



RADICAL GENEROSITY

2 Corinthians 9.6-15

Giving just isn't natural, at least cheerful giving isn't. I get it. Giving is necessary for the work of God's Kingdom, but I find that most of the time we give. . .no, I give. . .with clenched teeth and closed fists. I simply don't want to part with what I believe is mine unless it is pried from me. Guilt. Fear. Shame. They usually do the trick, but I feel terrible about it because I know the gift, though given, is but a sham. There is no heart behind it. God may love a cheerful giver, but a cheerful giver can be hard to find these days. They don't grow on trees, and everything I have ever heard about giving cheerfully just doesn't work all that well. Deciding, willing, choosing to be and give generously just isn't all that easy.

So how do we go about this cheerful giving thing anyway? According to Paul, we don't do it by deciding, willing, or choosing. We give cheerfully by opening our lives to God and His grace so that He might develop in us a generous spirit. It is a generous spirit that unclenches teeth and pries loose fingers. It is a generous spirit that turns my gaze beyond my wants to the needs of others. It is a generous spirit that fills me with contentment with less so that others might have some. It is a generous spirit that frees me from the idol of self propped up by my greed so that I might look upon God and see the ongoing, eternal results of giving for His glory. It is in a generous spirit that we find a cheerful giver. Here's the deal. God is in the business of transforming spirits, of taking calcified, shattered, self-absorbed spirits and reshaping them. Those that open themselves to God and His grace find that He works in them a new heart. So maybe the real question isn't, where do we go to find a cheerful giver, but rather am I willing to open my life to God so that He might make me into one?

A fellow traveler,

Blake
Spiritual Formation Pastor

My Next Step

We encourage you to consider doing the following as a way of handing off faith to your family. . .

- **Family Fast:** God is the One that transforms us, reshaping our hearts and lives so that we might live as He has called us to live. However, we are called to partner with Him by opening our lives to the transforming work of His grace in our hearts. One of the most powerful ways we can do this is through fasting. In fasting, we deny ourselves something that we need or desire so that we might see God as our sufficiency. This week, consider fasting as a family. This fast need not be from food. It might be from eating out or going to a movie. Agree as a family to forgo an activity like eating out and spend the evening at home enjoying one another. Allow God to be enough for you in place of the entertainment. Then take the money you would have spent and give it to a charity such as Rochester Family Mission or The Open Door. As you do this, you are opening your life to God and His grace. The more often you practice this, the more you open your life to God and His grace, thus the more you will see His work of transformation in you.

We encourage you to consider taking the following next step on your faith journey. . .

- **Personal Fast:** God wants to transform our hearts, but He desires that we open our lives to Him willingly. One of the best ways to do this is by fasting. Fasting is the practice of denying ourselves of something we want or need so that God becomes our sufficiency. In this act, we open our lives to God's grace, depending on Him to be enough. This week, consider fasting from something you normally spend money on. This might be a coffee at Starbucks or eating out at lunch. Choose to deny yourself this, making coffee at home or simply going without. As you go without, seek to see God as enough. Next, take the money you would have spent on eating out or on coffee and give it to a charity such as the Rochester Family Mission or The Open Door Mission. Thank God that He has given you more than enough. Consider making this a regular practice in your life, a means of opening your heart to God's transforming grace.