



Gifted Part 5 - Giving

We are already into the second last week of this Gifted course, week 5, and I really hope (and it is my prayer) that it has been an eye-opener and beneficial to you!

Pg.12 in our books.

Just a reminder (for the second last time) that this course is made up of three different parts, the six Sunday messages, six midweek videos, and then we're also doing 36 devotionals six per week from our gifted workbooks.

So far, we've spoken about the gifts of **Prophecy**, of **Mercy**, **Service**, **Encouragement**, and **Teaching**.

Ultimately we want to be encouraged and empowered to find out, and then exercise in faith, our superpower spiritual gifts that God has given to each one of us.

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Romans 12:6-8

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Money can be quite a sensitive topic in church, we understand that. And when we talk about giving today, we're not just talking about money. We're talking about time, and kindness and love.

But money does sit at the top. When we mention giving, money does sit at the top of the pile of what giving is to us.

The little story is told about a congregant that goes to the eldership in a church and says:

“Listen, my uncle has won 500 million Rand in the lotto, but he has a heart condition. And so I'm a bit worried to tell him, because I'm not sure how he's going to take it.”

So the pastor says, “Don't worry, I'll go over and tell him.” So during the weekly visit, the pastor goes and he sits with the uncle.

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“Listen Henry, what would you do if you won 500 million Rand?

And he says, “Well, Pastor, the first thing I'll do is give half of it to the church.”

And the pastor fell over and he died of a heart attack.

The moral of the story is this, that money can make us emotional.

It means something to us, it affects us, it affects every human being on earth, because we need money to live.

And when we talk about the gift of giving, it can be quite a hard one, especially if the gift of giving is not the one that sits at the top of your list.

Now with the seven gifts that we're talking about out of the series, all of us have a measure of these seven gifts. And so for some of us that may be encouragement right at the top and giving right at the bottom.

And so as we talk about this gift today, we're hoping it will inspire us.

If your gift is at the bottom, let's hope it's not going to irritate you or make you feel a little bit uncomfortable. But it is a gift God has given us.

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And we have to embrace that the Word says we must give, and we must give generously.

The Bible says, **'generously'** - It's more than just an issue of giving.

And so if this is not your gift, it can be one of your hardest gifts to function in.

And if it is your gift, every now and then we have to come back, to check our hearts to ensure that we're giving out of the right heart.

So even if it is your gift, we got to make sure that our hearts are sitting well.

Let's give a definition of giving : 'Being generous and resourceful with money, time and care.'

Another definition says: 'It's the habit of giving freely, without expecting anything in return.'

And if the type of person you are were to be described – with giving as your first in line gift – this is what it would probably say, “God has blessed you with a special ability to produce wealth, together with the spirit of generosity, in using it to serve His purposes”.

The gift of giving requires both generosity and faith.

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- Faith to give away your wealth because you know God gave it to you.
- These people have the ability to make money. But more importantly, their hearts are not fixed on money, but their heart is fixed on the treasure they have in heaven. So they can part with their riches.

Another word for the this giving gift is: 'enterprise'.

- This means that you're a highly ethical person, if this is your top gift, and that you manage your money with great diligence.
- You limit your standard of living so that you can increase your standard of giving.
- And you are able to prioritise your needs over your wants, so that you can simply be in a position to give more.

What a beautiful gift when it is functioning well.

If this is your top gift, it comes with a constant heart check!

There's always the "go to" when we talk about giving in church, that "It is more blessed to give than to receive", which is true. Giving opens up blessing.

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Some perspectives on those with the gift of generous giving:

1.

The gift of giving consists of generously providing resources and money to further the work of the kingdom. They have an automatic response to contribute to worthy causes. They ask, "what can I do to meet this financial or material need?" They are generous people; not just with their finances but also with their goods and time.

They are governed by wisdom when trusting their personal assets to others to help further their ministry.

2.

And you don't have to be rich to have the gift of giving. As Paul told the Corinthian church in

2 Corinthians 8:12

"For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have."

A good example of that is the poor widow. She put the smallest amount into the temple treasury but Jesus said she gave more than all the others because she gave out of her poverty. She had the gift of giving and she trusted God to take care of her. Those who have the

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gift of giving have the ability to trust that God will take care of them when they give.

The Macedonian church had this gift.

Paul highlighted their example in

2 Corinthians 8:1-4

"And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints."

When you hear phrases like "severe trial" and "extreme poverty" you wouldn't think they would be followed by, "rich generosity". But when you also have the phrase, "overflowing joy" then it makes sense. One of the factors of the gift of giving is having overflowing joy-joy for my salvation, joy for the ministry, joy for the church, etc..

I don't think you can have the gift of giving without having joy. You can give without joy because some give begrudgingly or with ulterior motives; but you can't have the gift of giving without having joy. And

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we see with the Macedonians that this overwhelming joy was present despite their circumstances.

3.

