

GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND

YOUNG ADULT LESSON

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Text: 2 Corinthians 8:3-5 (CSB)

The apostle Paul is collecting money for impoverished believers in Jerusalem during his third missionary journey. The Macedonians were begging for an opportunity to contribute to believers in need whom they had never met. They demonstrated going above and beyond as it relates to generosity. Paul talks about how the people gave “according to their ability and beyond their ability” (2 Corinthians 8:3). He applauds the fact that “they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God” (2 Corinthians 8:5).

The Macedonians were poor in resources but rich in generosity as verse 2 says—“During a severe trial brought about by affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.” Generous is defined as showing readiness to give more of something, money or time, than is strictly necessary or expected. Generosity is the quality of being kind and unselfish, especially as it pertains to sharing money and other valuables with others. Demonstrating generosity means going above and beyond.

Generosity should be motivated by God’s grace. We should not give out of mere duty and obligation, or worse yet, guilt. We should give voluntarily out of obedience to God. As a matter of fact, we should view giving as a privilege, not an obligation. It’s all about perspective. Don’t look at it as giving God your money but rather you are returning a portion back to the One that gave you all that you have. Giving should not be a bribe to obtain God’s favor but rather a grateful response to what He has done in our lives. We should give because God gave first. We serve a God who is very generous, and we should reciprocate His generosity. God is generous with His love, mercy, and grace. Who are we not to be generous with our earthly treasures? God has generously given us so much and continues to give. We are to respond by giving and being generous to the very best of our abilities.



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It was God who first went above and beyond. He gave us His best by sending His one and only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins so we could be saved and have a reconciled relationship with Him. Jesus went above and beyond and generously gave up His life for us. Because God gave first and gave us His best, He is indeed worthy of your best. He is worthy of your generosity. He is worthy of your going above and beyond.

When you look back at the Old Testament, you'll see God's people are commanded to give a tithe. A tithe equals 10 percent, meaning God gets a dime out of every dollar. In the New Testament, we see the idea of going above and beyond. In other words, tithing should be the floor or launching point of our generosity and not the ceiling. Matthew 6:21 says, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Your generosity, or lack thereof, reveals matters of the heart. What are you giving to? Give to and go beyond for the things that really matter: the church, the Kingdom of God, advancing the gospel, making disciples, and meeting needs in the community and beyond.

The Bible is full of references about being generous.

- Here's one Old Testament reference: Proverbs 11:25—"A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed."
- Here's one New Testament reference: 2 Corinthians 9:6-7— "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly as under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

Don't miss out on the blessing of obedience. Be intentional, trust God, and go above and beyond. God will reward those that give. He will do this in His way and in His time.

Application

1) Make a monthly budget. See how much you have coming in (your income) and how much you have going out (your bills). This gives you a clear picture of where you are financially.

2) Give systematically. For example, my wife and I give our tithes and offerings online. This ensures our tithe is the first thing to come out of our budget. If you prefer to give in person, that's fine too. The heart of the matter is to put God first in your giving and to give systematically and consistently.

3) Give sacrificially. You'll have opportunities to go above and beyond. Don't shy away from those times. Often you may feel it in your budget, and you'll have to make adjustments so you can give more. Do it. It's worth it.

Discussion

1. Read Proverbs 11:24-25; Luke 6:38; Acts 20:35.
2. What does generosity look like in your life right now?
3. What does it look like to go above and beyond in the area of generosity?
4. Why do you give? (Guilt? Obligation? Obedience?)
5. What keeps you from being generous (or more generous)? (Fear? Lack of trust?)
6. In what other areas of your life could you be generous?
7. How can you apply this passage to your life?
8. Spend time in prayer asking God to mold your heart, to help you to be more generous, to help you to be a wise steward over all that He has entrusted to you, and to help you to walk in obedience.