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**Refreshed**  
**Part 3 – A Sense of Abundance**  
Pastor Ted Cunningham

We're looking at these four drivers of generosity. The driver we looked at last week was your income. You need to work to have something to give. We looked at that earn, give, save, spend, and in that order. We encouraged young people, even before you get your first check, decide that's how you're going to deal with money. Earn it, then give first, give generously, then save, then spend.

Today, we're looking at the idea of abundance – having a sense of abundance rather than a scarcity mindset. Next week, we will look at stewardship, that you and I can fall into this trap where we think we own it all instead of we are just managing what the Lord has given us. So, we're going to talk about what it means to be a steward. Then in the last week, we'll look at the last driver of contentment.

Those of you in the business world who have read that book: Seven Habits of Highly Effective People... Did anybody read that book? It's been around quite a while. There are two terms in there that Steven Covey coined – the scarcity mindset and the abundance mindset. The more I read it this week, I was going, "Oh, the Lord came up with this first." They say he coined it, but we have different terms in the scripture for it.

The scarcity mindset is basically this idea of that "There isn't enough; we'll never have enough. We have to be sparing with what we give and how we support others and share with others because we've just got to hold onto it."

The abundance mindset says there's plenty to go around. In the workplace, if you've ever heard of someone getting a promotion or the boss recognizing them, a scarcity mindset is frustrated by that. That's because a scarcity mindset believes there is only so much recognition, so many promotions, so many raises to go around. Remember how HR would tell you what your raise was and then tell you, "Don't share this with anybody"? And then you go to the lunchroom and share it with everybody. The scarcity mindset says, "Well why did you get a raise?" But the abundance mindset is grateful. "Good for you. I'm glad for you. There is plenty to go around."

The scarcity mindset focuses on competition. Businesses can get into this. Churches can get into this. Whereas the abundance mindset focuses on the customer. We're trying to move our church to what we looked at in the 5S model: a surplus mindset. Again, it has nothing to do with your income. The idea of generosity is for those who make \$20,000.00 a year and those who make \$200,000.00 a year. Your income does not determine your generosity as we've been seeing in 2 Corinthians 8 & 9.

Today, again, we're going to see that the Macedonian churches they were extremely poor, but they had this rich generosity. We want to move an entire community from the scarcity mindset to an abundance mindset.

I love going to shows in our town and listening for the scarcity mindset or the abundance mindset. With the abundance mindset, the entertainer stands up and begins to talk about other shows. They encourage you to visit other shows. The scarcity mindset is, "We have to get as much to this theater here as we can." The abundance mindset says, "No problem."

In our community, there's this debate going on between shows and attractions. The scarcity mindset says there is only so much to go around, but the abundance mindset says there's room for everyone and it can make everyone more successful.

I think where it started was when we were really young, when it was you and your brother and only one candy bar. Somebody had to break this thing into two pieces. So, you would break it into two pieces. And I think those are pretty equal (shows picture of broken candy bar). How many of you would say they are pretty equal? All the middle children are saying, "No, no, that ain't fair at all." How many of you say those are not two equal pieces? The rule your mom gave you was what? Whoever breaks it, the other person gets to choose.

But Hershey came along and said, "We're not going to let chocolatey goodness divide families." They made this candy bar this way (picture of a Hershey bar). I have no idea if that's why they made it that way, but it makes for a pretty good theory. So, now you can divide it. We did the math really fast; three times four is twelve, so if you have a big family, it would divide. But every family had one person in the family that ate it like this (picture of a bite out of the whole Hershey Bar). Raise your hand if you eat the candy bar like that. You shouldn't be allowed to vote. That's my opinion. If you don't know how to eat a candy bar...

I move from the abundance to scarcity mindset like that when I'm eating a cup of pudding. I love pudding and some of you are like, "We can tell. You look like you've had a lot of pudding." But when I open it, I am abundance. It's still got the swirl from the factory on the top and you've got a spoon and it seems like a lot until you get down the end. It kind of has a ridge on the bottom of the container that traps the pudding. I immediately move from abundance to scarcity when I'm trying to dig the pudding out of the ridge. It's the saddest bite you'll ever take when it's all gone.

The terms we get from scripture are not scarcity and abundance; the terms we get in scripture are sparingly and generously. If you have your Bibles, turn to 2 Corinthians. We're going to be in Chapter 8. We've spent a lot of time in Chapter 9, but we're going to come back today as we end out this message in Chapter 8.

