

Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

November 17, 2024

Choosing Our Habits

The Choices Before Us

Philippians 4:10-20

KEY VERSES

*I rejoice^[a] in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me but had no opportunity to show it.^[b] **11** Not that I am referring to being in need, for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. **12** I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. **13** I can do all things through him who strengthens me. **14** In any case, it was kind of you to share my distress. **15** You Philippians indeed know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone. **16** For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs more than once. **17** Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit^[c] that accumulates to your account. **18** I have been paid in full and have more than enough; I am fully satisfied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. **19** And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. **20** To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

As we've looked at Paul's choices through this series, they have helped us learn how to exercise our faith to allow us to have joy, gratitude, and peace no matter the circumstances. It has become evident to us why Paul has a very clear affection for the Philippian church. They not only learned from and were led by him, but they have been able to respond to his distress as well: "no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone" (v. 15). The Philippians had no idea the ripple effects of their decision to help Paul, nor do we when we choose to say yes to serving the needs of others. God took their one gift and through the centuries used their generosity to change the world. **How have you seen others' actions, small or large, impact countless lives?**

We experienced this as a community 10 years ago, when Thomas' friend and mentor Darrell Guder came to advise Covenant. In a conversation with staff and elders, Darrell had us think about the question, "If Covenant went away tomorrow, would the city be the same without us? Darrell doesn't remember posing this question, yet it has rooted itself in our imagination and Covenant's DNA. Every day we make choices about whether to live lives with open-handed generosity or clenched fists - with our time and resources. **What does it mean to you to be a living witness to the love of God? How has God called you to give of your time and resources?**

Giving is just one part of what it means to be part of a generous community. When we are only focused on serving and helping out others, however, it can simply be charity - *we who have will help you who don't*. We must be willing to both give **and** receive -- we must be willing to let other people come minister and pray for us and to show up in our needs. This is not always easy, and harder for some than others. This is why community is so important for us, as it is in community that we truly slow down from our busy lives, and be authentically known and prayed for. It's in the balance of giving and receiving that we see how beautiful this life together can truly be. **How is your balance of giving and receiving? Where in your life do you need to take a step further to be able to receive from others more generously?**