

Re - DISCOVER

D I S C I P L E S H I P

October 4	Isaiah 29, 30	Ephesians 6
October 5	Isaiah 31, 32, 33	Philippians 1
October 6	Isaiah 34, 35, 36	Philippians 2
October 7	Isaiah 37, 38	Philippians 3
October 8	Isaiah 39, 40	Philippians 4
October 9	Isaiah 41, 42	Colossians 1
October 10	Isaiah 43, 44	Colossians 2

Compelling Generosity

(2 Corinthians 8-9)

Why is this gift for the Jerusalem church so important?

What dangers or suspicions accompany Paul and his request?

How does Paul attempt to diminish these criticisms?

Do verses 20-21 apply to us as a church? Why are they so important?

If the Macedonians came to visit you, would they find your generosity lacking or overflowing?

With what else beside money are you generous?

To become more generous, what would have to change?

- Your job
- Time priorities
- Spending habits
- Purpose of my life
- Vision for the future

What have you reaped by being generous to others?

For what purpose will God materially bless His Children?

Compelling Generosity
First United Methodist Church



Compelling Generosity

“You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” 2 Cor. 8:9

Com·pel·ling \kəm-'pe-līŋ\

demands a response, to express forcefully or irresistibly

➤ **Compelling Generosity requires a vision for the future our generosity is creating.**

“If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” Matthew 12:28

Food Pantry	Community Breakfast	Clean Water	Liberia Hospital
Clothes Closet	Heart & Hands	Nicaragua Christmas	Girl Scouts

➤ **Compelling Generosity requires simplicity**

Simplicity –eliminating those things that stand in the way of the future your generosity could create.

Wants - desires based on competition, envy, pride, or entitlement

Needs – essential to health and the fulfillment of our purpose

➤ **Compelling Generosity embodies a message**

Our giving reflects the Spirit of Christ in us.

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This is God's Word for my life in this place and at this time. Today, I am a new creation in Christ, I am God's very own, and I believe He has a purpose for my life.

Acts 4:32-37(Msg)

The whole congregation of believers was united as one—one heart, one mind! They didn't even claim ownership of their own possessions. No one said, "That's mine; you can't have it." They shared everything. The apostles gave powerful witness to the resurrection of the Master Jesus, and grace was on all of them.

³⁴⁻³⁵And so it turned out that not a person among them was needy. Those who owned fields or houses sold them and brought the price of the sale to the apostles and made an offering of it. The apostles then distributed it according to each person's need.

³⁶⁻³⁷Joseph, called by the apostles "Barnabas" (which means "Son of Comfort"), a Levite born in Cyprus, sold a field that he owned, brought the money, and made an offering of it to the apostles.

Compelling Generosity

The first Christians were a compelling people who shaped cities, carved out culture, and impacted the Roman Empire. Compelling people are rarely people who live in conformity to the dominant culture. They are people who resist the dominant characteristics of their culture and live in stark contrast to it. Their lives are shocking and provocative because they are so counter to the main culture's pattern of living. As we look at our city and culture we are clearly in a culture with an economy of excess –US Consumer debt rose in March of this year to **2.56 trillion**. What this debt reveals and exposes about us is our self-absorption and commitment to improve our personal circumstances, comforts, and conveniences even if we do not have the means to do so. We are seeing signs and hearing rumblings that our culture is actually growing weary of this monoculture of luxury. We say this consumerism is rooted in self-absorption because this excess is always to the neglect of our neighbor's needs. This economy of excess rooted in self absorption was tenaciously resisted by the earliest Christians. **Acts 4:32-37**. They were liquidating and sharing, instead of acquiring and consuming. They had a vision of the Kingdom where there would be no lack and it was coming into focus in their present. As Apostles we are seeking to become a community of compelling generosity. Compelling people just don't sporadically exercise generosity, they steadily embody generosity. It is the pattern of their lives. They have seen the pattern in Jesus (2 Corinthians 8:9). What will it take for you and I to embody generosity?

We have to get a vision for the future our generosity is creating. People who buy into the culture's self-absorbed economy of excess have a grand vision of the future they are creating for themselves. (Their retirement homes, exotic vacations, toys, etc.) But, Jesus calls us to abandon that radically individualistic vision of a prosperous personal future and like Jesus who took on flesh and became one of us, embrace a solidarity with the human community that envisions a better future for the world that more closely resembles the coming Kingdom. In the coming Kingdom there is no lack and no suffering. So we look at the brokenness of the world and say "that looks nothing like God's staggering vision for the future, nothing like what this world is destined

for and I have to do something about it. I have to bring my resources to bear upon this world and help create a better future that looks more like the Kingdom that God is bringing." **Compelling people have a vision for the kind of future their generosity can create.**