The gift of giving doesn't leave when times are tough. It may not be as easy or widespread as when I have more resources to use but when I have the gift of giving my attitude will still be desiring to use whatever I do have to bless others.

And it works the other way too. One doesn't become generous just because he has more. Some people think that way, though. "If I had more, I would give."

There's a quote that goes, "If one is not generous with what he has, he deceives himself if he thinks he would be if he had more." The gift of giving is there regardless of how much I have at my disposal.

And we see some other factors with the Macedonians that showed that they had the gift of giving.

- A. "Entirely on their own". They didn't need to be prodded or even prompted to give; they were the initiators. Someone with the gift of giving is ready to give as soon as the need is exposed.
- B. "Urgently pleaded". Instead of having to urgently plead with them to give, they were the ones who were urgently pleading

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to give. That sounds so unnatural, doesn't it? "Oh please, please can I give you my money?" It's natural when it's the other way around, when we're trying to get something, but not so much when someone is trying to give something. But that's what was going on with these Macedonians.

C. And we see that they saw giving to help the saints as a privilege. It was an honour to them to be able to help. And it wasn't so they could boast, it was for the purpose of benefiting them by meeting needs. For someone who has the gift of giving their reward is knowing that a person or a ministry is better off because they could contribute; so that God's work could be enhanced or continued.

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4.

Someone with the gift of giving also has the right perspective regarding their possessions. Their possessions don't possess them. They can let them go if it is God's will to do so. The rich young ruler couldn't do that when Jesus challenged him to. Wealth was his stronghold. But someone who has the gift of giving can let go of their possessions when the need presents itself and God moves them. They realise that it's all God's to begin with.

Psalm 24:1-2

“The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.”

The Lord is the Creator, Sustainer and Possessor of it all. Grasping this involves taking a look at stewardship vs. ownership. If we were to look at everything we have as being on loan from God and under His control rather than everything being mine and under my control, we would have a whole different attitude.

If our attitude changed from ownership to stewardship what would change? I would seek to use what God had given me to bless Him and others. I would be more willing to let people borrow things. My mindset wouldn't be, "I earned it so I'm entitled to do with it what I want".

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Instead, I would have more of a thankful, appreciative attitude that says, "Thank you God for giving me the ability to work, thank you for giving me the job, thank you for providing me the opportunity to serve you with what you've given to me."

The one who has the gift of giving sees their possessions in the right perspective; they see them not only as things to bless their lives but also as aides and tools to bless someone else's life. Instead of being like the man who decided to build bigger barns to hold all of his abundance we need to be "rich toward God" and bless others with the abundance of blessings God has given us.

2 Corinthians 9:11

"You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God."

When we exercise the gift of giving that will result in having more to be generous with. When our attitude is right about the things we have God will honour that. Having the gift of giving results in being willing to be generous on every valid opportunity.

And we see that there is thanksgiving when we're generous. And their thanksgiving can result in paying it forward; being generous to others because generosity was shown to them. Having the gift of

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giving not only blesses others; it inspires them to bless others in return.

Today, let's talk about the heart of a giver.

What is the heart of the giver?

We learn ultimately from Jesus, and here are three lessons on the heart of the giver.

1. Jesus is enough, so that's why we give.

Matthew 19:16 tells us about a rich young ruler who comes to Jesus and he knows there's more to life than what he was currently experiencing or doing...

Matthew 19:16-21

Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"

"Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments."

"Which ones?" he inquired.

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Jesus replied, “You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,’ and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’”

“All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?”

Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

It says that this rich young ruler left Jesus downcast because he was incredibly wealthy.

What is Jesus teaching us? He is enough. So give.

Consider the profound words Jesus said to His disciples when He called them – which He still says to us today: “Follow me.”

And the Bible says that they left their fish, their boats, their nets. They left their livelihoods and followed Jesus.

Why? Because Jesus is enough.

If we can hold on to this truth, and own it for ourselves, that Jesus is enough, - then He fulfills us, and when He fills everything of who we are, suddenly our hands and hearts start to open wide.

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Why? Because we don't live for the possessions, or the things that we have here on earth.

Matthew 6: 24-27

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?”

Jesus says we cannot serve both money and God. And then He goes on and tells us not to worry...

He's teaching on worries.

Matthew 6:25-26

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap

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or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”

If God feeds the birds of the sky, how much more would he feed you, a child of God? If God clothes the flowers of the fields, how much more will He not clothe you, a child of God?

What is Jesus teaching? **‘I am enough.’**

You see, friends, if we can hold on to this reality of Jesus being enough, then we start to function highly in the gift of giving because we don't hold on to possessions.

Think about it this way: Jesus is the living water. We get to serve our cups of water to people around us, from the living water that Jesus puts in us. But you see the beautiful thing about Jesus being the living water is that He's the ocean, He never runs out, no matter how much water you give.

When Jesus is enough, our heart becomes that of giving.

That's why Paul had the confidence to say;

“To live is Christ, to die is gain.”

