

Penny Pinching in the Pews

I HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO BE A PENNY PINCHER. ONE COST SAVING STRATEGY HAPPENS DURING THE SUMMER AS WE ARE DRIVING IN THE HOT TEXAS SUN.

**** (SLIDE)** IT DOESN'T TAKE LONG FOR MY GIRLS TO START ASKING FOR A SLURPEE—ONE OF THOSE FROZEN ICE DRINKS FAMOUS FOR “BRAIN FREEZES” THAT YOU FIND AT MOST CONVENIENCE STORES. I OFTEN WILL PULL OVER AND BUY THE BIGGEST SIZE AVAILABLE—BUT ONLY ONE-- AND THEN SELECT MY 3 FREE STRAWS SO THEY CAN SHARE. IF I REALLY PLAN AHEAD, I BRING MY OWN CUP AND RECEIVE THE REFILL PRICE.

THERE ARE TIMES I PAT MYSELF ON THE BACK FOR MY FRUGAL WAYS. I CAN ALMOST RELATE TO THE MAN WHO WON A CONTEST FOR “PENNY PINCHER OF THE YEAR”:

**** (SLIDE)** THE WINNING ENTRY WAS SUBMITTED BY A VIRGINIA EXPECTANT MOTHER, LAUREN WELLS, WHOSE

HUSBAND, MATT, TOOK HER FOR A PENNY-PINCHING RIDE SHE WILL NEVER FORGET.

WELLS HAD WAITED A LITTLE TOO LONG TO START FOR THE HOSPITAL. AS THE COUPLE CLIMBED IN THE CAR, HER HUSBAND OPTED TO SKIP TAKING THE MOST DIRECT ROUTE WHICH WAS A TOLL ROAD IN ORDER TO SAVE \$2.

THANK GOODNESS THIS MOM HAD A SENSE OF HUMOR. SHE ARRIVED IN PLENTY OF TIME TO DELIVER HER BABY GIRL. AND SHE WASN'T EVEN TOO UPSET AT HER MADDENINGLY FRUGAL HUSBAND.

**** (SLIDE- BLANK)**

SOME OF US CARRY OUR PENNY PINCHING WAYS INTO THE PEW AT CHURCH. THIS MORNING, I WANT TO INFORM YOU TODAY THAT OUR CHURCH IS NOT SPENDING ENOUGH MONEY. IN FACT, WE NEED TO DRAMATICALLY INCREASE OUR CHURCH BUDGET.

**** (SLIDE- SPEND MORE)**

HOW CAN THAT POSSIBLE HAPPEN, YOU ASK? WE HAVE A HARD TIME MEETING OUR BUDGET AS IT IS. IN FACT, WE NEED TO BE THINKING OF WAYS WE CAN CUT BACK AND CONSERVE. HOW CAN WE POSSIBLY CONSIDER AN INCREASED OUTFLOW OF MONEY?

I BELIEVE THE KEY IS IN EACH MEMBER BECOMING CHEERFUL GIVERS. TODAY WE WILL LOOK AT 3 CHARACTERISTICS OF CHEERFUL GIVERS AS OUTLINED BY THE APOSTLE PAUL.

IN II CORINTHIANS 8&9, PAUL IS MAKING AN OFFERING APPEAL. IT SEEMS THAT THE CHRISTIANS IN JERUSALEM WERE EXPERIENCING NOT ONLY A NATURAL DISASTER—A FAMINE, BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF THEIR FAITH, THEY WERE BEING PERSECUTED. IT BECAME IMPOSSIBLE FOR A CHRISTIAN FIND EMPLOYMENT. THE SITUATION WAS DIRE, SO PAUL PULLS OUT ALL THE STOPS TO TRY AND RAISE FUNDS FOR THEIR RELIEF.

LET'S TURN TO OUR KEY PASSAGE IN II CORINTHIANS 9:6,7 (**READ).

THE FIRST CHARACTERISTIC OF A CHEERFUL GIVER WE DISCOVER IN THIS PASSAGE, IS THAT THEY SOW BOUNTIFULLY.

