

Discipling Grace-filled Givers

Prayer

Lord, help us to acknowledge that You are the source of everything good in our lives. Thank You for Your generosity toward us, demonstrated especially by the gift of Your Son, Jesus. Grant us loving and thankful hearts so we might give freely to You through our church. Bless this study as we learn what it means to be grace-filled givers. In Your precious name we pray. Amen.

Theme verse: *“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).*

The Apostle Paul Teaches and Encourages Giving

After his conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul lived a faithful and fruitful life of a giving steward. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he had much to say in his letters about the giving aspect of stewardship. His writings help shape our thoughts and attitudes regarding giving. Paul challenges the Corinthian Church to be responsible as givers. *“On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come” (1 Corinthians 16:2).*

1. What three points does the above verse make?

- 1
- 2
- 3



Paul’s Warnings about the Love of Money

Paul also warned his friend Timothy about the consequences of loving money. *“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs” (1 Timothy 6:9-10).*

When money has a hold on us, it is nearly impossible to give money to God and others because we would rather hoard it for our own pleasure than give it. We can confront money’s power to possess us by giving 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.

2. What is Paul’s main point here about money?

3. What are some consequences of loving money?

4. Read Luke 18:18-27. What was the Rich Young Ruler’s problem?

5. Read 2 Corinthians 8:8. What is the meaning of this verse?

6. Is giving an obligation or an opportunity for you? How has your attitude changed in the past few years?

7. Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-7. The Apostle Paul used the giving of the Macedonians as an example of faithful giving to the people in Corinth. What did Paul say about the giving of the Macedonians?

True Motivation for Giving

The announcement is made that a family has lost its home to a fire. All their belongings are gone - the furniture and appliances along with the photographs and scrapbooks. People eagerly open their wallets, "giving joyfully and generously" and often beyond their ability in order to provide for the needs of this family. This is indeed what Christ would have us do. Scripture is full of admonitions to give to those in need (See James 2:14-17 and 1 John 3:17-18).

Unfortunately, these same givers can be very frugal with their weekly offerings. They are "need givers" rather than "love givers." When need is our motivation for giving, we may actually limit ourselves in our giving, because, once we perceive that the need has been met, we restrict our giving.



God, who does not need our gifts, still asks us to give them. He tells us, "I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills" (Psalm 50:9-10). He doesn't ask us to give because He needs our money. He asks us to give our gifts in response to who He is and what He has done and continues to do for us. Why? It is for our sakes so that we might experience the joy and fulfillment of giving. By grace, we are enabled to give faithfully and generously.

When faith, love, and gratitude for God become the motivating forces behind our giving, we will find ourselves giving joyfully, freely, cheerfully. Week after week, we will give our offerings faithfully, writing out that check before we pay our bills.

Love and trust motivated the poor widow in Luke 21:1-4 to give her last two coins to Jesus. She gave from her heart rather than to a need. Even though the widow gave only a small gift, Jesus praised her for her generosity because she gave all that she had. For Christians, giving is not an option. Love compels us to give.



Testimony through Giving

In addition to the joy we receive through our giving, God can use our giving as an encouragement for others to give. When others give, they will also receive God's special blessing, which comes from honoring Him with their lives and resources. For the most part, our giving is a private matter between the Lord and us. However, there are times and occasions when it is proper for God's people to share with others how God has worked in their lives to enable their generosity and the blessings they receive through their giving. Such testimonies can encourage others to grow in their giving as they begin to trust in and depend on the Lord.

A giving testimony can have the same effect that a pebble has when it is thrown into a quiet pond of water. After the splash, waves emanate from the pebble's initial point of impact. Similarly, a giving testimony can have an immediate impact upon the hearts and minds of those who hear, and, like the waves that move outward through the water, the giving testimony can also have a far-reaching effect on the attitudes of other believers toward their financial stewardship, causing those who hear that message to act upon the Spirit's prompting to do likewise. It's easy to see how the gifts and testimony of one person can encourage a generous spirit in many others when the person who gives the gift does not bring honor to himself, but gives the glory to God.

In Scripture, we see how God has used the testimony of people faithful in their giving to encourage the giving of others. In the book of Acts, we read of Barnabas' gift of property. *"Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet"* (Acts 4:36-37). His gift was an encouragement for others to give. Among the believers, none lacked food or shelter, because those with surpluses were encouraged to share with those in need. Our giving can be a witness to our families, church, and, potentially, to our neighborhoods. People will pay more attention to what we do with our money than with many other areas of our lives. May God grant us His grace to give, so that our giving can be a testimony of our faith.

8. Why is giving more a spiritual decision than a financial one?

9. Read Proverbs 3:9. What are you directed to do?

10. Read 1 Chronicles 29:10-18. What does David's prayer about giving say to you?

11. It has been said, "The mind grows by what it takes in; the heart grows by what it gives out. What is this phrase saying?"

12. What kind of giving attitude did the following people have and what portion did they give:
 - Widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8-16)
 - Mary (Matthew 26:6-13)
 - Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)

13. Read 2 Corinthians 8:7. What does it mean to excel in the grace of giving?

Prayer

Lord, thank You for Your generosity to us. Help us to be generous toward You and others. Grant us faith to grow in the grace of giving. May we see our money as a tool to use to extend Your kingdom and help those in need. In Your precious name we pray. Amen.