



Giving for Glory

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What if I told you you could be a part of the greatest public works project in history? A project that affects every country, renews every culture, bestows dignity on every person in it. We'd be crazy not to get in on it! That's what this passage is about. We plunge down into the thick of Israel's mission: *And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst* (25:8). Is there a more noble cause than to be about building a place for God to dwell? Similarly, we have been called to build a place for Gods' glory and grace to dwell. How do we do it? This passage shows us it requires *contributions, collective effort, and cosmic purpose*.

Contributions

Contributions are needed to launch the sacred project, "*Take from among you a contribution to the LORD* (Ex 35:5). Now when we think of a contribution, we think of making a donation to Goodwill or the performing Arts. But the Hebrew word for contribution can also be translated as *offering*. What's the difference? A contribution is something you spare to be generous, but an offering is something we sacrifice to worship. Contributions may draw attention to our generosity or perhaps philanthropic interest, but an offering *is sacred*: it is *to the Lord*. Giving not to draw attention to human generosity but to divine glory. Similarly, financial gifts to the local church shouldn't be viewed as a tip, a contribution, even a favor to help the church out. All gifts should be acts of worship; they are to the Lord. Have you ever noticed it can be more exciting to give to a cause you're into than the mundane maintenance of the church? Israel continued to give well after the tabernacle was complete to support the priests and maintain the temple. Anna, the priestess, ministered for decades in the temple by Israel's gifts. Until one day, she was swept up into an exciting announcement, the Messiah is coming! Faithful offerings keep the lights on, enable the bread and butter ministry of the gospel, to the glory of the messiah. Our tithe is a matter of *worship*. What do they give? The **materials** range from great to small, costly to inexpensive: gold and silver, wood and oil. There is no gift too great and no gift too small. People give what they have. All of the offerings work together to produce



one, glorious dwelling place for God. *Similarly, your financial giving in the local church is to support, strengthen, and expand the glorious dwelling place of God.* A few weeks ago we asked you to give 7k to help the Valdezes get on with church planting fundraising, and we would match it. You raised that 7K in less than 10 days! Expect a call from Ivan! But we did so while running a 10-12K monthly deficit. I'm pleased to say we had a great March! But on April 18th, we'll expand our capacity for Sunday gatherings up to 80 adults and 20 kids. Church giving will need to rise not only to make budget but to accommodate the extra rental space and eventually hire another pastor. Let's keep the lights on and promote everyday gospel ministry. Now who gives to the tabernacle? **Everybody.** *All the congregation* is gathered. But doesn't it say, *Whoever is of a generous heart, let him make a contribution?* Yes. This is how we ought to give. It's ideal giving. Christians joyfully generously giving in response to God's grace and glory. But even if we don't feel generous, we owe God, *"Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.* (Ro 11:35-36). We are in God's debt; he is not in our debt. Even the resources we have *are from him!* So, while ideal giving is from joyful hearts, God accepts gifts from hearts that are less than joyful. Why? Our affections are always catching up to the truth. No one is flush with holy affection for God in every act of obedience. If we waited to obey until we felt like it, we'd be a total mess. How? They were moved by the Spirit to contribute. If you can't give cheerfully, repent on your way to the give box and ask the Spirit to help your affections catch up with the truth of Jesus' joyful gift, his death for your life. Jesus did not give us what he could spare; he gave us his entire life. Why? Not to take a tenth of your life but all your life and to give you a life you could never earn in return. Who greater to give to! In the end, Israel's donations exceed the need! Moses tells them to stop giving! May it be with us: giving generously, overflowing joyfully for mundane needs of the church and to expand the place where God's glory dwells.

Collective Mission

The mission of creating a place where glory dwells doesn't happen through individual contributions alone; it requires a collective effort of God's people including skills, sundry