What we've been reading is this big idea in Chapter 9. We read this in week one. **6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give...**

That's a very tough passage for many because there is nowhere in the New Testament that gives a percentage amount or an amount to give. Many of us tithe because we were taught tithing and it's a principle we've taken out of the Old Testament. Yes, we're not under the law, but what Paul is saying clearly is you should decide in your heart what you should give and the emphasis throughout all of these two chapters is generosity. Be generous. **...not reluctantly or under compulsion...**

Don't be like, *I should probably put a couple of bucks in because I want the people sitting by me to see that I'm doing something.* That's not the heart that God is after. The heart he is after is that of a cheerful giver. This is someone where the gospel is overflowing in the life of a believer and he is excited to give; he can't wait to give. Words like excitement, joy, and cheer should mark the believer.

**...for God loves a cheerful giver. & And God is able to bless you abundantly...** I've stressed all week about not coming across like a prosperity preacher. Here's where the wrestling comes in: God blesses you abundantly, but now you have to ask the question, "What are you doing with what God has given you?" **...so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.**

So, sparingly versus generously... Those who have the scarcity mindset or the sparingly idea... When we give sparingly, we think God's blessings stop with us. I'm the end all be all. Should we enjoy the fruit of our labor? Absolutely! But what we've been studying the last few weeks is this heart that each one of us should be marked with and that's a heart of generosity.

God's people should be known as generous people, not stingy people. Raise your hand if you know a stingy person. It's a slow raise because they are here with you right now. They admitted it in the first service; let's see about this one. How many of you would say, "I would probably be known as a stingy person," and you're okay with raising your hand.

God's blessings, as we just read, are not supposed to stop. They fuel us for every good work. So, when we give generously, we want God's blessings to flow through us. We realize it doesn't stop with us. So, before we look today what it means to be a generous person, let's look quickly at what the scripture says about being a stingy person.

**Stingy people look away.** Stingy people are not aware, and they actually go to an extreme to not be aware. Proverbs 28: 27 says, **Those who give to the poor will lack nothing, but those who close their eyes to them receive many curses.** I think we've all done it where we see someone in need and in our minds, we may not say it out loud, is *don't make eye contact.* I've done it. I can tell you I've done it more times than I care to count.

Then you start having children. You start teaching them everything we've been learning the last few weeks. And you walk by someone you did not make eye contact with and your kids ask you, "Why didn't we do anything right there?" It gets harder when the kids are watching us, doesn't it? What do we do? It starts by having eyes that are open.

Generosity sees need, but I have to give this warning as well. I was studying some research from Barna this week that says the younger generations now believe they are the most generous generations on the

earth right now. But the data says just the opposite. They are the least generous. Part of the reason... Please hear this; this comes from the heart of a pastor who loves you. Buying a pair of Toms does not make you a generous person. You can be aware of a need, but there is a lot of self-interest in our purchases. Should I go with Nike or Toms? Well, I better go with Toms because they are going to do something to help. That's a lot different than opening up your wallet and giving generously – as we've been learning – more than you are able to give. Awareness alone does not lead to generosity.

**Stingy people delay.** Proverbs 3 says, ***27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act. 28 Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back tomorrow and I'll give it to you"—when you already have it with you.*** Do you have generous people in your life where you've watched them do this? It's like immediate. I just want to encourage you, church family, when you see need and it's with you and you have the ability to give, don't say call the church, be the church. Meet the need. Do it right there.

I've had a mentor in my life that I've watched generosity flow out of. His name is not important. It's Joe White. You have to be careful around Joe not to compliment anything he's holding. If you compliment it... You'll be golfing and you might say, "Hey, your driver seems to work well," and that driver becomes yours. "Hey, I like your shirt." He'll take his shirt off and literally give you the shirt off his back. That's what he does. You have to be really careful. I'm nervous saying that to a congregation this size with him on our teaching team. "Hey, I like your car, Joe. That is really nice. Where did you get that? Where can I get a car like that?"

That's what generous people do. Generous people see the need, they are aware of it, and then they have it with them and they do something. They do something right there. A stingy person makes excuses.

**Stingy people hoard.** This is where we get the text that's driving this series called *Refreshed*. I challenged first service. We have a lot of our senior adults in our first service. I said this is very important for you to hear as I know you start to fret and worry about your retirement years. May you not become a hoarder but remain a generous giver.

Proverbs 11 says, ***24 One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. 25 A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed. 26 People curse the one who hoards grain, but they pray God's blessing on the one who is willing to sell.*** And keep the economy moving. What are the three lessons out of this text?

**1. Wealth should be shared.** That is raising some hairs on the back of the necks of some of the people in here going, *Oh, boy; he's going Bernie on us. He's getting liberal.* This isn't a political statement. You cannot read the two chapters we've been reading the last two weeks and tell me it's not the purpose of us who have abundance to share. We should be sharing. We should be doing what we saw the first century church doing, which was going and selling property, as we read in Acts 4, bringing the proceeds from the property and laying it at the apostle's feet so they could distribute to those who were in need. Wealth should be shared.

