

Experiencing the Joy of Generosity!

The Joy of Sharing God's Blessings

Daily Devotions for Week 3

Monday

Blessings through Giving

Scripture: *"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully"* (2 Corinthians 9:6).

Every command God gives us is for our good, for the building up of the Church, and for the honor and glory of his name. God's command to give, to share with others the resources with which he has blessed us, follows the pattern of command linked to blessing. Throughout Scripture, when a command to give is stated, along with that command is a reference to the rewards that the giver will enjoy. These blessings come in many forms.

"When Jesus was at Bethany...a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, which she poured on his head (and feet)..." (Matthew 26:6). Can we imagine the thoughts going through Jesus' mind as this woman gave such a precious, costly gift to him? His disciples thought it was too expensive, extravagant, and wasteful. Sometimes it takes something out of the ordinary, something impractical to show our gratitude, to offer encouragement. We know Jesus was encouraged. *"She has done a beautiful thing to me,"* He said and then rewarded her with words that did more than compliment; they lifted her up. The incident is recorded for our benefit as well, for her example of encouragement is a lesson for us. Her selfless act of giving resulted in her being encouraged in her faith, even as she had encouraged her Lord.

This account truly illustrates Proverbs 11:25. *"Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered."* As Christians, we should give without reservation, without expectation of receiving anything in return. However, our gracious God, Who loves us so much, thrills to reward us. He has put within us the joy of giving and finding reward in another's pleasure.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, as you are generous with me, grant me the joy of giving. **Amen.**

Tuesday

Giving from the Heart

Scripture: *“It is more blessed to give than to receive”* (Acts 20:35).

In God’s Word, we find many examples of people who gave faithfully, generously, and joyfully. In 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, Paul uses the Macedonians as an example of people who, in their extreme poverty, gave beyond their ability. Because of the famine in Macedonia at the time, they didn’t have a surplus to give from; however, they put God first and trusted in him to provide. Out of overflowing joy, they gave from their hearts.

For another example of giving from the heart, we can look at the account of the Widow’s Offering found in Luke 21:1-4. In this story, the Pharisees gave from their excess and for recognition, whereas the widow quietly dropped in two small copper coins, which was all she had. She gave from the heart. From this sacrificial gift, it is evident that she placed her total trust in God. She was relying on him for her future care. Although the Pharisees gave larger gifts than the widow, they were chastised for having hardened hearts. Even though the widow gave only a small gift, Jesus praised her for her generosity because he knew she gave from a loving heart.

A third illustration of one giving from the heart is Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). When Jesus changed Zacchaeus’ heart, he cheerfully gave away half of what he had and four times to those from whom he had cheated. Before he met Jesus, his money was his god so he hoarded it. With a changed heart, he gave generously and joyfully.

God wants our giving to come from hearts filled with gratitude for who God is and for all that he has done and continues to do for us. As we spend time in God’s Word and participate often in the Lord’s Table, our attitudes toward giving will change from seeing it as an obligation to being a privilege. May God fill our hearts with gratitude so we can experience the joy of giving to our Lord and Savior.

Prayer: Dear Lord, open my eyes to opportunities to share what I’ve been given by you with others.
Amen.

Wednesday

Overcoming Selfishness

Scripture: *“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work”* (2 Corinthians 9:8).

By nature, we are selfish people. At an early age, we voice our selfishness with the word “Mine!” Unfortunately, this selfish attitude often carries forward into our adult years. Many people live with the attitude, “What is mine is mine, and I’m going to keep it.” Because of our selfishness, we look at life in terms of our money, our things, and our achievements. We focus on ourselves and give little thought to those around us.

A selfish attitude is obviously not conducive to giving joyfully. Believing that we need and deserve all we have, we have little interest in giving generously. Because of our sinful, self-oriented natures, we fail to exercise generosity in our daily lives. The Bible depicts our fallen condition: “. . . *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). As self-centered people, we accumulate things for ourselves. When God changes our hearts, though, our selfishness is no longer an obstacle to our giving. With hearts right with God, we acknowledge God as the owner of all things and trust in Jesus rather than our money for our security and salvation. By the working of the Holy Spirit through his Word, God can remove our selfishness.

Prayer: Dear Father in Heaven, I pray for a giving spirit. Enable me to give joyfully and generously. **Amen.**

Thursday

Giving Honors God

Scripture: “You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God” (2 Corinthians 9:11).

God wants us to honor him with the first portion of our incomes. He exhorts us to give in proportion to how we are blessed. He encourages us to give regularly and cheerfully. He wants us to excel in the grace of giving. God tells us that our giving tests the sincerity of our hearts and that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Through our giving, we worship and honor God, and, through our faithful giving, God blesses us.

When we give to God first, he is honored. We dishonor him when we give our leftovers and when we give haphazardly. In Proverbs 3:9 we read, “*Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.*” Because most of us don’t farm for a living, we don’t give the first fruits or the first portion of our crops, but we can give the first fruits of our incomes. In an agricultural society, the first part of the crops was given before farmers had harvested the rest of their crops. They truly trusted that God would provide as they gave the first part to him. God asks us, too, to place our faith and trust in him to provide for us as we give the first part of our incomes as well. God promises his people that he will bless them if they give faithfully and generously. In Malachi, God tells us that he wants to be put to the test by our giving, so he can prove to us that he is faithful in his promises.

Satan, the world, and our flesh tell us we should spend our money on ourselves and give only minimally, if at all. As you prayerfully consider what you will give, ask God for a joyful and generous heart.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your faithfulness to me. Help me show my faithfulness through my giving. **Amen.**

Friday

The Spiritual Discipline of Giving

Scripture: *“On the first day of each week, each of you is to put something aside...”* (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Jesus said, *“It is more blessed to give than to receive”* (Acts 20:35). We receive much joy from giving. Through the discipline of faithful giving, we give witness to our relationship with the Lord. In our giving, we acknowledge Who God is and what he has done for us.

Giving requires discipline. Discipline is the key for success in every area of life. God’s people become more faithful in their giving through spiritual discipline. With God’s help, we can develop a discipline of systematic giving. Putting God first in the managing and giving of our money is a part of the stewardship journey of faith.

In practicing the spiritual discipline of giving, we learn to make giving a priority. Jesus said, *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Matthew 6:21). Money goes to what we love most or, in Matthew’s words, to where our hearts are. By making out the first check to the Lord’s work, we affirm that Jesus is our treasure. Our gifts represent our love and gratitude to him. We also learn to give cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7), not begrudging the offerings we bring to the Lord. We learn to be faithful in our giving, making it a priority, and providing consistency in our stewardship lifestyle (1 Corinthians 16:2). By giving our money, we break the grip that money can have on us, freeing us to be devoted, instead, to our Lord.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, forgive me when I’ve not given faithfully. Grant me a giving spirit. **Amen.**