**** (SLIDE- SOWING SEEDS)**

“BUT THIS I SAY: HE WHO SOWS SPARINGLY WILL ALSO REAP SPARINGLY, AND HE WHO SOWS BOUNTIFULLY WILL ALSO REAP BOUNTIFULLY.”

**** (SLIDE- HARVEST)**

THE PURPOSE OF SOWING SEEDS IS FOR A HARVEST. I REMEMBER AS A CHILD BEING SOMEWHAT OF AN ENTREPRENEUR. ONE SUMMER I TACKLED TWO ACRES OF LAND TO PLANT GOLDEN JUBILEE CORN IN BY HAND. I PREPARED THE SOIL, LINED OUT MY ROWS AND BEGAN PLANTING. ALTHOUGH I RAN OUT OF STEAM BEFORE PLANTING THE ENTIRE TWO ACRES, I PLANTED ENOUGH CORN SEEDS TO EXPERIENCE A HUGE HARVEST. I LEARNED THAT THE AMOUNT OF SOWING I DID UP FRONT IMPACTED THE HARVEST ON THE OTHER END.

GOD IS TELLING US IN THIS PASSAGE THAT THE SAME CONCEPT IS TRUE SPIRITUALLY WHEN IT COMES TO MONEY.

NOTICE IN VERSE 12 OF CHAPTER 9, PAUL SAYS THAT NOT ONLY WILL THEIR GIFT MEET REAL NEEDS OF HURTING PEOPLE, BUT THAT IT WILL ALSO SERVE AS A TESTIMONY.

** (SLIDE- II COR. 9:13)

NOTICE VERSE 13, "...THROUGH THE PROOF OF THIS MINISTRY, THEY GLORIFY GOD FOR THE OBEDIENCE OF YOUR CONFESSION TO THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST." THEIR GIVING WAS PROOF THEY WERE SERIOUS ABOUT THEIR COMMITMENT TO CHRIST. AS A RESULT, THEIR FAITH WAS STRENGTHENED.

THERE IS A DIRECT CORRELATION BETWEEN A SPIRITUALLY STRONG AND GROWING CHURCH AND GENEROUS GIVING TO GOD'S WORK. NOTICE THIS QUOTE FROM 3 TESTIMONIES P. 405, IN IT, I NOTICE ELLEN WHITE'S PREFERENCE FOR "LIBERAL" CHURCHES.

** (SLIDE)

“THOSE CHURCHES WHO ARE THE MOST SYSTEMATIC AND LIBERAL (GENEROUS) IN SUSTAINING THE CAUSE OF GOD ARE THE MOST PROSPEROUS SPIRITUALLY...THE MORE WE INVEST IN THE CAUSE OF GOD TO AID IN THE SALVATION OF SOULS, THE CLOSER TO OUR HEARTS WILL THEY BE BROUGHT...

**** (SLIDE)**

WERE OUR NUMBERS HALF AS LARGE, AND ALL OF THESE DEVOTED WORKERS, WE SHOULD HAVE A POWER THAT WOULD MAKE THE WORLD TREMBLE.”

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT THAT LAST LINE IS A BOLT OF LIGHTING. THE CHURCH WOULD HAVE A “POWER THAT WOULD MAKE THE WORLD TREMBLE.”

HOW? BY GIVING GENEROUSLY, LIBERALLY, TO SEE GOD'S WORK ADVANCE.

THIS GIVING CAN ONLY BE A REALITY WHEN WE ARE WILLING TO MAKE PERSONAL SACRIFICE FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL. NOTICE THE RESPONSE OF THE CHURCHES IN MACEDONIA.

**** (SLIDE)**

II CORINTHIANS 8:2,3, “IN A GREAT TRIAL OF AFFLICTION THE ABUNDANCE OF THEIR JOY AND THEIR DEEP POVERTY ABOUNDED IN THE RICHES OF THEIR LIBERALITY (IT SEEMS LIKE PAUL LIKE LIBERAL CHURCHES TOO). FOR I BEAR WITNESS THAT ACCORDING TO THEIR ABILITY, YES, AND BEYOND THEIR ABILITY, THEY WERE FREELY WILLING.”

