

DAY TWELVE

For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints—and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and by the will of God to us...

2 Corinthians 8:3-5

It simply makes no sense. The Macedonian Christians, in the midst of their own poverty, in the midst of their own struggles, begging earnestly for the joyous privilege of GIVING. IT MAKES NO SENSE. How could this happen? The answer is amazingly simple. They gave themselves first to God and then to others.

Her name was Michelle. As she considered her gift to the church campaign, she became increasingly upset. She desperately wanted to make a significant gift, but because of her life situation she thought it impossible. She was faced with medical bills for a child, college tuition for another child, and a 35% pay cut for her husband. Like the Macedonians, Michelle wanted to give. Her pastor listened to Michelle's frustration and suggested that she be open to what God may want, and in fact, what God may do. He suggested that she simply pray. Reluctantly, she agreed. As she gave herself to God in prayer, something happened. She became aware of ways she could give and give with generosity. It wasn't easy. It wasn't magic. It required prayer, faith, and trust. When Michelle arrived at the church on Commitment Sunday, her face radiated joy and peace. She gave herself first to God and then to others.

In every campaign the goal is the same, that each of us would give ourselves first to the Lord and then to others. If we truly give ourselves to God and then to others, we will raise all the money we will ever need. And far more importantly, lives and hearts -- like Michelle's -- will be forever changed and transformed.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Have I truly asked for God's guidance in giving?
2. Am I open to what God would have me do?
3. What might prevent me from being open and obedient to what God wants from me?

PRAYER

Oh God, I am frightened to think about coming to You for guidance. I'm not sure I want to hear what You have to say. Forgive me. Help me to lay aside all of the reasons and fears and help me to turn to You in faith and trust. Help me, Oh God, to be open to whatever You would have me do. Fill my heart with the Macedonian spirit of generosity. Through Christ my Lord, Amen.