

Give as an act of worship Exodus 35; Philippians 4; Malachi 1

God is worthy of our worship. He is matchless. There is no one and nothing to compare with Him. And one of the most transforming ways we worship God is through becoming generous and joyful givers.

What is Every Knee?

The next step of courageous growth we believe God has called us to take over the next two years

We have 2 goals during this 2-year initiative

- **Goal #1 – challenge each of us to give all we are and all we have to Jesus**
 - o We'll each be challenged to a deeper level of investment in God's kingdom
 - o Clarify: not just to GBC or Every Knee – our goal is bigger than this one initiative
 - o Our hope is that all of us will be challenged to offer more of our time, money, possessions, skills to Jesus
- **Goal #2 – raise the funds required for the next stage of our church's growth**
 - o \$32 million over the next 2 years – that's a massive #
 - o But remember - \$12 million is what we'd already give over the course of 2 years
 - o \$18M is to reach every neighbor in Bryan/CS; and \$16M is just cost to build a home for Creekside
 - Clarify: we're not being extravagant – about the same sq ft as Southwood and Anderson
 - It is just REALLY expensive to build in this town, especially south end of town where Creekside is located because there is so much growth going on there.
 - BUT that's actually why we felt like God was calling us to establish a campus in the south of this town – because there are not enough churches to serve the thousands of new people moving into those neighborhoods every year
 - So our goal is to raise the entire construction cost – all \$16 million so that we can pay off the Creekside campus in just these 2 years so that Grace can continue to multiply in our community and throughout the world.
 - o So \$12M for 2 yrs of regular annual budget; \$16M to build Creekside; \$2M to plant the next local campus and \$2M more for two new church plants, one national, one international... that's how we get to the \$32M total

LOT of new info... so to guide you through this Every Knee Initiative, we've prepared a book for you

- Here's what you'll find in this Every Knee Book
 - o Letter from pastors and elders: explains what we believe God is calling us to do next
 - o Walks you through history and impact Grace has had over the last 50 years
 - o Interspersed with testimonies: people at Grace excited to be part of next stage
 - o Then walks you through details of Every Knee Initiative that you saw in the video
 - o At back: sermon discussion questions for each of these next 5 sermons
 - Use the questions for personal study or in a small group
 - o Next to the questions: place for sermon notes – today on page 46
- Love to have you bring this book each week to take notes

One final thing we've given you – a Commitment Card stuffed into the booklet

- This is NOT a Pledge Card - We will never call you, beat on your door!
- **This is #1 a TOOL to help you think strategically about your giving to your local church**
 - o Take before the Lord and ask Him to guide you
 - o Maybe you are like me: you don't think often or strategically about what you give
 - Now most of my giving automatic by CC or EFT – great, easy to do
 - BUT it's easy to get lazy – not think about it – not engage my heart in my giving
 - o This card is a tool to challenge us to think deeply and strategically about what we give
- **This is #2 how you COMMUNICATE to the elders and staff of the church**
 - o We believe God has called us to this \$32M goal... but we could be wrong!
 - o We need these cards from you so that, when we add them all up, we can see if this is indeed what God has called us to do, so that we can be wise stewards of this vision.
 - o Let me clarify: I won't see your card; Brian won't see your card; none of Teaching or Campus pastors will see your card, nor will any of the elders.
 - o The only people who will see it are the few staff in our financial department who are the only ones who ever see your name with your giving. I have no idea what you give and it will always be that way!
 - o All we'll get is the total number so that we can make a wise decision
 - o If the total # is exactly \$32M – then we know we should move forward
 - o If it's less – we need to go back to God in prayer to see what He wants us to do instead
 - o If it's more – then that's God telling us we haven't dreamed big enough yet
- This is how you help us move forward in God's will
- Don't fill it out yet
 - o You'll get a new version in the future that we ask you to actually turn in.
 - o This is just to get you thinking and praying.
- For now, just begin to pray and ask God to guide you and your family

Let's be honest: a giving initiative like Every Knee is not something we do that often at Grace. In fact, we've never done one this big or this direct before. It may feel unusual or even uncomfortable for some of you.

