

## **GLADNESS AND GENEROSITY: SERMON (1)**

### **GLADNESS & GENEROSITY**

Acts 2: 42-47 (NLT) The Believers Form a Community

42 All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. 44 And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. 45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. 46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity 47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people.

And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

Holy Habits encourages us to look at the world with the 'mind of Christ', and how to embody that outlook in the way we live our daily lives. The mindset and way of living out our Holy Habits gradually becomes habitual, until eventually they become instinctive. In verse 42 it tells us that the Disciples were DEVOTED to these habits...and so should we...

Hence, we really do need to begin to practice the habit of remembering what Christ has done for us...and be GLAD because of these truths.

For, if we don't have GLADNESS in our hearts, our giving will not ignite GENEROSITY to others.

1 Corinthians 13:1 tells us '...if we do things without LOVE, we are a clanging cymbal!!!'

These habits brought fruitful spiritual renewal into the early church in ACTS...these thoughts need to reflect on all aspects of our lives/discipleship.

2 Corinthians 8:1-8 (NIV) Generosity Encouraged

"8 And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. 5 And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. 6 So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. 7 But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

8 I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others."

Paul is urging the Corinthians to do as the Macedonians did, by their generosity, even when they faced extreme poverty. He recognised that this was the will of God; he wanted them to KNOW about the grace God had given the Macedonians; in fact he went as far as to pass on the knowledge that they felt it was a PRIVILEGE to give. He

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urged that they should give of themselves first to God, followed closely by giving generously to others. We can follow this blueprint of the early churches in Acts 2, & the lessons given to the Corinthians.

“Am I generous? I think so. I hope so...I’m definitely getting better even though it’s not always easy, and requires a LOT of chats with God, who I pray to for wisdom and love for others. The challenge to be generous is always there in the forefront of my mind. It’s one of those by-products God gives us as we follow Jesus in our daily life.” The daily challenge of choosing to do a kind act in the midst of a busy life could look like this:

- Should I ask my neighbour if she needs any shopping
- Buy/pick someone some flowers to cheer them up
- Forgive someone who’s wronged you
- Offer to visit a sick person in hospital (I’ve visited complete strangers...and made friends)
- Invite someone home for dinner
- Should I sell this expensive top I never wear, or give it to charity...or a friend?
- Spend more time with the homeless man outside Lidl and buy him a snack.
- Contribute more to the church, and volunteer to do things in my community.

These are but a few of the choices we face daily...I’m sure you can think of your own.

“Maybe you, like me are ambling along spiritually, and recognise that you need to repent and be more open to the nudging of the Holy Spirit to give more as you walk with Jesus; and this is probably because we often think of generosity in terms of how much money we give etc, when really we should be a bit more GLADNESS aware, ...because amazing things happen when we’re overflowing with GLADNESS and start to be radically GENEROUS. Only God knows the exact details of what I actually give, to whom and why, but, if I really am generous, surely people will be able to see this?” And, extending this to a larger body like, say, a church, shouldn’t this also be true? In fact, isn’t it important for churches to be explicitly obvious about generosity?

Yes, it’s very important.

We need to kindle afresh that same gladness the Macedonians had ...or the Disciple on the Road to Emmaus. Our Gladness should OVERFLOW from us...be in abundance...well up from within...2 Cor 8:2 states that in the midst of their severe trial, their overflowing joy (gladness) ...welled up...into...rich generosity... Something so beautiful happened in their lives...something so real that they couldn’t contain their gladness...and it welled up into generosity...How exciting is that!!!

Our scripture in Acts 2 shows us that the Disciples did numerous things to show generosity.

All of them devoted themselves to teaching, fellowship, sharing meals (including the Lords Supper), and to prayer, when they did...Surely it was specifically because of this that Gladness & Generosity overflowed...and:

- A deep awe came over them
- Met in homes

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- Shared meals
- They performed many miraculous signs & wonders
- They met together in one place (temple)
- Shared everything they had
- Some sold their property, and possessions
- Met in homes for the Lords Supper
- Shared their money with those who had needs
- They worshipped daily

...all with JOY and generosity, while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people.

And when they did...each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

We can all GIVE SOMETHING to others, even if it's only a word, a gesture, a message, an encouragement...once we have fully received that gladness, that encounter with God that changes everything, when we do, our lives will be changed...let us PRAY...

(Add your own stories/testimonies to support the habit of gladness leading to generosity)

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