

Unit 3



Generous Living is an Evidence of:

Your Motive of Worship

TRUTH

by memory – 2 Corinthians 9:7 (ESV)

"Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

in Bible –

What *motive* for giving delights the heart of God? You'll find out as you compare two Old Testament passages with a few verses from Paul's writings. As you connect the dots between Paul's teaching and these Old Testament stories of sacrifice, a picture will emerge that will challenge the way you think about giving.

Remember to use **PRAISE** and be sure to think about specific, measurable applications to your life.

Gen 22:1-18 – This well known story of ultimate sacrifice challenges us to examine who (or what) we truly love.

2 Sam 24:18-25 – In this passage, King David's true motives are revealed when he is given an opportunity to make an offering to God that would cost him nothing.

Philippians 4:18 – This verse connects giving with worship by using the Old Testament language of sacrifice to describe the gift Paul received from the Philippians during his imprisonment.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 – To fully understand these verses you will need to think about what Paul means by the words "*love*" and "*cheerful*" in verse 7.

to summarize -

You have been learning what it means to have a grace motivated commitment to generous living. Such living is an outward evidence of contentment with what God entrusts to you, and an evidence of

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your choice to invest in the kingdom of God. This week you will explore how generous living is also an evidence of an inward motive of worship.

A basic formula that will serve you well to remember is, "*Good deeds plus bad motives equals unfavorable results.*" Imagine a husband coming home, flowers in hand for his wife. "What's the occasion?" she asks. "No occasion", he says, "just wanted you to know how much I love you." His wife is delighted...until later during dinner he says, "Honey, you remember the picnic I promised you tomorrow afternoon? Something has come up and..." Well, he won't even get to finish that sentence before his wife smells a rat in the motive behind those flowers, and he isn't going to have a pleasant evening.

The formula holds true in the realm of your spiritual life as well. The Bible is clear that you can do good deeds prescribed by God, add to it a wrong motive (God *always* knows the motive), and the result from God is very unfavorable. He is not pleased at all. In fact, Jesus' response to those who did bad things was actually more favorable than his interaction with those who did good things like praying, fasting, or giving with bad motives. On the other hand, as mentioned last week, God has promised an eternal reward when you invest in the kingdom of God with good motives. The question for you to consider is what motives God would consider good. Or, let's ask, what is the *best* motive that delights the heart of God when you invest in His kingdom?

The answer is the motive of *worship* – exulting or glorying in God so as to magnify His worth. In Philippians 4:18, Paul describes the gift he received from the Philippian believers as "*a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.*" This manner of speaking may seem strange to modern ears, but Paul's audience would have understood that he was using the language of Old Testament worship – referring to the system of animal sacrifices – to describe their gift. The phrase "*fragrant aroma*" refers to the smoke of the sacrifice rising to the heavens as it burned on the altar. Often this rising smoke was called a *pleasing aroma* to God (see Exodus 29 for several examples). Paul wanted the Philippians to understand that their offering was not merely received gratefully by him; it was also an act of worship that delighted the heart of God.

If you wonder why God would be delighted by the Philippians' gift or an Old Testament sacrifice, just consider the fact that sacrifice has always been a universal standard for the measurement of love. If you have young children, don't you enjoy hearing those simple little words, "I love you, Mommy"; "I love you, Daddy"? But isn't your pleasure increased when your child expresses their love with a hug or a kiss? Even more if your little one took the time get out the crayons and the paper to draw the expression of their love for you? That small sacrifice of time and effort causes those drawings to become very precious to you. No matter the language or culture, sacrifices (even on a childlike scale) are understood as an expression of love.

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So, if you recognize the value of a sacrifice as an expression of love, shouldn't you expect that God would, too? Yes, God has always delighted in the sacrifices of His people. Consider the story of Abraham's ultimate sacrifice in Genesis 22. Remember that Abraham had no heir when God promised the birth of Isaac and the blessing that would come to the whole world through Abraham's descendants. So, just imagine Abraham's shock when God said, *"Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering."* (v 2) What was going through Abraham's mind as he raised the knife above his son? More importantly, what was going on in the mind of God as he beheld the sacrifice Abraham was so willing to make? God had to be delighted by the love, the trust, the devotion that was demonstrated there on the mountain.

Hundreds of years later, under the Old Covenant which God established with Abraham's descendants, God created a system to allow Israel to express their love and devotion to Him through sacrifices. Under this system there were several different kinds of sacrifices. Some dealt with the problem of sin and were a way of reminding God's people that they had to look beyond themselves and their own merits to receive forgiveness. Other sacrifices were meant to be an expression of thanksgiving or adoration. This is the kind of sacrifice King David offered in 2 Samuel 24. David had sinned and brought judgment upon Israel. But God in His mercy stayed His hand, and David was told to offer a sacrifice on the property of a non-Israelite, named Araunah. Araunah offered to give David the land, the materials for the altar, and the animals for the sacrifice free of charge. But David replied, *"No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing."* (v 24)

How do you think God would have responded if David had taken Araunah up on the deal? Would God have been pleased? You can bank on this, that God was much more pleased and thrilled that David wanted this sacrifice to cost him something personally. Such a sacrifice was a true offering of worship that delighted God because it magnified God's infinite worth by springing from a motive of love and thanksgiving.

