

Living in the Overflow

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An economy is based on ordinary daily transactions, a value exchange of goods or services for something of consistent value. In ancient times, grain was the currency. It was aggressively traded and used to pay taxes and buy protection from the king. Today, whether it be stocks and bonds, health care, service industry employment, Word and sacrament ministry or anything else we do, daily transactions are the way our world's economy functions. It's not just money; it includes our relationships with one another. Each of us has expectations and motivations behind our transactions.

These transactional behaviors are so ingrained in our consumeristic culture that we don't give them much thought. And it should be no surprise that these worldly attitudes seep into our congregations. Weekly giving for some people can become solely a transaction: *I give because I am obligated, or I give to pay the bills.*

That only touches the surface of what it means to give and give generously. Knowing in your mind and heart that everything we exchange in our earthly lives has its origin, its source, in

God our Creator — this moves giving from transactional to transformational. Everything we are and all that we have in this life — if we take a moment to trace it all back to its source, it leads us to a generous, self-giving God who is the source of all redemptive love.

Do we truly believe that everything we possess in this life is a gift given to us by God? You and I may nod in agreement. But if so, then why is financial giving wrapped in myths and fears? Why is there so much time, attention and anxiety involved with how we acquire, secure, spend, save, loan, borrow and give money? In his book *Life Without Lack*, Dallas Willard writes, "One of the greatest needs today is for people to really see and really believe the things they already profess to see and believe. Knowing about things — knowing what they are, being able to identify them and say them — does not mean we actually believe them.

... Acting as if things are true means, in turn, that we live as if they were so." Transformation happens when we discover God's truths for ourselves and gain understanding about what

we may have not understood before. Self-discovery leads to deep changes — heart changes. And when a truth changes your heart, it becomes a part of you, an unrehearsed guiding principle of your life.

We enjoy God's presence, notice the beauty and goodness of the grace around us, and become utterly caught up in his abundant generosity when giving moves from being a purely transactional activity to a transformational one.

Transformational giving sees giving as an act of worship, a surrender to love, a deeply spiritual practice. When we live with transformed hearts, we look for daily opportunities to give ourselves to the needs of the world and put fewer expectations on return. Transformational giving is uncalculating; instead, it is genuinely generous, big-hearted and open-handed.

How can this be? Because whether we believe it or not, we live in the overflow: The overflow, the abundance of God's love. As C.S. Lewis said, "In God there is no hunger that needs to be filled, only plenteousness that desires to give."

