

Daily Devotions to Help You "Give Joyfully and Generously" as You Live the Lifestyle of a Faithful Steward

Monday

Blessings through Giving

Scripture Reading:

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke 6:38).

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.

While Jesus was in Bethany . . . a woman came to Him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on His head as He was reclining at the table. When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to Me. I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her" (Matthew 26:6-13).

What an uplifting account this is! Can we imagine the thoughts going through Jesus' mind as this woman gave such a precious, costly gift to Him? Expensive, extravagant, wasteful, some thought, and vehemently expressed their

thoughts. 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. *"A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."* As Christians, we should give without reservation, without expectation of receiving anything in return. 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: Lord, I ask that Your Holy Spirit would change me into a giving and generous person who wants to worship You with my life and blessings. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Tuesday

Glorifying God through Giving

Scripture Reading:

"He who sacrifices thank offerings honors Me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God" (Psalm 50:23).

Our chief purpose in life is to glorify God. We glorify God by how we live our lives and by giving Him our thank offerings or gifts. Gifts given in faith and thankfulness honor and please

God. In fact, through God's Word, we learn, "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). It is through faith that we as believers give our gifts of gratitude, and it is by grace that God gives His gracious gifts to us.

In Psalm 50:9-12 we read, "I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is Mine and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is Mine, and all that is in it." The world and everything in it belongs to God so He has no need of our gifts. However, He has chosen to use us as His channels to others. We are God's hands, feet, and mouth. Through us, He feeds the hungry, gives water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, shelter to the homeless, and care for the handicapped.

God invites us to join in the work of missions, not because He needs us but because He wants to give us the privilege of working with Him. If we choose to ignore God's invitation, we are the poorer for it. Either with or without us, God's kingdom will move forward.

When we give our offerings to God through our churches, we need to remember that the only gifts that are pleasing to Him are those gifts that are given out of faith and love.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for calling me to be Your steward. Use me as Your instrument to reach out to others. Help me to hold onto the material things You've given me loosely so I can give generously. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.

Wednesday

How Much to Give?

Scripture Reading:

"For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their

own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will" (2 Corinthians 8:3-5).

"How much should I give?" we ask ourselves. Unfortunately, from our selfish perspective, we may really be asking: "How little can I give and still call it a gift?" Giving is not something that comes naturally to most of us. By nature, we are selfish people who are interested only in the accumulation of more and more things for our own comfort and enjoyment. Without a relationship with Jesus, our giving is nominal at best.

In our Scripture reading, Paul used the giving of the Macedonians as a model for the people in Corinth as the Corinthians considered their gifts to the distressed Christians in Jerusalem. The Macedonians pleaded for the privilege of sharing. They did not know the people in Jerusalem personally, but they wanted to help fellow believers. The Macedonians gave sacrificially beyond their ability. They didn't give their leftovers or what they could afford. They gave to the extent that it impacted their lifestyle.

The Macedonians gave because they were new creations in Christ. Paul wrote, "They gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will" (verse 5). Giving came naturally after God had control of their hearts. As we spend time in God's Word and participate regularly in the Sacraments, God will grant us hearts that will plead for the opportunity to give.

Prayer: Good and gracious Lord, grant me the same passion to give as You gave to the Macedonians. Help me to be eager to use my gifts and resources to extend Your kingdom and to share with others. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.

Thursday

Proportionate Giving

Scripture Readings:

"A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord" (Leviticus 27:30).

"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income . . ." (1 Corinthians 16:2).

From the beginning, God has given us all we need for our physical and spiritual lives. God is the creator, owner, and provider of all things. God gives us 100 percent, whereas we are called to return only a portion of our blessings to Him. One of the first references in Scripture to proportionate giving was when Abram gave Melchizedek, the King of Salem, a tenth of his harvest (Genesis 14:17-20). In Genesis 28:10-22, Jacob promised to give God a tenth. These verses show that Abram and Jacob gave the tenth before God made it a requirement.

