

## PARTNERS IN GENEROSITY - Philippians 4:10-20



This little old grey haired, granny from Florida was in the supermarket and came out into the car park to her car and found 4 young men breaking into her car. Of course being in America she was packing 'heat.' She took out her gun and pointing it at the men she said:- "Leave or I'll shoot."

Well they bolted. They're out there. Granny is shaken up goes over to the car, gets in the driver's seat and fumbles for the keys. She tries to get the keys in the ignition to start the car but they won't go in. It's only then that's she realizes that it is not her car. It is like her car but her car is parked a few spaces down.

Terribly embarrassed, she drives down to the local police station and tells the sergeant at the desk the full story. He bursts out laughing and laughing.

"What's the matter?" she says. He points down to the far end of the counter. Down there are 4 white faced, shaken up, young men, reporting an attempted carjack by an assailant described as female, about 70 years old, grey haired, approximately 5 feet in height and carrying a very large gun.

What's Granny's problem? It wasn't her car. She thought it was her car. That is our problem as well. Our resources belong to God. It's not our money.

I know talking about money and possessions is a sensitive topic. If I was to talk about it as much as Jesus I would be giving a sermon on it about once every six weeks. 15 percent of everything Jesus said was on this topic. More than his teaching on heaven and hell combined.

Why? There is a fundamental connection between our spiritual lives and how we think about and handle money. We try to separate our faith and finance but God sees them as inseparable.

This week we continue our 'Vision' series 'Partners in Christ.' Today we are looking at the topic of 'Partners in Generosity.'

### 1. Contentment by God's power

**Read: 10f**

Paul has learned contentment. He has learnt this in any circumstance.

What were his current circumstances? He was in prison. It might be easy to be content when you have all you need but about when you don't. Paul is not only content but joyful and thankful.

Paul has 'Learned' contentment. Contentment doesn't come naturally. We need to learn it in different circumstances of life.

Don't we all say that if only \_\_\_\_\_ would change, I'd be content.

One of my cycling mates says a bike shop owner he knows says that ' $N + 1$ ' is the formula for how many bikes you need. ' $N$ ' is the number of bikes you currently own. That is often how we live in our lives. How much do we need? ' $N + 1$ '. ' $N$ ' being what we currently own.

Paul says he has learned the 'secret.' I think the secret is v.13. Paul knows God and that he has everything he needs in Jesus. He is completely dependent on God. God will give him strength to be content in any and every situation.

Contentment starts by learning. Putting what you learn into practise is convincing yourself of what you know about God. There are so many things out there to convince us to be discontent. TV shows and Ads. The TV show 'Better Homes and Gardens' is a classic example. Junk Mail reminds of what you don't have but apparently need.

Paul knew contentment by God's Power

## 2. Giving comes back to bless

### Read: 14-17

Paul has partnership on view again. It is captured in the word 'share.' The Philippian's partnership wasn't a ONE time contribution but again and again.

Did you notice v.17

He is motivating them not what he will receive if they give but what they will receive.

We are given eternal rewards for generous giving.

Luke 6:38 Give and it will be given to you.

We often say I can't afford to give. You can't afford not to give.

Matthew 19:29 – *"Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life."*

That's 10 000 percent – an impressive return.

That's why Randy Alcorn says: *"Storing up earthly treasures isn't simply wrong. It's plain stupid."*

We are all told to invest in our IRA or our Individual Retirement Account. We should be investing in our IEA or our Individual Eternal Account. Do you have one? What's in it? When did you make your last contribution to it?

Jim Elliot said: ***"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."***

Don't think about the return you'll get in 3 years or 30 years but in 30 million years.

It is absolutely incredible how rich, we are. Listen to this illustration from the good weekend, June 10, 2006 there were a group of Ethiopian refugees from remote villages starting new lives in Minnesota in the United States that it might as well be here. Soon after they arrived, they were given a house to share and left with groceries.