If I live, it's for Jesus. If I die, it's with Jesus. Jesus is enough.

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You see, when Jesus becomes enough, when Jesus becomes all that He is meant to be in our lives... Guess what happens? - We can give from any position in life. Whether we have much or whether we have little. Jesus is enough.

Someone said, "Everyone can experience the joy and blessing of generosity because everyone has something to give."

2. People are enough, so that's why we give

The second thing that we need to settle in our hearts in order for us to be able to function highly in this gift of giving is that People are enough, so that's why we give. People are enough.

Acts 2:45

"They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need."

They sold their property and their possessions and gave to anyone who was in need. What a challenging passage of scripture.

Have you ever heard your children repeat things you've said or imitated things you've done? For a minute you may wonder why they have said or done something in that way, and then you realise they're simply imitating their father.

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Here in Acts 2 these disciples are simply imitating the generosity of their Father in heaven who gave the life of His Son as a ransom for many! God gave what was most valuable to Him, and as that drip feeds into our souls we will begin to do the same.

That's where these disciples got their high level of generosity from!

They're selling houses, and property and their possessions and everything they have to give to the poor.

Haven't you ever driven past a beautiful home, or a beautiful car, prayed in tongues and thanked the Lord for it in advance?

And then the thought crosses your mind, "What if I owned that one day and Jesus said "Give it away. There's a building project coming up, sell that house and give the money to the building project?" Would you be able to?

You see, when we see that Jesus is enough, we start to see that people are enough.

We start to value and love people enough, to sell our possessions and to give to the poor (both the poor in possessions and the poor in spirit).

These followers of Jesus were shaped by their Master. Jesus taught them about true priorities.

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The Pharisees come to Jesus, in **Matthew 22:36**

Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

They’re asking: ‘What's the greatest commandment in the kingdom of heaven?’

Guess what he says? - Jesus settles the issue of giving (if you can see it) He says: ‘Love God with all your heart, with all your soul AND love people.

Why? Because Jesus is enough. And people are enough. And that’s why we give...

Some people say that you can't take anything to heaven. You can't take your houses, your possessions, your dog. You can't take anything!"

But you can take souls and rewards to heaven with you. They may not come with you, but they coming after you or before you - the people that you got to minister to!

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So let's think about this. If a soul is the only thing that can go into heaven, then surely our investment here on earth should be into something that is eternal.

What is eternal?

- The person sitting next to you is eternal. Your 'person', your friend, your boss, your co-worker. Your neighbour. The soul in them is eternal.

See, when we start to get a revelation of the value of people, that's where our finances start to go.

That's where our possessions start to serve.

Why? Because people are enough.

There is only one example and His name is Jesus. And He died on the cross.

And when He died on the cross He declared that every soul is worthy of blessing.' Every soul is worthy of our giving.

It's not our job to judge people, It's our job to love people.

We're not saying that we practice giving without wisdom. But we are saying that 'the gift of Giving' says give generously.

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There will always be a reason not to give.

But Jesus died for the value of all people. Right?

Here's a scripture that can point you in the right direction.

Proverbs 3:27-28

“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbour, “Come back tomorrow and I’ll give it to you”— when you already have it with you.”

You see, when Jesus is enough, and when people are enough - all of a sudden the hand opens, the heart opens – and the world sees and experiences the heart of a giver.

3. Giving opens doors for God to move, so that’s why we give

This gift can change the world because it creates space in the world for God to move.

Giving, which sometimes involves money, has got the ability to create spaces where people get to see the true beauty and essence of the Gospel.

Giving can change the world.

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Your giving creates opportunity for God to move.

Giving is never done in vain. It's done to open up moments, open up an atmosphere where God can move. Don't underestimate it – because it's not about the amount, it's about the heart and the obedience...

Jesus gave his life – and when He gave His life, what opportunities did that open up for you?

Eternal life. We now have access to the Father, because of this **'divine generosity' that** Jesus showed us.

Surely our response is showing a 'divine generosity' to others, as an outworking of our gratitude towards Him...

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son”.

If we were to define giving in my own words, it could be: 'Giving equals love.'

We give out of a deep love for Jesus, a deep love for people, not out of a deep love for being blessed and needed. God takes care of that.

He promises that in **Matthew 6** that we don't have to worry about our provision and care!

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When I have a divine revelation of Jesus in my heart, a divine revelation that Jesus came for people, that we exist for people, for souls to go to heaven – then opportunities open for us by the hand of God.

John Wesley, the great Methodist preacher and theologian, said,

“Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever as you can.”

Isn't that what the gospel is about? Isn't that why we exist?

Jesus did all that He could, for you and I to be sitting here today, for you and I to have the life that we have today.

My car, my house, my time, my money, my life, I will give, because Jesus is enough. And people are enough.

Jesus summarised for us the Greatest Commandments,

‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul with all your mind, and love people, as yourself.’

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