Now, understand that the acceptable expressions of sacrifice have changed since the death and resurrection of Christ. God no longer requires offerings for sin because the cross was God's ultimate sacrifice that once and for all time satisfied the justice of God. You don't have to win God's favor with offerings. If you belong to Jesus, you are free from the need to perform to earn God's acceptance. True, God is pleased by your obedience and worship with right motives, but His favor and acceptance have been won for you by Christ.

So, what acceptable forms of sacrifice remain for believers today? The New Testament mentions several *"spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"* (see 1 Peter 2:5). The first of these is described in Romans 12:2, the living sacrifice of your body. This is simply the surrender of

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your life and will to be an instrument of God's kingdom on earth. Another is the sacrifice of praise found in Hebrews 13:15. This is the verbal worship we offer to God in the name of Christ. Last, there is the sacrifice of our gifts and offerings depicted in Philippians 4:18. All of these are described as sacrifices that are pleasing to God.

As is the case with Old Testament sacrifices, the acceptability of these New Testament sacrifices is determined by the motive. When it comes to your gifts and offerings, your memory verse taught you that "*God loves [is pleased by] a cheerful giver.*" (2 Corinthians 9:7) What this means is that God wants you to give for the very *joy and love* of giving. In Matthew 26 you will find a beautiful illustration of this in the story of the woman who poured a flask of costly perfume over Jesus' head. It was probably a family heirloom worth a year's wages, and a precious treasure to her. But when she met Jesus she took the best she had and let it overflow as an extravagant gift on the one she loved most. The disciples called it a waste, saying that it should have been sold and the money given to the poor. But Jesus rebuked them, and was pleased to receive the woman's gift as a sacrifice of love and worship.

Is this the way you sacrifice to God – out of worship, with the sacrifice of your life, your praise, and your gifts? Do your sacrifices cost you something, as they did David? Is worship the motivator of your giving? Are you finding in your heart a longing to give your best to the one you love the most?

As you think about these questions, you might find it instructive to evaluate your growth in giving in terms of your progress through school. There is:

- **Kindergarten Giving** – is the sporadic, impulsive giving of whatever happens to be in your pocket at the time the offering is received.
- **Grade School Giving** – is reluctant tithing. It's giving because you feel you have to give God his 10% to keep Him "off your back". The tithing is good, but the motive is bad.
- **High School Giving** – is worshipful tithing. It is giving out of joyful love for Jesus. It knows that He is worth the other 90% as well and can have it anytime He asks. In terms of giving, God's plan is that every true follower of Christ should "graduate" from High School. Make it your goal, not to earn the favor of God, but to experience the joy of giving.
- **College Giving** – is sacrificial giving beyond the tithe. Like the woman with the flask of perfume, these Christians know they don't have to give more, but their earnest desire is to offer a sacrifice of love that goes beyond what He requires.
- **Graduate School Giving** – is faith promise giving. This is trusting God for what you don't have yet. It is a pledge that if God will provide X dollars, you will return it to Him as an investment in His kingdom.

As a final reminder, you need never give out of guilt in an effort to earn God's favor, no matter where you find yourself in the school of giving. Think of your giving, no matter how great or small, as a sacrifice of worship that is made acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5). You may give out of raw obedience, but then you should ask God to give you a heart of joyful worship in your giving. That is a prayer He will certainly honor. You will soon see yourself growing in contentment with God's provision. And as you invest in the kingdom of God, your motive of worship will express a love that greatly pleases your God.

online –

Remember to visit <http://perimeter-adult.followers.net/Discipleship.Curriculum> for this week's downloadable audio, video, or print resources.

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EQUIPPING

In 2 Samuel 24 you read that Araunah offered to give David everything he needed for the burnt offering. So, he also was willing to bear the cost of this sacrifice. What do you think would have made his personal sacrifice acceptable to God? What would have made it unacceptable?

Perhaps you haven't ever understood why preachers say that receiving the offering is a time of worship. Has the offering been a worshipful moment for you? Will it be now? Explain.

Is worship the motivator of your giving? Are you finding in your heart a longing to give your best to the one you love the most?

Think about your level of contentment, your choices of investment, and your motives in giving. Then take another look at the school of giving and write a few sentences describing how you see your growth in the grace commitment to generous living.

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MISSION

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes..."(Romans 1:16)

"And I, when I came to you, brothers, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."(1 Corinthians 2:1-2 ESV)

"...Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect..."(I Peter 3:15, NIV)

By now, you should have made significant progress on writing your 3 Minute Testimony. If you aren't finished, you should finish it this week. If you are finished writing your testimony, spend some time this week memorizing it. Remember, you want to make sharing your testimony a natural experience for you and the person you are sharing it with. If your testimony "sounds funny" to your ears, you may need to rewrite it so that it sounds more like your natural way of talking.

You have a three-fold mission this week:

1. You have been preparing an attractive reason for your faith. Now offer yourself to God as a willing ambassador of the hope you have in Christ. Spend some time praying earnestly that God would give you an opportunity to share your testimony with someone on your target list.
2. In the space below answer this question, "What is the true Gospel?" Try to give a concise answer, no more than a few sentences.

3. Evaluate your testimony with this question, "How well does my testimony represent the true Gospel?"

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