

1st week of July

“Giving”

2 Corinthians 8:7-15

My Story

One of my favorite stories of giving comes from one of the children at church. At six years old, she received a dollar from the tooth fairy for losing a tooth. But she didn't use that money to buy something for herself. Instead, she put that whole dollar into the offering plate at church one Sunday morning. And she was thrilled to do that. She was so excited that she gave her offering that she ran up to me after church to tell me all about it. Giving generously is what we are called to do, whether it is simply a dollar, ten thousand dollars, or even time.

Your Story

Share with your children about a time when you gave generously, either monetarily or gave generously of your time to help the church or someone else. Or, share about a time when someone gave generously to help you. How did you feel?

The Bible Story

Read 2 Corinthians 8:7-15. From *The Message*: “You do so well in so many things—you trust God, you're articulate, you're insightful, you're passionate, you love us—now, do your best in this, too. I'm not trying to order you around against your will. But by bringing in the Macedonians' enthusiasm as a stimulus to your love, I am hoping to bring the best out of you. You are familiar with the generosity of our Master, Jesus Christ. Rich as he was, he gave it all away for us—in one stroke he became poor and we became rich. So here's what I think: The best thing you can do right now is to finish what you started last year and not let those good intentions grow stale. Your heart's been in the right place all along. You've got what it takes to finish it up, so go to it. Once the commitment is clear, you do what you can, not what you can't. The heart regulates the hands. This isn't so others can take it easy while you sweat it out. No, you're shoulder to shoulder with them all the way, your surplus matching their deficit, their surplus matching your deficit. In the end you come out even. As it is written, Nothing left over to the one with the most, Nothing lacking to the one with the least.”

In a culture where it seems as if we are always pushed to give more, do more, be more, and buy more than we could possibly afford, Paul's words remind us to take a step back and remember why we give. We give because of Jesus' generosity, his sacrifice for us. Jesus became poor, dying on the cross, so that we could be rich by being forever friends with God. Because

Jesus was generous, we are called to be generous. Paul tells us that our generosity isn't so we will be hard pressed or "sweat it out" as *The Message* says while others are relieved or "taking it easy." Instead, we are called to work shoulder to shoulder with other Christians who are working for the kingdom of God. We are each called to be generous, and to give generously what we can. For some, giving what they can may not seem like much. For others, it may be a great deal more. It's not the amount that truly matters, for if we each give what we can, it all comes out even in the end. What truly matters is our heart. We have to desire to give of our time, our money, and of ourselves. We have to want to be generous. For as Paul says, "the heart regulates the hands." We are called to give what we can and work with others who are giving what they can too. If we all give as we are able, then we will continue to help the kingdom of God.

Discussion

- How can you and your family give generously this week? Talk to your children about what it means to be generous.
- Have you "caught" your child doing something generous? Praise him/her for his/her generosity and talk about how he/she can continue that this week.

Prayer

Thank our Savior for being generous with this life by dying on the cross so that we could always be friends with God. Ask God to give you and your family a generous heart.