

Have someone read 1 Chronicles 29

It is a great thing in a church when people get to celebrate together. And we are celebrating today the reality of a growing journey to generosity in our church. We are going to do so by looking at this example of generosity, and this celebration of generosity in 1 Chronicles 29.

We have cause celebrate here today and we will speak specifically about this after church today when we present our six month update since our Journey to Generosity season commenced earlier this year.

But we also know don't we that the journey doesn't end - there is no limit to God's generosity and likewise we should not (in fact cannot) limit God's work in growing generosity in our lives. We want to be continually spurred on and encouraged on our journey. And this story is a good reminder to us of how we can to do that.

So if you can turn to 1 Chronicles 29... just to briefly set the scene (which can mostly be done in the chapter immediately before in chapter 28), David is nearing the end of his reign and is realizing that he does not have much longer to live.

King David would have loved to build the Temple but Chapter 28:3 tells us that because he was a warrior and had shed blood, God had denied him this opportunity and instead Solomon, David's son, would become responsible for building the Temple

We hear that David had set the wheels in motion - he'd given the temple a lot of thought and preparation and he had also prepared the hearts of the people - he reminded them this step was one of commitment to God - not a physical project but a spiritual one - they had to buy into this with all of their hearts - his son Solomon included.

So we come to Chapter 29 with that background in mind. We read in verses 1-20 of this chapter about David setting up the project for Solomon and essentially launching the building campaign.

His building campaign was pretty simple and extremely effective. He first declared his own commitment and sacrifice – he generously brings all of these material that he had set aside – a large component of which was from his personal wealth and lays it out for the building of the temple. Then the leaders follow suit with their sacrifices and contribution. Finally, the people see the generosity of David and of the leaders and they filled with joy and they are spurred on.

And then David, in response to the generosity of the people, responds in prayer from verse 10 – it's this prayer that I want to spend a few minutes on this morning because through this prayer there are revealed, some key priorities for God's people in this area of giving to God and growing a culture of generosity in our lives.

Firstly we learn that our generous giving is for...

1. For God's Glory – lets look at verses 10-16

(10-13).

Verse 9 everyone was rejoicing greatly and filled with joy at the display of generosity that had taken place. How did David respond? Well he didn't praise the people, or the leaders, or even himself. According to verse 10, he praised God in prayer and in the presence of the whole assembly. His response to all the willingness and generosity and joyful giving is to give praise to God. God had revealed Himself in a tangible way through the amazing generosity of the people.

John Piper, when commenting on this passage, puts it well when he says:

“The giving of money for the house of God was the work of God in order to reveal God so that we should stand in awe of God. It’s all about God, not about us.” In other words, it’s not our gifts that matter, but his Glory.

(14) Verse 14 following on from this is quite an astounding phrase. “But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this?” [repeat]

David has listed off all of the reasons that God is so good and abundant and generous - Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.”

David recognizes that everything remains His even when He loans it to us. When we are generous we are doing nothing more than opening our hands and allowing God to use and multiply what belongs to Him.

Essentially saying that having the ability to give generously, willingly and joyfully is a gift from God, just like the materials we give are. Our giving is not something we should be proud of – it’s a gift from God.

(15) If we keep going through verse 15 we see David understands that it’s all about God and not about us. Look at verse 15: “We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope.” This is really a humble statement for David to make. He was the King and yet he knew that he was just an alien, or a stranger, passing through this earth. We’re all just dust piled high and held in place by God. We’re dependent upon Him for every ounce of strength, every breath of life, every beat of our heart. Since we’re pilgrims here on earth it makes sense for us to invest our treasures in heaven. Who are we to hold onto what he has given us to store up in this world?

Temporary Hotel example

Suppose you went on a 6 month secondment to say the USA. You are told that you can't bring anything back with you but you are able to wire money back to Australia. You wouldn't spend all your money furnishing and building into your hotel room while you there – you would send the money back so you can use it when you get home.

If we continue to live our lives through this prism, understanding that everything we have is his and that we are to build everything for his kingdom – our giving will flow. Not just our money either – how we use our time in giving to others, how we use our talents and our spiritual gifts - but money is the one most of us find the hardest to let go of.

And in verse 16 too, the Holy Spirit through His Word, drives home the point that even our giving is a gift from God: "O Lord our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you."

It goes from His hand to our hands. When we give, instead of clenching our fists around that which we think is ours, we're simply opening our hands, and giving back to Him.

The Junior Sunday School Teacher asked her eight eager 10-year-olds if they would give \$1,000,000 to the missionaries. "YES!" they all screamed!! "Would you give \$1,000?" Again they shouted "YES!" "How about \$100?" "Oh, YES we would!" they all agreed!! "Would you give just a dollar to the missionaries?" she asked. The boys exclaimed "YES!" just as before except for Johnnie. "Johnnie," the teacher said as she noticed the boy clutching his pocket, "why didn't you say 'YES' this time?" "Well," he stammered, "I HAVE a dollar."

We can't focus on what we wish we had so we could give more – we are to focus on what we do have – what God has given us and be faithful and open-handed with that.

So we give generously for God's glory - the second thing we learn from David's prayer is that we must give with integrity.

