

1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:1-8
Investing Your Relational Capital
Sunday October 25th, 2015

Today is the 3rd in the series on the 5 Capitals God has given us to thrive in this world and witness to his love. Today I am addressing the 2nd most important capital and that is “Relational Capital.”

The 5 types of Capital that God gives us in descending order of importance are:

- 1st: Spiritual, which we address next week on All Saints Sunday.
- 2nd: Relational, today
- 3rd: Physical, in three weeks
- 4th: Intellectual, which was last week.
- 5th: Financial, in two weeks.

Each of these types of Capital or assets that God has given us is 10 times more important than the one below for thriving in life and witness to the world. Sorta like the Richter Earthquake Scale of God’s gifts for service.

This is how you make Relational Capital: A story is told about *Henry who was 73 years old when he moved into a rest home. Since the death of his wife two years earlier, Henry had been extremely lonely. He needed some companionship, someone to talk to, to relate to.*

After unpacking his belongings, Henry walked into the activities room, where many of the other residents were gathered. Everyone in the room was either talking, reading, playing cards, or watching TV. Suddenly Henry felt nervous about trying to make new friends at his age. He wasn’t sure he had made the right decision.

As he stood in the doorway surveying the room, Henry was startled by a gentle tap on the shoulder. He turned to find a small woman staring up at him.



Even though she must have been 85 years old, she was attractive and had a kind face. She said nothing but continued to stare at Henry. It was an awkward moment.

Finally, Henry said, "Good day, mam. My name is Henry." With a sparkle in her eye, the elderly woman said, "Henry, you look just like my fourth husband."

Rather startled Henry said, "I do?" He then asked. "Tell how many husbands have you had?"

Smiling broadly, the woman replied, "Three."

Relational capital is something we make and something we receive. Relational capital is built on love which means it comes from God and is more important than Physical, Intellectual or Financial capital and in fact can be the source for all three.

Now our scripture today seems like it is all about money, but first and foremost it's about relationships. As you read these two scriptures today you can see that Paul is banking on his relationships with the churches in Galatia, Macedonia and Corinth. He is banking on these relationships to demonstrate the

Gentile Christian's unity or relationship with the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

Paul wasn't just raising money for the poor Christians in Jerusalem who were suffering the effects of persecution and famine. Paul was raising money because he deeply cared about the unity, the fellowship, and the relationships within and between all his Churches. Remember all of 1 Cor. 12 was about the Church as a Body and our individual gifts.

Paul was passionate about this offering, the help it would bring to the Jerusalem Christians and the unity it would show. This offering is mentioned 4 times in his letters. He uses 9 different Greek words to explain it and it was collected over a two year period between 53 and 56AD.

Of the 9 words Paul used to refer to the offering he first called it **"the Fellowship" offering**. Its purpose was to show the fellowship, the positive relationship between giver and receiver. In Greek he also called it the **"Diakonia" an offering of "practical Christian service."** He also called it the **"prosphora" which means "an offering and a sacrifice"**; because, "In the most real sense, that which is given to someone in need is a sacrifice to God." And our sacrifices demonstrate our relationship with God. Barclay "The Letters to the Corinthians" p. 194

Again, the offering was to show the unity of the Christian Churches and faith. It was all about relationship. This first offering spoken of in the churches of the New Testament is very similar to U. M. apportionments. They demonstrate unity, relationship as we do good or practical Christian service in the world.

It is very interesting as you read through I Corinthians how Paul goes from the deep theological understandings of the Resurrection of the Dead in Chapter 15 to the practicalities of

Church administration and taking up an offering in Chapter 16

Verse 2a of 1 Cor. 16 reads, “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income,…” The teaching here is **regular, proportional giving**. Here of course it is speaking of an offering on Sunday, the first day of the week. In that day and age weekly giving was tied to worship as it is today. We of course still gather weekly for worship; but often give monthly, quarterly or even yearly. The idea being promoted here is the giving is **regular**.