Now, if I can just throw out there that if we stick with the context of the scripture today, this is a church thing, not a government thing. And there are republicans that haven't amended a day in their life agreeing with that right now.

**2. Stinginess leads to poverty.** It's that mindset we've been talking about. There are those who are surviving and struggling and they make \$100,000.00 a year. It's because the stinginess has brought them there. We said it last week: We can't afford a lifestyle that keeps us from helping others. We have to be giving. We have to be sharing.

**3. Generosity leads to abundance.** This is a new way of thinking for many, but it's why we are studying this. We could move our entire community, Southwest Missouri, from a scarcity mindset to an abundance mindset. We often think about generosity as being something that happens after abundance. You hear people say it. Like when a professional athlete signs the contract. "Man, if I came into a million dollars, here's what I would do..." No, do it now. Don't wait for some big amount to hit you. Be generous now. Generosity has a sneaky way of driving abundance and this is why Paul said this to young Timothy in his ministry.

1 Timothy 6 – ***17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain...*** Have you ever seen the stock market... For those of you who have lived many years upon this earth, have you ever seen the stock market go up and down and up and down in a day?

I was telling Amy that I remember that in seventh grade came into metal shop with Mr. Milanovich. I could see something was wrong with him. I walked up to him and asked him what was going on. He goes, "Man, the stock market crashed today." And it went down like 600 points. I think we did that on Tuesday and then again on Thursday and then went back up 300 points. If you watch the markets and this is where you're hope and faith lie, you're going to be a depressed individual.

Don't put your hope there, ***...but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.*** Enjoy. We read this in Ecclesiastes. "Eat your food with gladness, drink your wine with a joyful heart for now God favors what you do. Always be clothed in white. Always anoint your head with oil."

***18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds...*** It doesn't stop with them and their enjoyment ***...and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure...*** You want to talk about investment? Here it is. ***...for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.***

Some of you right now are missing out on life because of stinginess. Some of you are hoarding, delaying, and keeping your eyes closed. As we say around here often, the antidote to selfishness is serving. Let's throw generosity in there as well. If your day is consumed with you and your fun and your enjoyment, you're missing it. You want to experience what life truly is? Become someone who has eyes for other people, aware of what their needs are, and then finding ways to meet those needs.

I'll give you the definition of the scarcity mindset versus abundance mindset. **The scarcity mindset** believes resources are limited and keeps us from sharing recognition, promotions, money, resources, and tourists. I added *tourists*. This is kind of a mix of John Maxwell and Steven Covey. They didn't say anything about tourists, but...

I wonder what's holding back your show here or your attraction here or your business here. I wonder what would happen if you unleashed an abundance mindset into your place of business and you realize there are millions of tourists to go around. We can begin to promote somebody else. We can promote them going to someone else's show or someone else's business.

A scarcity mindset believes that if one theater wins, another must lose. It focuses on competitors, not customers. And can I tell you I have a lot of friends in ministry, a lot of pastors with this mindset. Another church comes to town and opens its doors and the pastors are frustrated. Do you know why? It's because they view that church as competition. That's bad. And I've had that mindset. Now, I'm thrilled to see other churches coming town. Any church that wants to start up to keep us at three services, we will speak major blessing over that church. But you're not focused on the people because you have this scarcity mindset.

**The abundance mindset** is completely different. The generous mindset flows out of a deep inner sense of personal worth and security. When I read that this week, I thought, *yeah*, but what we've been saying here and what Paul shares in 2 Corinthians 9 is the indescribable gift. Who is the indescribable gift? The indescribable gift is Jesus Christ. Our generosity, our deep inner sense of personal worth and security flows from the gospel.

Our generosity flows from this overwhelming gratefulness for our salvation, for life, for our home in heaven. When we think about that, when we meditate on that, when we focus on that, when we read that, when we keep that ever before us, there's this idea that none of this is mine, what do you need? May this church never be marked as a stingy church. May we always be known as being generous to one another, generous to the community, generous to those people in nations we'll never even visit. May that always mark us – generosity.

The word picture that is often related to these two is that of a pie. There's only one pie in Branson. There is only so much to go around. Tony Shields is the first one that ever taught me this. He was at Big Cedar for years. When I would meet with him, he would say, "Ted, the problem in this community is everybody is fighting for a piece of the pie, when we should be working at finding ways to make the pie bigger."

