



SHADOW MOUNTAIN LEADER *Packet*

Giving Up!—Mastering the Joy of Upward Giving

Leaders: This weekend Rob Morgan will be speaking again. I was able to have a conversation with Rob. He sent me an outline and some thoughts on his message. Below, you will find Rob's simple outline and some companion verses for each point. For this week's Leaders Notes and Small Group Questions, we thought it would be timely to focus on his second point: The Generosity of the Church. The questions will come from both of the Scripture passages Rob supplied and will dovetail nicely with what he speaks on over the weekend. Have a great week of small groups! Pastor Dale

Rob Morgan's speaking outline:

1. The Genesis of the Church: Acts 16:11-34
2. The Generosity of the Church: Philippians 2:25-30; Philippians 4:10–20
3. The Grace of the Church: 2 Corinthians 8:1-9; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Getting Started

1. What does the word generous mean to you? How do you know when a person is being charitable? What are the clues? [Here is how Merriam-Webster defines the word generous: liberal in giving \(a generous benefactor\); marked by abundance or ample proportions \(a generous helping of mashed potatoes\); characterized by a noble or kindly spirit \(a generous heart\).](#)

2. Describe someone you know who stands out as a generous person. When have you observed him/her acting in a benevolent manner? Here are some descriptions of a generous person:

- a. Always ready to help
- b. Doesn't keep score
- c. Celebrates others' wins and successes
- d. Values people over things
- e. Good listener
- f. Make apologies when necessary
- g. Encourages others

Digging Deeper

1. As a group, read Philippians 2:25-30. What do we learn about Epaphroditus from this passage? Describe the way in which Paul viewed his spiritual brother. Apart from these few verses, Epaphroditus would be an unknown. Honestly, in many respects, that fits him. He was just a layman in the church at Philippi who held no office, wrote no books, gave no sermons, led no "great" enterprises for God. He was a messenger boy for the gospel, a servant for his Lord. No task was too menial for him to do. No assignment was too little for him to accept. No risk was too great for him to take. He would have been comfortable with a towel and basin. Epaphroditus had a cooperative spirit. He was not just a worker or a soldier; he was 1) a fellow worker, 2) a fellow soldier, and 3) a brother.

2. Re-read Philippians 2:25. How does this verse show that Epaphroditus was a generous man? Describe the way in which he was charitable to Paul. In what way has someone served you in a similar way? Paul described Epaphroditus as "your messenger and the one who ministered to my need" (2:25). Twice we are told that Epaphroditus risked his life in order to minister to Paul (verses 27, 30). The phrase "not regarding his life" is a translation of the Greek word *paraboleumai*, and this is the only time it is used in the New Testament. In the language of the common people, it meant "to gamble or bet." In other words, Epaphroditus gambled his very life to fulfill the work he had been given to do. He gambled his life to come to Rome in search of Paul. The early Christians called those who risked their lives for Christ "Parabolani" or "the Riskers." Bonus Question: When might being generous feel risky?

3. Read Philippians 4:10–20 together. Paul wrote, “I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.” How might a person who lacks contentment view an opportunity to act in a generous manner? What about a person who is content? Paul knew how to live in good times as well as in bad. In Philippians 4:12 he used the word abound twice as he described his contentment in times of plenty. Abound means “more than enough.” It is probable that Paul grew up in a moderately affluent home, and even after his conversion, he had experienced God’s abundant provision for his needs. Whether he was feasting or fasting, rich or poor, he had learned how to be content. Extra Credit: Read I Timothy 6:6-10. Discuss how this teaching helps us combine contentment with generosity into a workable lifestyle.

4. Philippians 4:13 is one of the more recognized verses in the New Testament. A great way to think about the message of this verse is living a life of “quiet strength.” Describe a family member, friend, or co-worker who possesses a calm yet powerful demeanor. How does this person talk? Behave? Make decisions? Paul confidently wrote that he could do all things through Christ who strengthened him. He was simply saying he was continually energized in all things by the strengthening of Christ. He was not talking about an outward set of circumstances but an inward source of strength. This is not contentment in a place, but in a Person. This quiet strength enables a believer to live in the place where God has put him and be content.

5. Look again at Philippians 4:18. List out the three conclusions that Paul came to as he reflected on the generosity of the Philippians. How might these three descriptions be installed in a person’s life? As Paul evaluated the generosity of the Philippians, he came to three important conclusions concerning giving and receiving:

- a) Giving brings blessing to the one who receives the gift. Paul was very thankful for their generous gift. Because they gave, he said, “I have all and abound. I am full” (v. 18).
- b) Giving brings blessing to God. From God’s perspective, the Philippian gift was “a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God” (v. 18).
- c) Giving brings blessing to the one who gives the gift. Paul told the Philippians they had “done well” (v. 14), and he described their gift as “fruit that abounds to your account” (v. 17).

6. Acting generously rarely happens by accident. Because of sin, we are quick to see obstacles to giving or sharing. Creating a lifestyle of benevolence is a spiritual discipline. Which item of the below list is your own “barrier to generosity?” What is your story of facing this type of obstacle? *When God calls us to generosity, we will be inclined to lean on our own understanding and withhold our resources (which are really His resources anyway). We might battle our thoughts and feelings regarding cultural factors, financial challenges, upbringing, specific fears, or anything else. But regardless of the balance in our checking account, generosity starts with having the right mindset.*

7. Below are some ways we might respond to an opportunity for generosity if we operate in our own strength. Which have you struggled with? Are there any of these that you are grappling with right now?

Generosity is for rich people.

Radical generosity is unwise.

I’m afraid of running out of money.

What if _____ happens again?

_____ doesn’t need my help.

Applying the Message

1. Read Philippians 4:19-20 and 2 Corinthians 9:8. When it comes to God’s promises to fulfill all your needs, how confident do you feel He will follow through? Pick a percentage between 1 and 100 (1=low; 100=high). *Paul reminded the Philippians that the God who had cared for his needs through their loving concern would also care for their needs as they trusted Him! This promise is often taken out of context. It was given to encourage those who were sacrificial in their response to the needs of God’s work. Paul had been rejoicing in the fact that the Philippians had supplied his need. Now he told them that God would supply their need. His promise to them was personal: “My God.” It was positive: “shall supply.” It was pointed: “all your need.” It was plentiful: “according to His riches in glory,” and it was powerful: “by Christ Jesus.”*

2. Describe a fresh way of thinking that will help you turn toward a more generous lifestyle. How will you remove the barriers to this new way of living? *This is all about application. The Word has spoken and now we have been given the honor of responding to God’s call to be generous.*