Proportionate or percentage giving gives all Christians an equal privilege and opportunity to share in extending God's kingdom. Since God blesses us in different ways and amounts, the sizes of our gifts will vary, but God directs us all to give in proportion to our blessings. *"For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have" (2 Corinthians 8:12).* The person giving \$100 from \$1,000 of income is just as faithful as someone giving \$10,000 with earnings of \$100,000. We can give proportionately whether we are rich or poor.

We are able to give proportionately by faith. The proportionate percentage we give will be determined more by our spiritual maturity than by our financial ability. To give generously is a leap of faith, and it shows our trust and dependence on the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for being so generous with me, especially for the giving of Your one

and only Son. Help me to show my gratitude to You through my giving and serving. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Friday

Warnings about Money

Scripture Readings:

"Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless" (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you' " (Hebrews 13:5).

In 1 Timothy, Paul alerted his spiritual son Timothy about the consequences of loving money. *"People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Timothy 6:9-10).* Paul warned his readers about the danger of money becoming our security and god. If we are obsessed with money, it becomes our love and treasure, and our thoughts and activities will become preoccupied with having more of it. When money has a hold on us, it is difficult to give money to God and others because we feel compelled to hoard it rather than give it. The only way we can overcome money's power to possess us is to give it away freely and cheerfully. Then we will see money as a tool that God gives us to provide for our needs and for the help and support of others who are in need.

Sounds easy, right? Just give your money and be cheerful about it, too. As we know all too well, we're all too much like Zacchaeus who treasured his money. Zacchaeus, however, had an encounter with Christ—an encounter that

brought about a total transformation of his thoughts, desires, and actions. The same Savior Who changed Zacchaeus so completely can turn us into generous givers as well.

Jesus said, *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (Matthew 6:19-21). These words from Jesus tell us that our hearts will follow our treasure. When God is our treasure, money no longer has control over our lives. God will open our eyes so we can see opportunities where our money can be used to further God's kingdom.

Prayer: Lord, Your Word warns me about the attraction that money can have on me. Keep money from becoming overly important to me. Help me to see money as a tool that can be used to extend Your kingdom and to help others. In Your precious name I pray. Amen.

Saturday

Grow in the Grace of Giving

Scripture Reading:

"My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to My name, because My name will be great among the nations . . . But you profane it . . . you say, 'What a burden!' and you sniff at it contemptuously . . ." (Malachi 1:11-13).

Instead of being cheerful about giving, we may complain about giving our money to God through our churches. This is nothing new, as we see from reading the passage above from Malachi. We must keep three facts foremost in our thoughts: All we have is God's, not ours (Psalm 24:1); God loves a cheerful giver (2

Corinthians 9:7); and He is very displeased with grumblers and poor givers (Malachi 1-3).

What God wants is that we give **from** the largesse He has first given us, not **to** a budget. He has given us a plan for giving. Scripture tells us to . . .

1. give to God **first**. *"Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well"* (Matthew 6:33). This is Jesus' promise: Seek Me first, and I'll take care of all your needs. St. Paul tells us how to work this out in our daily lives: *"On the first day of every week . . . set aside a sum of money in keeping with [your] income . . ."* (1 Corinthians 16:2).

2. give a predetermined amount each week. As we read in the passage above, we are asked to give according to our incomes, not according to what we don't have.

3. give generously. Old Testament believers were required to tithe. As New Testament believers under grace, we are free to give **beyond** the tithe, free to give generously, free to give sacrificially. Jesus said, *"Freely you have received, freely give"* (Matthew 10:8).

4. be faithful. Stewards are required to be faithful (1 Corinthians 4:2). Faith sets the standard for giving.

By grace, God will change us into cheerful and generous givers.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, You have given so generously to me. Forgive me when I fail to thank You and take Your many blessings for granted. Grant me a giving and generous heart. In Your name I pray. Amen.