Also the idea here was to give of the “**first fruits**” of your labor on the “**first day of the week**”, not giving God leftovers on the last day of the week or month. In preparation for this message today I reread one sermon I preached on November 6th, 1988. My oldest was 4 years old then.

My wife and I have always tithed to the church since we were married. A tithe is 10% of income. When I first became a committed Christian I tithed to the church. I thought it was as natural to tithe as a Christian as it was to believe that Jesus rose from the dead.

As I wrote in 1988, “From my reading of the scripture the basic minimum required of a Christian is a tithe. It’s both the goal of a Christian and the fulfillment of our duty. If we are tithing, giving 10% of our income to God we in most cases are meeting our duty to God. In some cases though, John Wesley said we shouldn’t hold to a certain percentage but to simply “**make, save and give all we can**”. But I believe a tithe is a practical guide for most to fulfil their duty to God.

In terms of proportional giving, I know for some to begin giving God 10% would make as much sense as giving God 50% or 100%. There are too many obligations you have had to take

on in life, or you have never considered it before and your income is all committed.” Paul addressed that when he said, “**you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income.**” For some that could be 1% or 2%, but the idea is to deliberately, regularly start to give to God through the church, and when able to step up in giving.

Now I know most Christians don't tithe. In the year 2000 a survey of Christians was completed and it showed 26% tithed to the Church. So it seems like we have some room for improvement. And even though many don't tithe I and my wife still do and we believe in it.

We tithed while we were both still in school with a baby and our total income was \$12,500. We tithed all through our children growing up and even while all three were in College for a while at the same time. And we have done well. We have learned and lived the truth of verse 8, “**And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every goodwork.**”

Now as you can guess if you are a member or visitor here today we are in the midst of our annual financial campaign. We do this every year and it helps us remember the spiritual aspects of money. Jesus spoke about money more than he spoke about Heaven and Hell. He spoke about money, mostly because of the spiritual damage it can do; to help us live in a material world without getting sucked into worshipping and being controlled by the material rather than God.

I like the current campaign we are using because it addresses the need of the giver to give and not the church to receive. No formal budget will be adopted until we finish the pledge drive with the majority of the pledges coming in on November 8th.

A famous theologian said this about giving, “You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.” Which brings us back to relationship. That is pretty much the meaning of verse 7, “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

We give because God first gave to us. We love because God first loved us. To exist in the image of God, to be made in the image of God is to love and to give!! God gave us his son, “the indescribable Gift” mentioned in verse 15 of this Chapter. We give out of thanksgiving for what we have received. And God will even give a cheerful attitude to give if we ask.

So, I encourage you to spend your relational capital on others. Make friends with strangers and invite them in, maybe not to be your 4th husband or wife, but to experience the love and grace of God here. I will eventually talk about “People of Peace” whom God calls you to invite in, but basically they are new friends who welcome you, serve you and are open to your invitation.

Invite them to serve beside you in Agua Prieta or any of our many missions. Invite them to sing next to you. Invite them to learn beside you in a Bible Study. Invite them in. Build relational capital.

Every person this church needs to thrive, absolutely bust at the seams thrive is “out there” waiting to be invited in. Every child, every family, ever Adult Sunday School teacher, every mission helper, and financial supporter is out there waiting to be invited in.

The church is the only organization that exists for people who are not already members. And God has given Vista Church tremendous relational capital to do this.

You are the only church I know who has a person in charge of fellowship on the church council. There is a love here. There is a wideness in God's love here that is so attractive and appealing.

Truly this is a church family of deep relationships that gives people comfort, strength, affirmation and guidance. So do not hesitate to invite others in. The relationships are great here!!! The relational capital is deep and rich and strong.

I am inviting now our Finance Chair Sharon Scanlon to come forward and talk about, in a very practical way, just like St. Paul, regular, proportional giving for our Consecration Sunday Financial Campaign.

Sharon Scanlon