The Book of Acts Series – Lesson 24

Acts 11:27-30

“ Giving Directions “

Introduction: The cost of a 30 second commercial during the Superbowl is $4 million dollars. Companies and individuals covet this event because of how many people tune in to watch (an average of 111 million in 2014). This is because people want to reach as wide an audience as possible to promote their product. There are many reasons that people give, but none more important than the cause for which God has called Christians. To give.

I. As Christians we are part of something eternal and are called to give to this purpose.

1. The task of the local New Testament church involves taking care of its own needs of course but there are avenues through which our church can contribute to the gospel in other places as well.
	1. Josephus, the Roman historian, recorded that many in Judea died because of the severe drought that yielded poor harvests.
	2. The Christians in Antioch would have also been affected by the famine, but perhaps not to the same degree that those in Jerusalem experienced.
	3. The Christians in Antioch gave in spite of having what many would call a good excuse not to give. This is a result of preferring others as Christ did.
	4. Ephesians 4:28 commands the thief to *“work with his hands that which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”*
2. Hillcrest is engaged in the task of spreading the gospel all over this world.
	1. We support 60 missionaries all over the world.
		1. We pray for them on corporately.
		2. We encourage our members to pray for our missionaries individually.
		3. We support them financially so missionaries can devote themselves to the work God has called them to.
		4. We give them lodging when they are in the area.
	2. We support church planters who are starting churches here in America.
	3. We have our own bills to take care of, but we must never use this as an excuse not to think about others.
	4. This is only possible because people like you and me give to the Lord as he has enabled us to.

Transition: There are many reasons for Christians to give, one of them evidenced in the passage is the fulfillment of the principle of sowing and reaping.

II. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Galatians 6:7

1. The church in Jerusalem had contributed much to the church in Antioch by way of spiritual blessings.
	1. In obedience to the leadership of the Holy Spirit they had sent out Paul and Barnabas to preach the gospel and they ministered in Antioch for one year (Acts 11:26)
2. The giving of God’s people should never be done begrudgingly, but cheerfully.
	* 1. When we focus all that we lose by giving back to God it can become a difficult thing. This is especially true during times of uncertainty like when your car breaks down or other unexpected expenses come.
		2. Think about all that God has given us spiritually:
			1. Salvation
			2. The Bible
			3. A church that stands for the truth
			4. Godly influences
		3. Everything that we enjoy in our lives has been made possible through God’s provision:
			1. Living in America
			2. The ability to work
			3. A place to call home
			4. Clothes
			5. Food
			6. Good health
			7. Loved ones
		4. It should not take long for us to realize that we will never be able to give back to God as much as He has given us.
3. Proverbs 19:17 *“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.”*
	1. The bible does not teach us to give just so that God will give us back more, but we know that God is not unjust and will be faithful to provide for our needs if we obey Him.

Transition: This passage may seem like just a parentheses of a historical event, but it contains some things that can help us in our giving.

III. The pattern for giving in these verses shows that God expects us to give while guided by love and wisdom.

1. The disciples in Antioch were first burdened by the work of the Holy Spirit.
	1. God gifted prophets to show His power and his care for His people in the early church. This is a sign gift like many others bestowed on the early church, which God used to show a sign of authenticity on His true followers.
	2. When those in Antioch heard of what was going to befall their brethren they decided that they could do something together.
	3. Some have defined love as *“Self-sacrifice for the benefit of another.”* This definition certainly fits the actions of these disciples.
2. They were then guided by godly wisdom to determine what they could give.
	1. God expects us to live by faith, but this is not the same as foolishness.
		1. There are times when we will be called to give beyond our ability and trust God to take care of us. But It would be irresponsible not to budget to feed your children and pay your debtors in order to donate your whole paycheck to the church.
	2. The disciples in Antioch looked at their income and expenses and gave what they could.
		1. It would be good for some of us to consider how many things in our lives are extra and consider limiting some of those things to give more to the Lord.
		2. Unlike the way many people in the world give, we should not seek recognition. Many Universities and hospitals name dormitories and wings of their buildings after generous donors. But when we give to God we must trust that He sees and that obedience to Him in this area is something He delights in.
3. Giving is ultimately a manifestation of love and is something that should be done in addition to obeying God in every area of our lives.
	1. Paying your tithe does not buy you favor with God.
	2. God is looking for people who will be primarily motivated by a love for Him and love for others.

Conclusion: There are certainly many religious groups and preachers who place far too much importance on giving. They manipulate the Scriptures to intimidate people, motivated by dollar signs. It is a shame that this goes on today, but we should not let these men cause us to shirk back from the true teaching of Scripture. God wants us to give out of love. We at Hillcrest do not apologize for teaching this, we are committed to teaching the whole counsel of God. This may be an uncomfortable topic for some, but this is truly an area that God wants us to follow Him in. Those who have been Christians for more than a few years will attest to the fact that God has always been faithful to provide, and that giving back to God a portion of what He has given to us is one of the ways that God has many blessings prepared for us in this life and after.