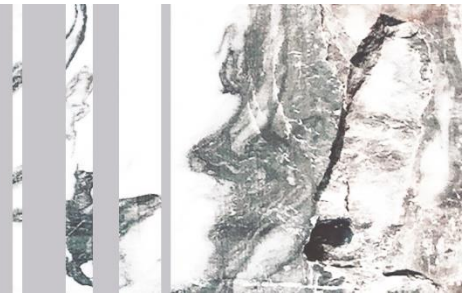


EXODUS

Daily Devotions Week 17



PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK: GRATITUDE

Choose one of the following practices for this week:

- Begin a gratitude journal by keeping a record of the abundances God has given you. Next to each abundance write what it means to you to have a God who interacts and intervenes in your life. Notice what you have been given that you did not deserve. What do you want to say to God about these things?
- End every day by writing in a notebook or journal at least three things you want to thank God for from the day. Then tell God what those things meant to you.
- Write a letter of thanks to someone who has touched you through their generosity in your life.

At the end of the week, take note of how this practice has shaped your mind and heart.

DAY ONE

It would have been quite a sight to see. Piles and piles of brightly colored yarn, linen, gold, silver, bronze, olive oil, and so much more—all because the Israelites were moved to give generously in response to their redeeming God.

Take a moment to be still as you read the passage for today. Invite God to speak through the text whatever it is he wants you to hear.

As you read Exodus 35:4-36:7, imagine what it would have been like to be right in the middle of the scene.

Read Exodus 35:4-36:7.

Exodus 35:20-21 in the Message version says, “So everyone in the community of Israel left the presence of Moses. Then they came back, everyone whose heart was roused, whose spirit was freely responsive, bringing offerings to GOD for building the Tent of Meeting, furnishing it for worship and making the holy vestments. They came, both men and women, all the willing spirits among them...”

The people of God were so moved by God’s generous grace toward them, they couldn’t help but respond. Their hearts were stirred. No one coerced them to give. They did so out of the overflow of gratitude in their hearts. No one was concerned about what they might have left or who would notice what they were bringing. They simply gave.

They brought their wealth and resources. They brought their skills, talents, and artistry. They brought their valuable time. They weren't concerned with how their gifts would be used in the Tabernacle or what would happen to them. They brought them without strings attached. All to the feet of their Redeemer.

- Is your heart currently willing or “roused” to give? If so, how? If not, why?
- If God asked you, “Are you doing all I would have you do with what I have given you?”, how would you respond?

Reread Exodus 36:6-7.

Can you imagine it? Moses had to give an order to the Israelites *to stop bringing any more gifts* for the Tabernacle. There was no more need for them to give.

What would it look like if this was the heart of our church? What would it be like if everyone was stirred by deep gratitude and began giving so generously, we had to cut it off? What do you think would happen as a result in our community if this was the posture of our hearts and our regular practice?

- What keeps you from giving this freely?
- Spend some time today inviting God to speak into your generosity. What invitations might he be giving you to give more willingly of your time, skills, and wealth?
- Pray asking God to grow your heart toward radical generosity.

DAY TWO

“Generosity: The habit of giving freely without expecting anything in return.”
–Anonymous

Today we’re going to take a look at another time in Israel’s history when they were moved to give freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord. In 1 Chronicles 28 we find David expressing his desire to build a temple for the Lord. He shares with his leaders how God has chosen his son Solomon to build the temple. Chapter 29 shows David’s generous spirit as he gives his own resources for the building of the temple. His generosity encourages the people of Israel to give freely as well.

Read 1 Chronicles 29:1-9.

- What do you see in example of David’s generosity? How did the people respond?
- Describe a time when you gave “freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord.” What was that like for you?

As the people gave, David’s response was to praise the Lord. He proclaimed God to be the one to whom greatness and power and majesty and splendor belonged to.

Read 1 Chronicles 29:10-13 slowly. Take some time to mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write them out below.

- How does David’s prayer of praise match what you would want to say to God in response to what he has done in your life?
- Think about what God has done in your life. Like David, write your own prayer of praise to God below.

Read 1 Chronicles 29:14-20.

David humbly recognizes that even though he is king, God is the source of his wealth and resources (1 Chronicles 29:16). He invites God to test his heart to see about his intention in giving. David also knew this would not be a default posture for the hearts of God’s people, so he prayed for God to keep this desire in their hearts (1 Chronicles 29:18).

- If you were to invite God to search your heart right now regarding giving and generosity, what would he find? Take a moment to invite God’s grace and kindness to reveal to you any area in your heart that does not match his generosity.
- Write a prayer of thanksgiving to God for what he has given you.

DAY THREE

Going to bed on Christmas Eve is such a task as a child! There is wonder and anticipation of receiving a gift you've desired the whole season. Will you get the *one* thing you've asked for?