THAT IS PERSONAL SACRIFICE I DON'T KNOW OR UNDERSTAND.

NOTICE THIS QUOTE FROM 3 TESTIMONIES 405,

**** (SLIDE)**

“WE ARE NOT DOING A TWENTIETH PART OF WHAT WE MIGHT DO IF WE WERE AWAKE. THE WORK IS RETARDED BY LOVE OF EASE AND A LACK OF THE SELF-DENYING SPIRIT OF WHICH OUR SAVIOUR HAS GIVEN US AN EXAMPLE IN HIS LIFE.”

WHAT AM I WILLING TO GIVE UP IN MY PERSONAL LIFE TO MAKE AN IMPACT FOR GOD'S KINGDOM FINANCIALLY?

HOW MANY HERE ARE WILLING TO CONSIDER THAT QUESTION
AND WRESTLE WITH IT?

HOW MANY ARE WILLING TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?

THE SECOND CHARACTERISTIC OF A CHEERFUL GIVER IS
FOUND BACK IN OUR KEY PASSAGE IS VERSE 7 OF II
CORINTHIANS 9.

**** (SLIDE)**

“SO LET EACH ONE GIVE AS HE PURPOSES IN HIS HEART.”

A CHEERFUL GIVER IS AN INTENTIONAL GIVER.

AN UNINTENTIONAL/SPORATIC GIVER WILL MAKE DONATIONS
WHEN THEY ARE EMOTIONALLY MOVED OR FEEL LIKE IT.

PERHAPS A FUNDRAISER FOR A NEEDY ORGANIZATION CALLS
ON THE PHONE ASKING FOR A DONATION.

PERHAPS A TELE-EVANGELIST MAKES A STIRRING APPEAL.

OR, EMOTIONAL SCENES OF CHILDREN DYING OVERSEAS
APPEAR ON THE SCREEN AND MONEY IS GIVEN.

SOMEONE PREACHES A STIRRING SERMON ON GIVING OR
MAKES AN EXCELLENT OFFERING CALL.

IT SEEMS THAT THE MORE MOVING THE APPEAL, THE MORE
LIKELY THE GIVING.

NOT SO WITH AN INTENTIONAL GIVER.

AN INTENTIONAL GIVER RECOGNIZES THAT THERE ARE MANY
GIVING OPPORTUNITIES.

**** (SLIDE- GIVING OPPORTUNITIES)**

THERE ARE A MYRIAD OF WORTHY CAUSES.

HOWEVER, AN INTENTIONAL GIVER PERSONALLY SEEKS OUT
GOD'S WILL REGARDING THEIR FINANCES AND HOW AND
WHEN THEY GIVE.

**** (SLIDE- TITHE)**

ONE NON-NEGOTIABLE IS GOD'S 10% TITHE RETURNED
THROUGH THEIR LOCAL CONGREGATION.

REGARDING OTHER GIVING, THEY HAVE ALREADY
DISCOVERED WITH GOD WHAT THEY WILL SO YES TOO, SO
DON'T FEEL GUILTY ABOUT SAYING NO.

BEFORE THEY WALK INTO CHURCH ON SABBATH MORNING,
THEY HAVE ALREADY PURPOSED IN THEIR HEART WHAT THEY
WILL GIVE. THERE IS A PLAN.

I'VE FOUND IN MY PERSONAL LIFE THAT PLANNING BRINGS
PEACE.

**** (SLIDE- PEACE)**

AS YOU ARE FAITHFUL WITH WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN, HE WILL
BLESS YOU WITH MORE.

SOMETIMES BLESSING IS WITHHELD BECAUSE WE SPEND
EVERYTHING WE GET ON BIGGER AND BETTER THINGS FOR
OURSELVES.

AS FINANCIAL MEANS INCREASE, SO SHOULD OUR GIVING TO
GOD'S WORK!