So, it's helpful to start by looking at an example of God's people actually participating in a giving initiative like this in scripture! This Every Knee initiative has precedent in Exodus 35... turn there

- 2nd book in your Bible – so near the beginning
 - o this event is shortly after God freed them from slavery in Egypt
 - o time to build the first version of the temple = the tabernacle – place to worship God
- **Read Exodus 35:4-6**
 - o God commands His people to bring an offering for the construction of the tabernacle – where the nation would worship God
 - o Precious metals and fabrics – raw materials for building the tabernacle
- **Read Exodus 35:20-22**
 - o The hearts of the people are stirred up to give
 - o In Hebrew, heart means “desire” – they feel a desire to give, not an obligation to give
- **Read Exodus 36:3,5-6**
 - o The people give TOO MUCH for the tabernacle! They are so generous that Moses has to tell them “enough”!
 - o What a great problem to have! Their desire to give exceeds the need!

That leads us to fundamental question of Every Knee series – will take next 5 weeks to answer:

Why should we become generous and joyful givers like them?

- Because Exod 35 is NOT about the FACT that they gave – it's about HOW they gave – their attitude
- They didn't give the bare minimum out of obligation – they gave generously out of joy

- Why? What truths about generosity stirred their hearts to give so freely to God?
- As we think about this question, it will challenge each of us to honestly ask:
 - o Am I a generous, joyful giver like they were? If not, why? What's holding me back?
 - o What practical changes do I need to make in my life to become generous like them?
- I won't sugar-coat this – this will be convicting and challenging to you and to me – we're going right after the topic of money and generosity and that is never comfortable to do.
- But it's worth it – because if you are not yet a generous giver – there is a LOT of JOY in this life and the next you are missing out on... and we don't want you to miss out!

So, let's jump right in. Why should we become generous and joyful givers?

- As I often do – I'm going to begin with the wrong answers! And there are a LOT!

WRONG ANSWERS: Give generously because...

- **God needs my money**
 - o No He doesn't! He owns EVERYTHING in the universe
 - o His plans for humanity will be accomplished with or without our money
 - o **Read Acts 17:24-25**
- **Then God will make me rich**
 - o No! He never promised riches for us in this life no matter how much we give
 - o Our reward is in the next life; not this life
 - o Peter, Paul, John... ALL died poor and persecuted after giving everything to Jesus!
 - o If God didn't reward their faith with wealth... He won't for us
- **God will love you more**
 - o Remember Romans 5:8 "God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"
 - o Even when we were still far from God, rebelling against Him, Jesus loved us so much He willingly suffered and died for us – there's no greater love than that – and it's already been given to you.
 - o God literally cannot love you more than He already does – so don't give to earn more love from Him... you've already got all of it!
- **Then you're more likely to go to heaven**
 - o No, no, no!! Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone!
 - o Remember Eph 2 "For by GRACE you've been saved through FAITH" – it's not by works
 - o Our giving has absolutely NOTHING to do with getting to heaven!

So why should we become generous and joyful givers? This week I'll give you REASON #1...

Because giving is how we worship and God is worthy of our worship

Two points in that statement, and I want to explain and prove both of them

Point #1: Giving is how we worship

- Turn to Phil 4 – towards the end of your Bible – one of Paul's letters
- **Define "worship"**
 - o = declaring the goodness and greatness of God
 - o We think "singing" but it's so much more!
 - o **Worship = anything we say or do that declares the goodness and greatness of God**
 - o That includes giving. Let me prove it...
- **Philippians 4**
 - o **Read Phil 4:15-16**
 - Paul praises them for giving to his ministry to plant churches
 - o **The remarkable part – Read Phil 4:18**
 - "a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice" = language of Old Testament sacrificial worship