When their carers came back, some days later they found the groceries in the cupboards, untouched. They hadn't realised that all those brightly coloured cans and boxes contained food. The next day, the carers took them down to the supermarket. They were astonished with all the bright lights, the wider aisles and background music. Excitedly they went up and down the aisles and put all sorts of cans and bags and boxes in the trolley. They had some sort of idea that the picture on the box indicated what was inside the box.

But they were baffled by some cans. Did people in America eat their cats and dogs. Oh no was the reply, 'that food for pets'. The Ethiopians were absolutely gobsmacked at a country that was so rich, You could have food for pets in a can.

Did you know, the average large supermarket now sells 35,000 different items. Have you ever gone down to the supermarket and wanted to buy say a garden Gnome variety of baked beans. But there then with barbecue source, salt reduced, and less fat, less fat with sausages with sausages but no salt, with special herbs and on and on. You just can't get the basic item.

In 2005 the United States produced four times as many goods as it sold. Did you know that Australians throw away 3.3 million tonnes of food every year and one quarter of our nation's food supplies?

In 2004 Australians spent \$5.3 billion on food we didn't eat. That is 2.9 billion on fresh food, \$630 million on meat and take-away food, \$876 million left overs, \$596 million unfinished drinks \$241 million in frozen food. That represents more than 13 times the amount donated by Australian households and overseas aid agencies. Friends, we are a rich, rich country.

We don't all of the same gifts. We don't all have the same capacity. We have been giving different gifts. Randy Alcorn says "giving isn't a luxury of the rich but a privilege of the poor."

### **Giving comes back to bless**

#### **3. Giving pleases God**

**Read: v.18**

Don't we long to live under the smile of God our Father rather than his frown? To bring pleasure to God.

Paul says the giving of the Philippians was like 'a fragrant offering.' Paul is using language of the Old Testament sacrificial system. In the burning of the incense there was an aroma that was pleasing. When you offer offerings from a heart that is tune with mine it brings me pleasure.

Notice also their giving is a sacrifice. Generous giving is not necessarily sacrificial giving.

Jesus drew attention to a lady who was going into the Temple treasury. Jesus saw the rich putting money into treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in 2 coins.

Jesus said this poor widow has put in more than others. The disciples were probably saying what is he talking about. Jesus said all these people gave out of their wealth but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on. The rich were generous the widow was sacrificial.

I feel like talking about the topic is like treading on a pin cushion. Both for me and for you.

I know what I give and I'm not sure if it is sacrificial. Only you know what you give and know whether it is sacrificial.

### **But I do know this: Giving pleases God**

#### **4. Giving because God meets your needs**

**Read it: v.19**

God will make sure the giver doesn't suffer because they give. Go ahead and give and you'll discover that God is no man's debtor.

We think if we don't receive we will never be able to give. Jesus turns that upside down and says if you never give it away we will never have it to keep.

*Do I really believe that God will supply al my needs if I give?*

If you are young you might think I'll wait until I'm earning a bit more before I give to the work of the Gospel more fully. If you are older you might think: when I've reduced the mortgage and put the kids through school, I'll be in a position to be more generous.

We all have different circumstances God has placed us in. But the Bible says that our resources are gifts from God given to us not only for our own good but also for the good of others. So what we have in our bank account has given to us by God so that others might come to know Jesus.

It is amazing that God has given us the resources we have to enjoy the pleasure of life. Will you please add to that joy the eternal privilege of partnering financially to save those who don't know Jesus?

And now I am asking you to prayerfully consider what you will give weekly in 2012. Also prayerfully consider what you'll give to the projects for 2012. Sign the cards and bring them back next week and give generously to the 'Special Projects' so that the mission of fruitful work for Gods kingdom can continue.

At the start of this message Paul said, '*I have learnt to be content whatever the circumstances*'. Why is Paul content in this passage? Because God is his strength and God is his source and God is his supply. Trust Him.

*I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Phil 4:12,13*

A life of contentment is a life of ultimate reliance on God which becomes a life of blessing and a life of joy.