gifts, and sacrifice. **Skills:** *Let every skillful craftsman among you come and make all that the LORD has commanded* (Ex 35:10; 26:1;31; 28:3, 6, 15). The word skill is repeated numerous times. The people of God used their natural talents and skills to complete the tabernacle: *engravers, designers, weavers, embroiders, metallurgists, perfumers, and more*. Similarly, God wants you to use your skill, yes to tithe, but also to contribute to the general flourishing of your community. As we expand Sunday gatherings (come out of the cocoon), we will need an influx of people who can serve in *design, audio, setup, kids life* for God's glory. Now, it's interesting that God didn't ask them to pitch an ordinary tent. Rather, he gives very detailed instructions that require skilled workers, professionals, artisans. Why? God is concerned with architectural precision and artistic beauty. Fine silk is used for the priest's vestments. Skillful women weave blue, purple, and red yarns to create curtains. Highly **organized**. Bezalel a master craftsman is entrusted with *devising* the plans and *teaching* others. 32-34 *Similarly, Austin and Preston put a lot into crafting our Sunday liturgy to help you worship. Danielle for Kids Life*. The artisans are a snapshot of what God intended for all of us. When he said to the Spirit and the Son, let us make man in our image, he had a creative-man in mind. To bear the image of God is to create as created. Take the raw materials of creation and fashion them into cultural products, works of art, infrastructure, cities and fill the earth with my image. You see, we are all culture-makers. How do it? Bezalel is filled by the Spirit, *he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship* (Ex 35:31). Ask for the Spirit's filling as you come to serve on Sundays and as you make culture the rest of the week. The Spirit wants to make good and beautiful things through you. So let's worship with our skills. **Sundry gifts**. If everyone plays their part, a remarkable unity in creativity, the result is stunning. When I was worshipping in church in Uganda, I'll never forget the offering time. People brought necklaces, vegetables, clothing, and money and placed their offerings at the front of the church. A diversity of capacity and kinds of giving. When I asked what would be done with those tithes, someone told me that they would be sold for money to support the local pastor. A family was in significant debt and wanted to tithe 10%, but if they did they wouldn't be able to pay their debts, so they decided to give 5%, pay debts, and work toward giving 10% of their income. Another person had next to nothing, but gave of their time

faithfully serving in various roles of the church. Everyone plays a role in supporting God's work, those with much and those with little. The collective effort requires sundry gifts and **sacrificial giving**. Israel gives brooches, earrings, fine linen, blues, precious items, some of their favorite things. God calls us to sacrifice things we love not simply give what we can spare. The Macedonian churches *gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints* (2 Co 8:2-4). The NT norm is to give sacrificially, just as Christ has given to us. You see, we actually give back what God first gave to us. The precious items the Israelites parted with were actually given to them by God when he told them to plunder the gold of the Egyptians before they left in the exodus (3:22; 12:36). This is a humbling reminder. Those administrative skills aren't yours; their God's. That musical ability; that's not yours it's the Spirit's. That gift with numbers; it's a gift. Those relational skills? From the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The contribution of our skills, gifts and sacrifices are *from the Lord and to the Lord to create a space where his glory dwells*.

Cosmic Purpose

What are the contributions and collective effort for? Why should we give? Because we love the doctrine, we like the pastor's personality, the preaching, because of how they do church? *No, that's contribution thinking not offering thinking, cause based not worship based*. We give with cosmic purpose: to replicate heaven on earth. What do I mean? As it turns out, the tabernacle is designed to reflect the cosmos. God frequently describes heaven as his throne and earth as his footstool (Isa 66:1). The tabernacle elements reflect the cosmic throne room, as if heaven has come to earth. As you make your way into the tabernacle, you pass through curtains *with cherubim woven into them*, reflecting the heavenly throne of God attended by angels. The lampstand, reflects the heavenly bodies, stars, light the way. But they also echo Eden, adorned with golden blossoms and flowers. *The cosmos* is a temple fit for the King. Then 40, *Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle* (34). This is a cosmic tent designed to replicate heaven on earth, to bring the glory down. Sadly the glory did not stay but departed when Israel rebelled, gone for hundreds of years, but in John 1 it returns: *And the Word became flesh and dwelt*



(the word is tabernacled) among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. Jesus is location of God's glory, the place where he dwells. And he gives his whole life to a new temple, the church. Living stones connected by Christ the corner stone; together, the place where his glory dwells. You see, we're still contributing to the sacred project. Through gospel ministry, we expand the temple one soul at a time, broadening the footprint of heaven on earth to bring the glory down. When you give of your finances, skills, sundry gifts, and sacrificial service you help bring glory down. Which turns up the light. The temple glows. People see it and are drawn to the glory. So, let's get on with our cosmic purpose of building and expanding the place where glory and grace dwells, that Christ may be all in all.