

GENEROSITY

F O R U M

Speaker: Al Mueller, President of Excellence in Giving

Date: March 16, 2009

Excellence in Giving

Practice Generosity with Discernment

- Coming to the understanding that **EVERYTHING** is from the Lord

Basis of Excellence in Giving: 2 Corinthians 8:7, to excel in the grace of giving

- **Mission:** to afflict the comfortable, challenging others to move forward in their spiritual journey
- **Message:** to encourage you to be a part of God's stimulus plan *if* you practice generosity with discernment
 - The detriment of foolishness looms, then, in both generosity *without* discernment & discernment *without* generosity
 - *Proverbs 25:14* - "Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of gifts he does not give."

Why should we be generous?

- In order to Demonstrate God's love: *1 John 4:8, 11* → "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love ... Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."
- "You can give without loving, but you can't love without giving." (Amy Carmichael, Missionary to India)

The Challenge

- Who do you love?
- Do you know the needs of the people?
- Are you doing anything in your life right now to help yourself become more aware of the needs in the world?
- "Awareness breeds generosity" (Andy Stanley)

Generosity Postures

- **Sacrificial generosity:** the giving up of something that you really want to keep (i.e. time, treasure or hobby)—not a percentage or amount
- The need for sacrificial generosity rather than relative and/or absolute generosity
- Having a sacrificial posture that lives by saying: there is nothing I wouldn't give to save someone (i.e. if one would give anything to save their spouse or children, what does this mean about what one should do to save a person outside of their family by giving)

Factors to Consider Before Giving

- Setting parameters for giving out of income (How much is enough?)
- Setting a finish line for giving from assets (Difficulty in intentionally making oneself poor)
- Creating a foundation to be prayerful and regular in giving
- When? How much? Where (geographically)? What (size & focus of a particular ministry)?
- You shouldn't take risks you don't know you're taking, as there is not substitute for doing your homework in the area of giving

Give to ministries that have:

- A focused vision
- A thoughtful strategy (ability to articulate the problem they are trying to solve)
- Proven leadership (past success)
- An effective board (gathering their board minutes in order to know this)
- Adequate resources
- A performance orientation (accomplishments and drive toward higher levels of giving)
- A unique and compelling mission

Warning signs in order to avoid giving to ministries that have:

- High turnover
- A vague mission statement (i.e. "to fulfill the Great Commission")
- A lack of measurable outcomes
 - Measurement in the Bible: relative and absolute → *Genesis 1; John. 21:11*
 - "You measure what man does, and you report on what God does." (Pat McMillan)
 - What you measure you can manage; what you measure you can prove

God's Standard for Generosity

- Danger in the subtlety of: desiring to get to a place where one can say: "I am a *generous* giver"; rather, one ought to desire to say: "I am a *grateful* giver"
- *Proverbs 11:24-25* → "One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."
- *Proverbs 19:17* → "He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done."
- *2 Corinthians 9:6, 11-12* → "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously... You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God."

Goal: to take the seed outside of our storehouses and plant it in well prepared ground & good soil

Discussion Questions

- What do you need to do to construct your own high performing portfolio?
- How can you participate in God's stimulus plan by practicing generosity *with* discernment?