

Chad Hester

SESSION 4: Following a Gracious Example – Giving

“If there be so certain and glorious a rest for the saints, why is there no more industrious seeking after it? One would think, if a man did once hear of such unspeakable glory to be obtained, and believed what he heard to be true, he should be transported with the vehemency of his desire after it, and should almost forget to eat and drink, and should care for nothing else, and speak of and inquire after nothing else, but how to get this treasure. And yet people who hear of it daily, and profess to believe it as a fundamental article of their faith, do as little mind it, or labour for it, as if they had never heard of any such thing, or did not believe one word they hear.” –Richard Baxter

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” –Acts 2:42-47

“I have held many things in my hands and I have lost them all. But whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess.” –Martin Luther

I. GIVING – THE MEASURE OF THE HEART

- RECOGNIZING WHAT WE HAVE IS SEEING WHAT WE'VE BEEN GIVEN
 - *“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” –Romans 5:6–11*

- SEEING OUR GAIN

"I value all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity." –John Wesley

- LOST SIGHT OF OUR ETERNAL REWARDS

- *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* –Mt. 6:19-21 (see also Luke 12:32-34)
- "Jesus adds another insight in Luke 12 that is not present in Matthew 6. Not only is heavenly treasure not subject to thieves and moths, not only will the heavenly money belt not wear out, but there is 'a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted'... On earth, his mother might see his good deed and bake him a cake, which he would gratefully eat. But then it would be gone. But in heaven we can enjoy and use our rewards, our heavenly treasures— whatever they may be—without ever exhausting them." –Randy Alcorn

- REFOCUSING OUR MOTIVATION

- *"Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist. When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven."* –Proverbs 23:4-5
- "What a motivation this is when we feel our labors are unappreciated by others! We can be freed from the burden of concern about whether others overlook our deeds, because God assures us that he will not overlook them. When we understand what it means to be promised a reward from God, any prospect of reward from others—or any bitterness for not being rewarded by them—will shrink in comparison." –Randy Alcorn

II. GIVING OUR FINANCES

"I continually find it necessary to guard against that natural love of wealth and grandeur which prompts us always, when we come to apply our general doctrine to our own case, to claim an exception." –William Wilberforce

- TITHE AS A STARTING POINT (from *SGCL Members Class* written by Jeff Purswell)
 - In the Old Testament, God's people were to give a tithe, or the first tenth, of their income to God. This practice predated the giving of the Law (Gen. 14:20; Gen. 28:22), and was later formalized in the Law of Moses for the maintenance of the

MONEY: THE MEASURE OF THE HEART

- temple and provision for the priests and Levites who served there (Lev. 27:30-32; Deut. 14:22-24).
- The Old Testament practice of tithing embodies many principles carried forth into the New Testament: consistent giving, giving to support the worship and mission of God's people, giving to support those called to minister to God's people, and giving to care for the oppressed.
 - In the New Testament, what it means to obey God's law is broadened and intensified due to the transforming work of the Spirit in light of Christ's work on the cross (for example, hatred is likened to murder – Matt. 5:21-22; lust is likened to adultery – Matt. 5:27-28). In the same way, our consistent giving is not merely to be thought of as “paying our dues,” but should flow from the giving of our entire selves to God. It is a reminder of God's ownership of us.
 - Giving to support the work of the church remains an expectation of believers. The work of stewardship includes:
 - *Supporting individuals:* “There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.” (Acts 4:34-35)
 - *Supporting church's leaders:* “Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.” (1 Cor. 9:13-14. See also 1 Tim. 5:17-18; Gal 6:6; Ex. 23:19; 1 Cor. 16:2)
 - *Supporting the extension of the gospel:* “And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.” (Phil. 4:15-16)
 - The practice of tithing embodies important biblical guidelines and provides a helpful starting point for regular giving to the church. Believers are commanded to financially support the local church where they receive care and training. We desire the members of the church to rejoice in the privilege of sharing in God's work here at Sovereign Grace Church of Louisville.
 - “Money can be a tool of Christ. But it must be used as such now, before our period of service on earth ends. There will be no second chance to use the money for Christ later.”
–Randy Alcorn

III. GIVING OUR TIME AND GIFTS

“It is my happiness that I have served Him who never fails to reward His servants to the full extent of His promise.” –John Calvin

- A holistic approach to giving – we’re not just spending money to advance the Kingdom of God!
- We steward and generously give in every category of our lives – always looking to the good of others and the glory of God!
 - *“Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.”* –Romans 12:9-13
- TIME
 - Serving: SGCL Kids, set up and tear down, greeting, community groups, Sunday class, kid play dates, opening your home, etc.
 - Caring: praying for one another, mentoring and accountability, Bible studies
- GIFTS
 - *“And there are a variety of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”* – 1 Cor. 12:6-7
 - Hospitality, teaching, mercy, administration, prophecy, etc.