I think there's even a better word picture than that. There are plenty of pies already and guess what? We can keep making pies. That's the abundance mindset to say there's more. How will this way of thinking generously, not sparingly, not being a stingy person, but being a generous person... How will this change you at your job. When you hear about the other person getting praise for from the boss, will you celebrate that? Will you get excited? When the promotion is given to someone else, will you think, *well that's it; I'm stuck in this job for another three years*. That's that stinginess coming out. The generosity says there's plenty of work around here. There are plenty of jobs around here.

A business owner came up to me at the end of last week and said, "Hey, Ted, I pay \$11.00 an hour. Right now, we are about 20 - 25 employees shy, so they can work 70 hours a week, which they're getting overtime for 30 of those hours." I started doing the math I'm thinking that's pretty good money. If you've got the ability to work and want to work, you can provide for your family instead of this *there's just nothing out there*. The generous mindset gets up and says, "I'm going to look for jobs today and there's going to be plenty offered to me; I'm just going to have a tough time figuring out which one to go with. Instead of fighting and scraping... I remember singing this song all the time in Sunday school: "*He owns cattle on a thousand hills.*" I know who I serve, I know what he provides, I know what he wants to do through me, I know what he wants to do through you, and I know what he wants to do through this church.

How about **our town**? I've already shared a lot about this, but wouldn't it be great for this town to explode again and have some of the days... Not going back to the 90s, no let's go to 2020. What does God have in store for this community, not fighting over table scraps, but going "Man, let's make the table bigger." Let's figure out how we can work together, not go at each other, but what we can do to make it bigger.

And then in **our church**... That we would always be marked as generous people. That we would never view other churches as competitors. When it starts bubbling up inside of you, confess it before the Lord that we would start rejoicing in what God is doing in other churches in our community. God has called us to something unique, he's called First Baptist to something unique, First Pres, Bloom. You can just go through the list of churches. Why don't we celebrate what God is doing through others?

**Generosity has a way of strengthening communities.** May this church be one that leads out on that. We've been reading this from Acts 4, and I've shared it three weeks in a row now. That's because to me, it's that fuel. We understand what's going on. Acts 4: 33 - ***God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all...*** Because of that, people went and sold properties and brought the money back to the apostle's feet and then it was distributed. It was marked with generosity.

And then Paul continues this in his missionary journeys and he's now going to start asking Gentile churches to take up a collection for the impoverished, destitute believers back in Judea. He starts taking up this collection... We've been reading about this in 2 Corinthians 8 and I'm going to add Verse 4. We've been looking at Verses 2 and 3. ***2 In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.***

This is the Macedonian church. You have to remember in that day... and that's why prosperity theology doesn't work for me because it's the idea of "Hey place faith in Jesus and you're going to automatically get a big job, a big house, a nice car. Everything is going to click for you and you're going to have millions of dollars flowing in." The answer to that is no and here's why. We read it here. When you place faith in Jesus in the first century, it meant just the opposite. It meant poverty was probably coming upon you.

You know how people namedrop Christ in business transactions in our town to win your favor and to get your business? That's not how it worked 2,000 years ago. When you were following Christ, it brought severe trial upon you. So, out of their extreme poverty, they had this overflowing joy and rich

generosity. So there again, your income is not what drives generosity; it's the gospel. It's what is flowing out of you, understanding what Christ did for you and that inner sense of *okay I am motivated by this to do something*.

**3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.** He's talking about those in extreme poverty. This is Paul in Macedonia, writing to the church in Corinth, telling them about their extreme poverty and how he's coming through and he's going to grab the collection. "Make sure your gift is ready" is what he's saying. He is saying, "I want you to know that your desire to take up a collection for those back in Jerusalem has been known to the church in Macedonia and now it has sparked." So, generosity is this contagious thing that people grab hold of and say they want to be a part of it too. This is the verse I love: ***Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people.*** The service of the Lord is this collection.

I get a lot of notes with people wanting stuff at church. I have a feeling after this service, people will come up and ask me to do something for them. I think I've set up a couple of those meetings already before the service. They're going to want the church to leverage their authority or leverage their influence somehow in this community to help them with a ministry or help them... I can't think of a time in 23 years of ministry where someone has come up and complained, "Hey, you know we don't take enough offerings around here." "Ted, would it be possible to take another offering?" These people who were extremely poor pleaded for the privilege of sharing in the service of the Lord's people. We want to be a part of this. May that always mark this church. How can you begin to practice this generosity, how can you get this started? Let me give you a couple of very simple ways.