THE THIRD CHARACTERISTIC OF CHEERFUL GIVING IS LISTED
AS A NEGATIVE IN VERSE 7 OF II CORINTHIANS 9, "NOT
GRUDGINGLY OR OF NECESSITY."

**** (SLIDE)**

"BUT, OUR CHURCH BUDGET NEEDS PEOPLE TO GIVE TO IT."

GOD SAYS, IF THAT'S THE THINKING, THE RESULT WON'T BE
CHEERFUL GIVERS.

PEOPLE GIVE TO VISION, NOT NEEDS.

**** (SLIDE)**

YOU WANT TO KNOW THAT WHAT YOU GIVE REALLY MAKES A
DIFFERENCE.

I HAVE FOUND THAT AS MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH SEE THAT
THE CHURCH IS REALLY SERIOUS ABOUT REACHING LOST
PEOPLE, ABOUT LIVES BEING TRANSFORMED, ABOUT TRAINING
CHILDREN TO DEDICATE THEIR LIVES TO JESUS...LOCAL
CHURCH GIVING EXPLODES.

THEY WANT TO SEE A CHURCH THAT KNOWS WHY THEY EXIST
AND WHERE THEY ARE GOING.

IF YOU CAN ANSWER THE FOLLOWING TWO QUESTIONS WELL,
I'LL GUARANTEE WE WON'T HAVE A GIVING PROBLEM IN OUR
CHURCH...

**** (SLIDE)**

WHAT IMPACT IS OUR CHURCH MAKING IN THIS COMMUNITY?
WHAT IMPACT IS OUR CHURCH MAKING IN THE WORLD?

IF YOU FEEL LESS THAN EXCITED ABOUT THE ANSWER TO THESE QUESTIONS, YOU PROBABLY AREN'T A CHEERFUL GIVER. YOU ARE LIKELY GIVING GRUDGINGLY OR OUT OF NECESSITY.

LET'S GET TO A PRACTICAL POINT. HOW MUCH OF THE CHURCH BUDGET GOES TOWARD COMMUNITY FOCUSED EVANGELISM. MANY CHURCHES DON'T HAVE ANYTHING ALLOCATED TO EVANGELISM IN THEIR LOCAL BUDGET. HOW CAN WE BE SERIOUS ABOUT THE LOST, IF WE AREN'T WILLING TO SPEND ANY MONEY ON THEM?

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF OUR CHURCH PUT AT LEAST 25% OF OUR BUDGET TOWARD OUTREACH EVANGELISM? I'D CHALLENGE THOSE OF YOU THAT SERVE ON THE CHURCH BOARD TO TAKE THAT CHALLENGE TO YOUR NEXT MEETING. DON'T LET YOURSELVES OFF THE HOOK TOO QUICKLY. DOES THE GIVING ALLOCATION OF THE CHURCH TRULY REFLECT THE MISSION GOD HAS CALLED THE CHURCH TO?

A CHEERFUL GIVER IS INSPIRED AND PASSIONATE ABOUT HOW THEY ARE ALLOCATING THEIR GIVING.

IT IS TRUE THAT THE LOCAL CHURCH HAS CERTAIN NEEDS THAT MUST BE MET TO KEEP THE DOORS OF THE CHURCH OPEN. WE ARE NOT CLOSING OUR EYES TO THAT.

HOWEVER, IT IS TIME TO STOP EMPHASIZING NEEDS AND START FOCUSING ON THE LIVES THAT ARE BEING CHANGED AS A RESULT OF THE MINISTRY OF THIS CHURCH. TESTIMONIES NEED TO BE HEARD REGULARLY. BAPTISMS SHOULD BE REGULARLY TAKING PLACE.

SO, IS IT TIME TO SPEND MORE FOR THE CAUSE OF THE GOSPEL? I BELIEVE THAT AS WE ALIGN OUR HEARTS WITH THE HEART OF GOD, WE WILL LONG TO GIVE MORE TO SEE OTHERS COME TO KNOW HIM. THAT IS MY OWN DESIRE AND I'D INVITE YOU TO MAKE IT YOURS AS WELL.