2. **With Integrity (17).** Verse 17 tells us that God is pleased when we give with integrity. God sees our heart when we give. If we're giving grudgingly, God would rather that we don't give at all. If we're giving in order to gain favor with Him, God wants us to keep our wallets in our pockets until we understand that He's done everything for us through Jesus. There are really three kinds of giving.

Grudge giving is when I say, "I hate to"

Duty giving is when I feel "I have to"

Thanksgiving means that "I want to"

David gave willingly and he's filled with joy because he sees that same sense of readiness to respond in the people. Six times in this chapter David speaks about the people's eagerness to give. He recognizes that this response can only come from the grace of God.

People don't give when they have more money. People give when they have more joy!

[repeat]

It's simple really – so I invite you to consider your attitude to giving. If

you are not giving generously what you have or if you are not giving what you have decided to give out of a cheerful heart, with thanksgiving then stop and ask God to help you deal with the real issue which is finding that place of joy.

Reminds us of our vision verse from our generosity season from 2 Corinthians 9:7-8. This same truth is echoed ... You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.

So pray today for God to continue to spur you onto giving with integrity and watch same results that David got in this verse – others responded joyfully – God is glorified.

Third thing we learn is that in our giving we must remain loyal...

3. Remaining Loyal (18&19). In verse 18, David recognizes that many will have the tendency to drift, or as the hymn writer says, we're prone to wander. As a result, He calls on God to "keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you." There are so many things that distract us from God, aren't there? It can be a bad thing, or a neutral thing, or even a good thing. David is saying, "God, keep this spirit of cheerful and willing generosity in the hearts of your people and keep their hearts connected with you." He also prays a similar prayer Solomon in verse 19.

The Millionaire

At a church meeting a very wealthy man rose to tell the rest of those present about his Christian faith. "I'm a millionaire," he said, "and I attribute it all to the rich blessings of God in my life. I remember the turning point in my faith. I had just earned my first dollar and I went to a church meeting that night. The speaker was a missionary who told about his work. I knew that I only had a dollar bill and had to either give it all to God's work or nothing at all. So at that moment I decided to give my whole dollar to God. I believe that God blessed that decision, and that is why I am a rich man today." He finished and there was an awed silence at his testimony as he moved toward his seat. As he sat down a little old lady sitting in the same pew leaned over and said to him: "I dare you to do it again."

It's very easy is it not to make a decision to give generously and then to slip back into thinking we are doing enough. Apart from God our hearts go after anything but God. And apart from God we do not give willingly and joyfully to the cause of God. Let's pray that God would keep our hearts loyal to Him!

The primary way we can remain loyal to him is to stay in his word and continually stay in that place of understanding we are nothing without him and everything we have comes from him and to practice that open-handedness.

But a practical way that we can ensure that we continue to be loyal to God in our generosity is to continue to plan our giving. What we noticed when we did our journey to generosity, and will be exemplified today is that people who plan their giving make an enormous difference to the church finances. But of course this is hardly just about church finances. Recording and tracking church finances are one measure of the generosity in people's hearts. The real issue is the heart – about god's rich blessings to those who live open handed.

It's been encouraging to hear so many share about how God has challenged them to set aside and plan their giving, which in turn has led to them being able to bless others and do so cheerfully.

Several people say that not they have started giving God has provided more than they can imagine. Many of you will have heard the story Annie shared about how she decided to give and God has blessed her in ways that she can't imagine. Including praying for those who have....

Reference new envelopes and people on list invited but if you have a heart for it – do same.

You will notice too the intentionality of the people in this story – David particularly had planned what he could bring for the temple that would help to construct certain areas.

God is calling us to be completely committed and totally devoted to Him. "We need to remember that the depth of our devotion determines our impact. God is not looking all over the earth for strong people, for great people, for perfect people, or even for religious people.

He's looking for devoted followers whose hearts and hands and lives are open to Him and committed to remaining loyal to the task of blessing others.

Conclusion

So this passage has helped us remember our generous giving is for God's glory, must be done with integrity and we must remain loyal in it. God's generosity never runs out and therefore if we consider it a gift to give generously of all that God provides, then we will never stop on this journey. The more God provides the more we give.

But in conclusion – invite you to notice what happens in verse 21 – the closing verses of this passage.

Final observation - celebration

There is a celebration amongst the people. In verse 21, the people made sacrifices to the Lord and in verse 22, “They ate and drank with great joy in the presence of the Lord that day.” Notice that they are not celebrating the completion of the building project, but rather its commencement. Actually, they’re celebrating because they had the privilege of participating in providing the resources for it.

To come back to where I started today – we have much to celebrate in this church. And again to reiterate that this is not about church finances – well our church finances have improved because of the generosity of the people in this church. But you know the more important point to celebrate today is the amazing things God is doing in our midst. Through our generosity – not the \$ amount – but through the heart of the generosity God is entrusting us with so much more.

We have commenced a season. God is bringing our community to us – God is blessing us with eyes and ears and hearts for our community. God is giving us areas where our generosity needs to flow. God is giving us the gift of generosity.

Prior to considering this passage my intent today was to stand here and celebrate all of you – and don’t get me wrong I do daily.

However, I stand here today and give praise and thanks and glory to our great God who gives us every blessing that we see. Our great God provides and our great God changes hearts.

Would you join with me in celebrating God by praying with me - shout out your prayers of thanks to God for what he has provided and let's celebrate together as the people in this passage did.

Cue band when prayer ceases ...