

Episode 109

I have never coveted anyone's silver or gold or fine clothes. You know that these hands of mine have worked to supply my own needs and even the needs of those who were with me. And I have been a constant example of how you can help those in need by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

- Acts 20.33-35

At the end of a remarkable building project where tens of millions of rands have been given so generously, I was a little hesitant to pick out these verses from this chapter today. However, it's because I am 'preaching to the choir' that I want to look at this portion of Paul's story.

I have a friend who lived without a salary for many years. We both got married around the same time and began our married life in very similar circumstances, except for the fact that he was in full-time ministry without a salary. Day after day, week after week, they would get down on their knees and trust God to provide. What we witnessed over the years was remarkable, to say the least. From groceries being dropped off at their door, to furniture being provided and bonds being paid, it was a radical faith journey filled with mountains and valleys, difficulties, and deliverance.

Years later, when the ministry was established to the point where they were able to draw a salary, the wild ride of living by faith day by day changed to a more predictable rhythm of a monthly income.

Then, when God opened a door for him to plant a church in a foreign country, they naturally jumped at the opportunity, even though they would have to go back to trusting God to provide - because if he had done it before, he would do it again right? Wrong. Like an Olympic athlete returning to their event decades after winning the gold, they were in over their heads and sinking fast. No longer seeing the miraculous daily provision they had become familiar with for many years, they eventually had to turn to fundraising tactics, as well as asking for help from friends and family before taking a job to carry the load.

His honesty was sobering, and it's what I feel to remind you of today: He recognised that a life of faith was not a switch, but a muscle. One that, when exercised, slowly grew stronger as he saw the faithfulness of God year after year. Similarly, at this point in our journey in the area of generosity, God has filled our lives with faith in his ability to provide. We have seen God move mightily on our behalf, changing our hearts and opening our hands. It's a grace that he has given to us as his people for the purposes that he has for us as a church. Let's not lose what God has done and is doing in and through us. Let us not grow weary in doing good, but rather, continue living generously, walking by faith.

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