Compelling Generosity requires simplicity. Simplicity is eliminating the things that stand in the way of the future your generosity could create. You can't see it as going without – it is not negating; it is creating. Simplicity is cultivating a modest lifestyle – renouncing soft-living and self-absorption, and consumerism, so you have enough resources to contribute to the lives of others. Eliminating unnecessary wants so you can meet the urgent needs in your community and the world. It is amazing how easily we slip into a lifestyle that is normative for this culture of excess and fail to see that we are casually spending significant sums of money on non-essential pleasures that are luxuries in other parts of the planet while the basic needs of so many go unmet. Buying Starbucks Coffee is a privilege of the elite in a world where 1 billion people live on less than \$1/day. Constantly eating out is privilege of kings in a world where every 3.6 seconds someone dies of hunger (majority under 5). Dropping \$12 on a movie seems audacious when \$10 could treat 30 kids for malaria. I share that not to guilt us or shame us, but to create awareness and cause us to pause. Coffee, food, movies are all gifts from God to be enjoyed, in moderation. But when we are more generous to ourselves than we are to God and to those who suffer, we have to stop and remind ourselves of the future God is calling us to create with Him and then trim off the fat from our lifestyles that prevent that future. Simplicity is not just being disciplined – that only leads to legalism. Simplicity is not negating for the sake of negating – it is eliminating the excessive embrace of the unnecessary that stand in the way of future shaping generosity. **How will you partner with God?**

This means you are going to have to accept that you will never reach your financial potential. You will never have things as nice as you could. You will look radically modest in your lifestyle compared to the people who make the same or even less than you. Your vacations might not be as exotic or consistent. Your clothes might not be designer labels. You may decide not to purchase every DVD your eye sees.

Application: Go home and ask God where have I been excessive and where do you want me to redirect those resources to help create a better future that looks more like the one the Kingdom will fully bring.

Give Graciously

It is the desire of First United Methodist Church that we become a community of **Radical Generosity**. As the people of God, we should reflect the heart of God, whose generosity is unfathomable.

What is Radical Generosity?

Our God is a God of Radical Generosity. When the Apostle Paul wanted to encourage an urban church in a cultural forging global city to be people of radical generosity, he pointed them to this truth about God seen most clearly in the giving of His Son.

2Corinthians 8.9-10 “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich.” (ESV)

Radical generosity is generosity that flows from an encounter with this radically generous God we meet in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When the Gospel takes root in our lives, it becomes the story that shapes, informs and defines the decisions and direction of our lives. So, just like Christ, we gladly *become poor*, giving sacrificially of our lives to enrich the lives of others. Just as our Savior poured himself out to rescue and enrich our lives, so we would pour out our lives to rescue and enrich the lives of others – not just friends and family, but even those who are removed from us.

Cultivating Generosity

Simplify

Many people do not practice radical generosity because most of their resources already have claims upon them. We cannot support God's church, bless the poor, and give to change the world unless we spend less and create margin in our lives in the area of finances. If we are going to be generous toward God and others, we must forsake any excessive generosity we have shown to ourselves. At First United Methodist Church we speak of living simply so that others can simply live.

Begin Giving

The only way to become generous is to begin by giving what God has given to you. The Scriptures give us some key principles about our giving.

First, God does not want our leftovers. He instructs us to give to Him our "firstfruits." That means the first thing we do with our income each pay period is to surrender it to God, and that includes giving a portion of it to His work in the world.

Secondly, your local church should be the first place you give. Only through the committed generosity of the people can the church carry out its mission, offer its message, and transform the in the world. Although we should also give generously to the poor and consider other organizations to which we can contribute, it is the church that makes the connection to Christ, our first and last hope.

Thirdly, Scripture would seem to indicate that a good beginning place for giving is 10% of your income. In the Hebrew Scriptures, this was called a tithe, or a tenth, and it was commanded by God of all his people. In the New Testament a tithe is not commanded because the inward experience of the grace of God in Christ replaces any outward motivations for our lives. If the people of God who were under law could give 10%, certainly those of us who are under grace can give at least 10%. *Lastly*, we should anticipate God's joy and blessing in response to our generosity. God loves cheerful givers and promises to bless them now and in the future. It is wiser to live on 90% of your income with God's blessing than to live on 100% of your income without his blessing. To

learn more about how to systematize your giving, visit our giving resources page and explore several giving options.

Grow in Giving

Giving is something we should grow in, just like every other area of our spiritual formation. God increases our resources not to increase our standard of living, but to increase our standard of giving.

Joel Lovell

The Upside of the Downside, New Yorker Magazine, 2/4/08

It's shameful, of course, to want this much. And while I don't mean to suggest that I'm utterly consumed by these things, I didn't used to think this way at all. I didn't used to lie in my bed and on nights that I couldn't sleep sometimes play this mental game in which I consider how I'd arrange our things (minus the futon) if we lived in the beautiful homes that many of our friends own. I never imagined I'd find myself in the curious position of having so much more than my parents ever had, of having more, frankly, than I ever thought I would have—and yet simultaneously feeling like I'm falling behind, that I need to earn more, save more, invest more, acquire more. When did I begin to feel this anxiety of acquisition? How did I become such a jackass?

It's not so much that making more money has turned us into outlandish spenders; it's more that over the years, we've absorbed and internalized the tastes and habits and priorities of the shifting culture around us, which is something I suspect has happened to a lot of people. (I like good cheese as much as the next guy. I'm just saying it's odd, or at least noteworthy, that I don't blink when I fork out \$26 for a pound of it.) And somewhere inside ourselves, we're aware that this is what's going on.

Tim Keller teaches that without an experience of the gospel and grace, our giving is **passive** and **spontaneous** - - we only give when guilted into it by someone else and when we do give it is whatever we have or can afford at that specific time. However, when we experience the gospel our giving then becomes **active** and **intentional**. We become active in seeking out ways to give and bless others with our finances and we become intentional about how much of our income we want to give to others. The gospel completely changes the way we view our money, and it gives us the freedom to give it away in acts of radical generosity.