- Their gift to Paul’s ministry was actually a gift of worship to God Himself
 - And that sacrificial worship “pleased God” – delighted His heart
 - So we give because our giving is itself an act of worship that delights God
- **Like when a guy proposes to a girl**
 - Gives her a ring... and it’s usually very expensive relative to how much money he makes
 - I was in seminary – all my income still wasn’t enough to pay for classes!
 - Still scrimped and saved to buy the very best ring I could
 - Why? Because I wanted to show this woman how wonderful she was to me!
 - Wanted her friends, family, co-workers to see how much I loved her
 - The interesting thing: that was some of the easiest money I’ve ever spent!
 - Painful to part with my money to pay utility bill... only do it because I have to keep the lights on
 - But it was not a duty or obligation to part with the money for that ring – it was a joy!
 - Because it was my opportunity to show Julie and the world how awesome she is
- But what would it have said to Julie and to the world if I had the money to spend on a nice ring but instead I spent the money on a new XBOX for myself and just gave her a twisty tie from a pack of bread?
 - Would have shown her and the world that she’s not that special, not that great
- **That’s the mistake Israel made at the very end of the Old Testament - Malachi 1**
 - **Read Malachi 1:6-8**
 - In Old Testament – worship was primarily performed through sacrifices – of animals, wine, grain
 - Surprising: most of the sacrifices in Old Testament weren’t about sin, they were about worship
 - Whereas we gather weekly to worship together in song, they gathered regularly to worship through offering sacrifices to show the world how worthy God is.
 - However, the Israelites were doing what I described a moment ago – spending their wealth on themselves and giving God a twisty tie
 - They offered lame and sick animals that cost them nothing – that would have died anyways. They kept the best animals for themselves.
 - What that said to God and to the world is that God is not special, not worthy of our best – barely worthy of our left-overs.
 - **Read Malachi 1:11-12a,14**
 - When they offered worthless sacrifices to God, what did it do? v12 – “Profaned” Him in the eyes of the nations.
 - Profane = treat as common, every day, un-special – opposite of “holy”
 - Their worthless sacrifices told the world that their God was nothing special – was not worthy of your attention, your faith, or your allegiance
- **That infuriated God...**
 - **Not because He’s a narcissist who needs our worship – God needs nothing from us**
 - **Infuriated God because it hurt the nations and God loves the nations**
 - Our God loves all people and wants all people to come to Him for salvation
 - But why would anyone come to a God who is treated as trash by His own people?
 - When we treat God as nothing special, we cheat those who don’t know him yet. Our actions turn them off from our God and they continue to live in the darkness
 - And God hates that because He wants them to live in the light!
- **Turn to 2 Samuel 24**
- **King David made a lot of mistakes in life... but he didn’t make this mistake**
 - When time to worship, he did something very different than the Israelites in Malachi
 - **Read 2 Sam 24:18** – so David goes to this man, Araunah, to buy his land and build an altar of worship to God
 - **But Araunah surprises him – Read 2 Sam 24:22-23**
 - How awesome! Dude offers the land and everything needed for the altar for free! Sweet! David doesn't have to pay a thing to worship God, right?!

- **Read 2 Sam 24:24** – No! David understands. Worship that costs us nothing is not worship! Worship that costs us nothing tells the world that God isn't worthy of our highest and best.
- So David sacrifices his wealth so that his worship not only pleases God but shows the world that his God is worthy and wonderful!

And that leads us to the 2nd point: Become a generous giver because that is how we worship God...

And our God is WORTHY of our worship

- Nowhere in the Bible is that clearer than in Revelation 4 and 5
- **Read Revelation 4:11 – God is worthy of our worship because He is our Creator**
 - Created the universe and this beautiful world FOR US
 - We didn't create the earth or life or even our own bodies – all of this is a gift from God
 - And contrary to every other ancient religion, our God didn't create us to be slave labor – to do His bidding so He could relax. He made us to enjoy and rule this world
 - Psalm 8:3-4a,6 “When I look up at the heavens, which your fingers made, and see the moon and the stars, which you set in place, of what importance is the human race, that you should notice them?... [yet] you appoint them to rule over your creation; you have placed everything under their authority”
 - In love and grace God created us and gave us this beautiful planet to fill and enjoy and care for – He gave it all to us as an absolutely free gift.
- And so we say WORTHY of our worship are you Lord God, **our Creator**
- **But not only is God worthy of our worship as our Creator... but also as our Redeemer**
- **Read Revelation 5:12** – the lamb = Jesus is worthy of our worship including our wealth – why?
- **Read Revelation 5:9** – because He purchased our salvation with His own death
 - And this is the truly incredible thing to think about – we should give generously and sacrificially to God because God already gave generously and sacrificially to us!
 - When you give to Jesus, you're being like Jesus because Jesus already gave to you
 - And what He gave you is infinitely more valuable than what you give Him because He gave you His life – He died in your place to free you from sin, Satan, and death and give you forgiveness and eternal life as a free gift.
- **So important: no matter how generous we are to God, we will NEVER OUTGIVE Him!**
- **And so we say WORTHY are you Lord, our God and our Redeemer of our worship and our offering because you gave FIRST and you gave MORE than we will ever give**

And so now we're going to respond to that truth in worship. We saved most of our worship set for *after* the sermon today so that we could respond to these verses in Rev 4 and 5 in worship

Let's sing boldly and loudly to God because He is WORTHY of all of our worship because He is our Creator and our Redeemer and the greatest giver of all!

Close service: Pray with me and then stay standing for a couple really quick announcements

- If you need to grab an extra book for someone missing – at the Information desk in foyer
- The video, the book, the commitment card are already up at www.everyknee.org
- If in a small group most will go through sermon discussion questions together
- If not and want people to process with – Anderson Wed 7:00 starting this week