

Sermon Series: 4 Stakes to Strengthen
Sermon title: Church Stewardship
Scripture: 2 Corinthians 8:1-15
Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church
July 8, 2018
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Let's pray together.

This is the last message today in our strategy series titled, "Lengthen & Strengthen".

Our theme verse for our strategy is **Isaiah 54:2-3**.
"Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.

3 For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities.

We looked at the **5 cords** some time ago; areas of ministry that we need to continually be stretching out.

Prayer

Proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ

Parents & Children

Planting multiplying small groups

Panta ta Ethne (all the nations)...stretching out our missions efforts.

And the last few weeks we have been looking at the **4 Stakes** of the tent that we need to tap in, hammer down or strengthen.

Church Leadership (Elders & Deacons)

Church Membership

Church Stewardship (today)

Church Polity (revising our church statement of faith and documents) which I won't preach on.

As I begin today, I want to begin with a word of thanksgiving and a word of praise for you.

- Thank you for being a giving church!
- Thank you for giving so that we could reach our Home Missions Offering goal.
- Thank you for regularly giving of your resources so that our church can do ministry, pay our bills and support my family and support mission endeavors.

As you turn in your Bibles to **2 Corinthians 8**, I want to say that personally this text on Church Stewardship has been convicting to me, enlightening, and I am still wrestling with how radical it is...and how it is so counter cultural.

I want to know how I need to obey this personally and how our church needs to obey it corporately.

From this passage today I want to show you 3 radical things about church stewardship and gospel giving.

1. **A Radical Example.**
2. **A Radical Principle.**
3. **A Radical Reason.**

1. **A Radical Example of giving in the Macedonian churches.**

Let's take a look at these churches.
What did they do?

verse 4 tells us that they were **“begging earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.”**

This is referring to what is mentioned in several places in the New Testament, that there was a severe famine and the church in Jerusalem was struggling.

See the sermon notes for all of the verses relating to this event and context.

Notice the mindset and heart of the Macedonian churches (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea) in verse 2.

They were afflicted themselves. But they *gave in joy*, out of their poverty there *overflowed a wealth of generosity*. Verse 3 says they *gave according to their means and even ‘beyond their means’*. And they were *begging* Paul to let them contribute.

So, Paul is writing to the church in Corinth and saying,

‘I know that you guys desired to give as well and started thinking about giving a year ago, so now complete what you started.’

And he’s motivating them (and us) by using the church in Macedonia as an example.

A church that is a joyful, generous and gives sacrificially.

In the book of Philippians [Philippi is the leading city in Macedonia] we see their heart of giving again.

Look at **Philippians 4:14-20**

14 Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. 15 And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. 16 Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. 17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. 18 I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. 19 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. 20 To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

So, Paul is writing to the church in Corinth and saying, “Be like the Macedonians.”

A church that is a joyful, generous and gives sacrificially.

And in this example he also teaches them a....

2. A Radical Principle about money.

Look in verse 12...

12 For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. 13 For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness 14 your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. 15 As it is written, “Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.”

He makes it very clear in verses 12 and 13 that a person is not obligated to give what they **DON'T** have. It's not that a person needs to go into debt in order to give!

But look at what he **DOES** say!

He uses the word 'fairness' twice!

“A matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.”

What does this verse imply?

It implies that Corinth's money is not their own to do with it whatever they want.

ABUNDANCE IS FOR SHARING.

And if the church in Jerusalem has an abundance they should share with another church in need.

That's completely radical and rare, if not completely unheard of!

Can you imagine a church today having money left over and giving it to another church to help them out?

In verse 15 he quotes [Exodus 16:17-19](#).

15 As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."

This passage is about collection the manna each day. A person was to collect only what they needed; to only get enough for you and your family. No more than that.

One has nothing left over.

One lacks nothing.

Abundance is for sharing.

Abundance is for giving away.

Is that really what Paul trying to say here?

Look over in **chapter 9**.

After telling them *again* in verses 1-5 that they need to get the money ready he gives us some more teaching.

In verse 6 he says, “**The point is this**”, which seems to mean, “This is what I am trying to say to you guys”.

6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 9 As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” 10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

Sow bountifully and reap bountifully.

Give cheerfully.

God will supply your needs and multiply your ability to keep sowing and producing fruit.

You’ll be enriched in order to keep on being generous.

God gives us an abundance in order to lose it for the kingdom.

God makes us rich to relieve other's poverty.

God gives us an abundance of seed in order to sow not to be consumers.

God enriches us for generosity.

ABUNDANCE IS FOR SHARING.

Wow. How powerful this is!

How convicting this is!

So, am the Bible saying it's wrong to have money???

We know it's not wrong to have money because God is actually giving it to us.

And he actually gives it to us to provide for our needs and to enjoy.

But we have to guard ourselves from keeping too much.

Listen to **1 Timothy 6:17-19**

17 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. 18 They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

Matthew 6:19-21 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

This is what the churches in Macedonia were doing. **A radical example** for us of **a radical principle** in the scriptures: “Abundance is given for sharing”.

But there's.....

3. A Radical Reason....for wanting to live this way.

Because this kind of giving is **gospel giving**.

This kind of giving is a lot like Jesus.

This kind of giving points to something the world knows nothing about.

In the middle of all of this talk about the Macedonians example and about how the Corinthians are to imitate them and in all of this teaching on stewardship....Paul inserts the most beautiful phrase.

Look in **2 Corinthians 8:9**

9 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.

Why in the world would you sell a house or a piece of land and give it away?

Why would you live on less so that you can bless others?

Why would you take loads of money out of the bank and use it to translate the Bible or support missionaries?

Why would you GO DOWN instead of going up?

Lower your standard of living?

Why would you become more poor on purpose?

Huh?

Are you a fool?

[PAUSE]

I am a follower of Jesus Christ.

You see...**though he was rich, yet for my sake he became poor, so that I.... by his poverty might become rich.** And I want to be like my Lord.

His abundance supplied my need. **He has an abundance of righteousness** and supplied my need for righteousness.

His abundance of grace relieved my sin. In him we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us.

[Ephesians 1]

He has an abundance of power. He daily supplies us with power to live the new life.

And the same power that rose Jesus from the dead will one day give life to my mortal body and take me to where he is.

This kind of giving points to the gospel.

This is **GOSPEL GIVING**. It is giving like Jesus.

This kind of stewardship is kingdom stewardship because it reflects our king.

Purposefully going down so that others can go up.

Purposefully becoming poor so that others can be supplied.

Purposefully..joyfully, generously, earnestly, bountifully...sowing seeds of the kingdom....laying up treasures in heaven.

Randy Alcorn said this, **“God prospers me not to raise my standard of living but to raise my standard of giving.”**

[Pause]

Church, what would God have us do with our surplus?
What could we do for the kingdom with the abundance God has given us?

The return is greater invested in the kingdom — — —
than in the bank, or stocks or bonds or real estate!!!!

Brother or sister, what are you doing with God's resources?

Follow the radical example of the Macedonians.
Follow the radical principle of "Abundance is for sharing."

Follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ!