We’ll Never Know (Until We Try It)
by Phillip G. Pattee

When I got married, my wife and I knew about tithing, but because of earlier buying decisions, we couldn't give ten percent of our income and still pay all of our bills. We prayed together. We prayed individually. Over time, we paid down bills, and used those savings to increase giving. When our income increased, we also gave more. Eventually, we reached a full tithe. I thought I was controlling my finances well, but I still felt like I was missing something.

Malachi 3:10 instructs to “bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. ‘Test me in this,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.” It wasn’t until my wife and I decided to adopt children that what I was missing became apparent to me.

We had embarked on an international adoption from Russia. To say the process was expensive would be an understatement. Quite simply, it was a financial mountain that I was certain I couldn't climb. I had pictures of the children we hoped to adopt—Ekaternina (Katya), in a red jumper, and Evgeny (Genya), in a blue sweater and pants. I prayed over them, knowing that if God truly willed us to adopt them, He would make it possible. I didn’t know how we would do it, but I surrendered what resources I had to God’s will.

After I had finished praying I went into the kitchen to get a drink. While I gazed out the window to a small pear tree in the back yard, I saw first a Cardinal, and then a Blue Jay fly in and land in the tree. I immediately associated the birds with the children’s clothing and I can tell you I was filled with peace and assurance that everything would work out.

It did. We surrendered an insurance policy for the cash value and decided to sell our investments, then borrow the rest to pay all the adoption fees. I told my wife at one point, “I can tuck kids in at night, but I can’t tuck in money.” As it came time to make payments on the fees, the stock market soared, always in sync for us to pull investments out. When payments were due, we always had enough without borrowing.

God threw open the floodgates for us. When I surrendered my heart, stopped trying to control and gave my resources to God’s will, I found what I had missed.

"Calling his disciples to Him, Jesus said, ‘I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

~ Mark 12: 43–44
Week's Overview: this week we’re going to look at break-out moments of generosity in the New Testament, imagining how those who gave were oblivious to all that God would ultimately do with it. In other words, it could be said about their generosity as it can be said about ours: “we’ll never know.”

Monday, 5.7
Read: Luke 8:1-3; Luke 10:1-24 (focus v.5-7);

Study: In Luke 8, a group of women fund Jesus’ ministry with money. In Luke 10, a ‘people of peace’ fund the disciples’ journey through hospitality with their home, food, and who knows what else. Both were simple & revolutionary moments of generosity that fueled the movement we’re apart of today 2,000 years later! Imagine: how much joy do you think they had as they saw Jesus’ ministry expand, knowing that they helped to make it happen?

Personal: In what ways are you supporting Jesus’ ministry today and how much fun is it to be a part of it? Make a list of the ways that giving brings you joy.

Tuesday, 5.8

Study: These two stories are about how extravagant generosity comes in pint sizes. Both the young lad and the poor widow simply gave what they had. What do you think would’ve happened in our world of giving today if we didn’t have those stories; if those two had disqualified their ability to give?

Personal: In what ways do you disqualify your own ability to give your time, talent, and treasure?

Wednesday, 5.9

Study: These ‘donors’ were the venture capitalists of the Early Church. One can assume that not only were the needs of the poor met in their midst, but that the continent-jumping, viral-and-spiraling-out-of-control gospel was subsidized out of these huge faith-sized moments of generosity! Consider: the rest of Acts and the stories of the entire New Testament that follows as their ‘money trail.’ Wow!!!
Personal: Pray and ask the Lord to reveal your ‘money trail’ – where you spend your resources, where it goes, and its eternal and ever-present kingdom impact.

Thursday, 5.10
Read: Philippians 4:10-23; 2 Corinthians 8-9

Study: These are two more examples of where three churches collectively supported the movement – Philippi, Macedonia, and Corinth.

Personal: Pray for Heartland (or whatever local church you call home) and ask God to increase in our hearts a spirit of movemental generosity!

Friday - Sunday, 5.11 – 5.13
Read: Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 2:9-10; Colossians 1:15-23

Study: Of course, the greatest movement in the history of the planet began with the most generous giver of all – Jesus. Spend this weekend reflecting on what He sacrificed, laid down, and surrendered in order to bring us LIFE!

Personal: After this week’s study, what’s one thing the Lord is telling you? Then tell a friend what are you going to do about it?

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