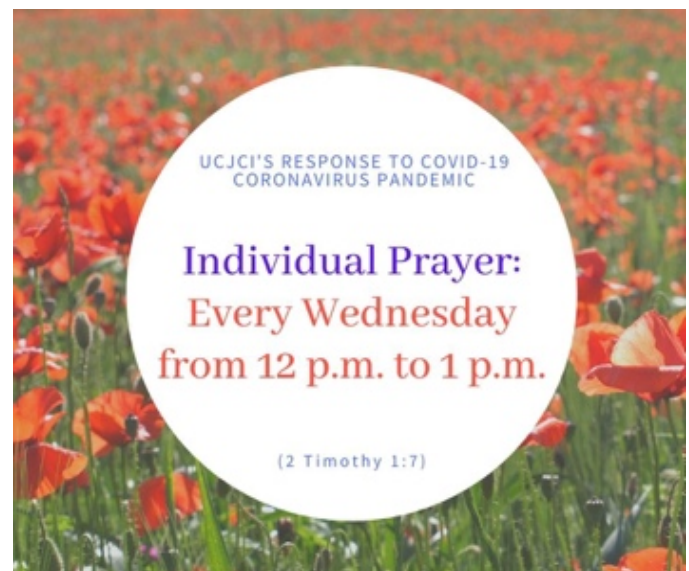
If you have to evacuate, in addition to the above, clothing, pillows, ‘bedding’ (a sleeping bag is allowed in the Government shelters but due to space constraints cots and air-mattresses may not), toys, books, games, etc., will be needed.

Ensure family members know how to secure the home with shutters, etc., turn off electricity, central water supply, disconnect cistern downspouts, close return valves on septic tanks (where available) and who is responsible for each of these duties. Clear trees, coconuts, loose wood, etc., in the yard that may damage the house.

The Government gives advice on this all the time – listen and follow. Know where vehicles should be parked, to be as safe as possible from anything that may fall or from flooding as happened extensively during Ivan.

The Cayman Government recommends that families discuss and agree an emergency plan – including agreeing with members how they feel about staying home, leaving the island, etc. Ensure family members know escape routes and they recommend ensuring all members have a contact of someone overseas to whom each can report after the emergency to confirm if they are well, etc., and get news on the other family members who have reported in.





on Radio Cayman 89.9
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August 02. Rev. Donovan Myers

August 02. (Sunday) 9th Sunday after Pentecost
All local United Church congregations are open- Please contact the offices for details.
Worship Services are also available via video links.

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