**1. Surround yourself with generous people.** I've had a scarcity mindset for most of my entire life. I don't know if it was the community I was raised in with a lot of blue-collar workers; I don't know what brought it on, but I've always kind of had that mindset of *there's not going to be enough. We'll probably run out* even though I grew up in a middle-class family. I've just never had this bigger picture of understanding surplus and abundance. I find myself... When I get around generous people, it makes me want to do something.

I remember the time we were on a trip and I was with Joe White. We met a young guy in the parking lot, and he was sharing some need and I was like, *Oh, here it comes*. I love watching this take place. Joe is digging into his heart and into his life and I'm like, *Oh, we get to see something happen right here. He's going to give this guy something*. When Joe reached back for his wallet, he didn't have his wallet on him. I'm not making this up; he goes, "Teddy, be generous." I felt reluctant and under compulsion to reach into my wallet.

If you are around stingy people all the time, you're going to have a stingy mindset. If you go out to lunch today and you always have that friend who gets up to use the bathroom around the time the check's going to come, you need to find some new friends. Find the friends that get up to use the restroom so they can get to the waiter and get the check before you do. Get around some generous people.

**2. Celebrate the successes and blessings of others.** When you find out something at work, don't get envious, don't read something on Facebook and get all jealous. Confess that before the Lord and

celebrate with them. It just begins to exercise that muscle of generosity to get you thinking bigger and understanding that at any income level, any season of life, you can choose right now to become a generous person.

**3. Give others opportunity and help them succeed.** We saw this last week. I know it's just a start. I wrestled with it for the first few days of the week, but we said, "May we always be known as a church that meets needs on the spot." I'm not a big red tape guy and forms and all of that. Let's just watch God do something.

Last week, it started to bubble up in this church. After the first service last week, a guy came to me and shared a need. He said he had a friend and he gave me the need. It was about \$10,000.00. I told him to let me talk to the elders and see what we could do. He said, "I'm already giving; I just wanted to see if the church could be a part of that." I no sooner walked out that door and the very first thing I get is somebody hands me a piece of paper that was given to them in the first service. I don't know who the person is. I don't know if they were tourists. I don't know if they are a part of our church. All the note said was, "We want to do something significant up to the amount of \$10,000.00." That, to me, seems very first century Christianity. That seems very *let's meet needs* instead of, "Okay, I've got the number here; I'll send them some forms. He can get those forms back to me..."

I know we have to be good stewards of what we've been given, but last week we said, "If you have a need, come forward for prayer and we'll meet that need. You'll leave with the resources you need to meet that need." Not that this is a small amount, but I think it's a small amount for what we typically do with the mercy offering. About \$1,400.00 was given out. Monday and Tuesday, I was like, *Oh come on, there's got to be more needs than that.* I don't know what was holding people back from making the most of that.

By Wednesday, I got to the point where I was saying it's a start. So, we're going to keep it going through this series. If you have need... no red tape, no forms to fill out this morning. Some people will call friends and tell them to call on Monday. We're still going to do the benevolence forms and all that as part of how we do benevolence. But during this series and during this time, if you have a need, come forward, meet with our prayer team. They would like to pray with you and help find ways to meet that need.

Please do that. Take advantage of that opportunity. Let this church family minister to you so that you can begin to get into a generous mindset. I hope if you're in that sparingly mindset and it's always been about you and you've always been in the surviving, struggling mode, I think you've found a church and a place that you can be a part of that says, "No, we know what God has done for us; the blessings don't stop with us; they flow through us." You're surrounded by people who are generous that that can begin to influence you and your giving.

We'll close with continuing in 2 Corinthians 8 - ***Z But since you excel in everything... He's now speaking to the church in Corinth. —in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you... You're growing in your faith. ...see that you also excel in this grace of giving.***

Be working on this. Don't just leave here without having the conversation. Have the conversations in the car with your spouse, with your children. Dig into this.

***8 I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.*** Now watch. Here is a concise statement of the gospel. ***9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*** My friends, that is the gospel. If you have never placed faith in Jesus that today, you would confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that he has been raised from the dead and you will be saved.

I'm going to invite you to stand as we close in prayer. Remember, if you have a need, come forward and meet our prayer team. They'd love to pray with you and meet that need.

Father, in the name of Jesus, may Woodland Hills always be a generous church. We never ever want to be marked as stingy, sowing sparingly. May we continue to give and meet the needs and share what we need to do here in our congregation, what we need to do in our community, and then to the ends of the earth.

I pray for the one who has never placed faith in Jesus that today would be the day that individual confesses with their mouth and believes in their heart and places faith in Jesus. We are grateful for how you continue to use our church. May this be true from our children through our senior adults and across all income levels. A generous church, a church that is full of cheerful givers.

And everyone agreed and said... Amen.