- Take a moment and recall your favorite Christmas gift as a child. What was the most extravagant gift you ever received? Whether it was for Christmas or another event, how did you feel when you received it?

Just days before Jesus' crucifixion, he received a radical, extravagant gift from an unlikely giver.

Read Mark 14:1-11.

Right in the middle of an act of extraordinary malice and an act of extraordinary betrayal, this unnamed woman performs an act of extraordinary adoration. In verses 1-2 we see the chief priests and teachers of the law looking for a time to arrest and kill Jesus. In verses 10-11 we see Judas setting them up to do just that.

But right in the middle of these two incidents, we see a woman who is overcome by gratitude. She gives of what she has freely and fully to Jesus.

Read Mark 14:1-11 again. Take time to visualize what the scene was like. As you read these words again, imagine you were the first hearers of them.

Read the passage one more time. This time imagine the scene as if you were right in the middle of it.

Who are you in the story?

What do you see?

What do you hear?

What do you smell?

What's your position?

Who else is there with you?

What are you feeling?

What's the mood of the crowd?

What is your response to all you experience?

What questions do you have?

What fears do you have?

Don't worry about historical accuracy. Just allow God to bring the story to life. The people we read about in Scripture were real people who walked the earth and had feelings and thoughts much like ours.

- What are you noticing from your responses?
- How do you respond to this woman's radical generosity? Does it seem too extravagant for you? Why or why not?
- What are God's invitations to you from this passage today? What would you like to say to him in response? Write a prayer responding to God's invitation for you.

DAY FOUR

“Give it to your brother.”

“Share with your sister.”

Comments like this probably still ring in many of our minds. Forced “giving” seems to be a part of everyone’s childhood. Probably because some of our first words include “mine” and “I’ll do it myself.” Our default isn’t selflessness. We don’t naturally give. At times we have to begin with obedient giving, asking God to change our hearts as we practice giving.

A life fueled by generosity can only come from taking time to remember what God has done and allowing our hearts to respond.

The Israelites did just this in Exodus 35-36. They experienced the radical grace of God after they chose to worship him in their own way by crafting a golden calf. The radical grace they received turned their hearts toward radical generosity.

This is the kind of heart response our God desires.

- Think back over your life. When have you given something that brought you great joy? What did you give? Why did it touch you so deeply?
- How might you continue to give in the area that gives you joy?

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15. As you read, allow the words to sink in. Read slowly, inviting God to lead your reading.

Read the passage again. As you read, think about these questions: What stands out to you in this passage? Is there a word or phrase that jumps off the page? If so, write it below.

Read the passage one last time. As you read, ask God how he would invite you to respond.

- How do you sense God inviting you to respond to this passage?
- How would you assess the heart behind your generosity? Be honest before God.
- How are you currently giving of your time, resources, and skills to God?
- How does your life of generosity act as a response to what God has done for you?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you for the generous ways you have given in my life. Open my eyes to see how you have been generous to me. Give me the courage and creativity to give of my resources—time, wealth, and skills. Show me how you’re inviting me to give and help me to take the first step with you. Amen.

DAY FIVE

Worship for the people of God has always included sharing what God has given us with others. True worship—our response to God for all he is and all he’s done—requires hearts postured in humility, grounded in contentment, anchored in gratitude, and overflowing in generosity.

Humility, contentment, and gratitude fuel generosity.

Humility is the first building block of generosity. When our hearts understand God owns it all, and has given us everything we have, humility should be our response.

Read Psalm 24:1-2.

Read Deuteronomy 8:10-18.

All we see and all we have belongs to our God. We are a forgetful people. Given to our own devices, we can begin to believe all we’ve acquired is because of our own talents and hard work alone.

- What stands out to you in these two passages?
- What do you sense God saying to you for your current life?
- How does humility affect your generosity?

Contentment is the second step in our journey toward generosity. If we are constantly reaching for the next thing, we will always need more. Contentment is defined as “the state of being satisfied with what one is or has; the state of not wanting more or anything else.”¹

If we’re unsatisfied or desiring more, we won’t have open hands to give to the work of God. We’ll be grasping for whatever our hands can hold.

Paul had something to say about contentment.

Read Philippians 4:10-13.

- What do you notice in Paul’s words? How does this speak to you?
- Do you have a heart of contentment or are you desiring more?

Another brick in the road to generosity is gratitude. This week, we’ve practiced cultivating gratitude.

- How has gratitude changed your perspective this week?
- What is the connection between gratitude and generosity?

Paul also wrote to the church in Corinth about the heart posture of giving that God desires. God delighted in the gifts of the Israelites in Exodus 35-36. A cheerful, willing, generous giver brings joy to the heart of God.

¹ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/contentment?s=t>

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-9.

- What is your “story of giving”? What’s the narrative behind generosity in your life?
- How might be God directing you to write your story as you continue to walk with him?