

righteousness

stewardship
heart
future
beautiful

reward

willingly

freedom

abundance

Master

pray

thankful

cheerful

give

honest

SweetSmellingSacrifice

attachments
kindness

offering

treasure

planning

humility

blessing

WellDone

talents
money

service

riches

wisdom

love

tithe

trustworthy
God'sKingdom

resources
joy

wealth

OPEN

faithfulness

generous

October 2

1 Chronicles 29:1-4. Then King David turned to the entire assembly and said, “My son Solomon, whom God has clearly chosen as the next king of Israel, is still young and inexperienced. The work ahead of him is enormous, for the Temple he will build is not for mere mortals—it is for the LORD God himself! Using every resource at my command, I have gathered as much as I could for building the Temple of my God. Now there is enough gold, silver, bronze, iron, and wood, as well as great quantities of onyx, other precious stones, costly jewels, and all kinds of fine stone and marble.” And now, because of my devotion to the Temple of my God, I am giving all of my own private treasures of gold and silver to help in the construction. This is in addition to the building materials I have already collected for his holy Temple. I am donating more than 112 tons of gold from Ophir and 262 tons of refined silver to be used for overlaying the walls of the buildings and for the other gold and silver work to be done by the craftsmen. Now then, who will follow my example and give offerings to the LORD today?”

In this passage of scripture, we see that King David was resolute and passionate about the construction of a temple of worship for the glory of Almighty God. As the leader of the Israelites, he has set aside construction materials for the great structure, but he knows that the project must involve every person in community-wide sacrificial giving. Then King David makes an extraordinary announcement that he is committing a large part of his own treasure to the building campaign. After he sets a leadership example of his own sacrificial gift, he asks the Israelites a question, “Who will follow my example and give offerings to the LORD today?”

In Nova’s Open Campaign we are following a similar leadership pattern. Many Nova leaders are prayerfully asking, “What will be my sacrificial gift to the Open Campaign?” On Celebration Sunday, November 5, 2017 we will humbly and joyfully announce what the collective leadership gift is to kick-off our Open Campaign!

Dear God, we ask that you would enlarge our faith and encourage our hearts to commit to a sacrificial gift for the Open Campaign. Amen

--Dean Mayeda

October 3

1 Chronicles 29:6-9. Then the family leaders, the leaders of the tribes of Israel, the generals and captains of the army, and the king's administrative officers all gave willingly. For the construction of the Temple of God, they gave about 188 tons of gold, 10,000 gold coins, 375 tons of silver, 675 tons of bronze, and 3,750 tons of iron. They also contributed numerous precious stones, which were deposited in the treasury of the house of the LORD under the care of Jehiel, a descendant of Gershon. The people rejoiced over the offerings, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD, and King David was filled with joy.

The above experience is a great example of the exhortation given in II Corinthians 9:7, "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." According to this passage, as a Christian one's attitude about the giving of our resources to the Lord's work is everything. This is especially true of leaders because they set an example for others to follow.

Actions speak louder than words. That was certainly true of the attitude and action of Israel's leadership as they prepared to build the Lord's temple. They led by example. As Nova Church leaders, we should take very seriously the divine privilege we have as leaders and the role we have in setting an example in godly living and stewardship of the resources God has given us. Let's continue to join together in praying for one another.

O God, my Father, thank You for the leadership you have given us at Nova Church. I pray for them. Give them wisdom, faith, joy and unity as they lead us in this great task called The Open Campaign. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

--Ron Graff

October 4

I Chronicles 29:9-13. The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord. David the king also rejoiced greatly. David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, Lord, the God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name."

Everything that David and the Israelites are doing here is for the Lord. They are giving generously and abundantly and it is coming from sincere hearts. They see a God who is worthy of our utmost praise. He deserves everything we have and more.

What better cause could we give to? We give to the eternal God of the universe and we give to achieve his plans and purposes. We give to the one who gives us life and sustains our every breath. What would we have if not for him? We praise him and give him our thanks. Spend time reflecting on who God is and what he has done. What has he created? What has he given you? What is God doing in the world?

Lord, thank you. You are my God and King—ruler of the universe. I owe you everything. Show me your wonders, your might and strength. May your reputation be known in the South Bay.

--Thomas Whiteside

October 5

1 Chronicles 29:14-18. “But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. We are foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. Lord, the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep these desires and thoughts in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you.

How beautiful it is to give with a humble heart, and yet how difficult it is at times. For many of us we feel a sense of pride when we give from what we have; this feeling may be overt, but it can also be subtle to the point of not even realizing it's happening. While I'm sure most, if not all, of us have worked hard and diligently for what we have, we cannot lose sight of the fact that all good things originate from God (James 1:17). David even ups the ante and reminds the reader that “our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope” apart from God. David reminds us of how utterly lost we would truly be without God. Therefore, when we give from what we have, let us not do so with a prideful heart, whether overt or subtle. Rather let us be thankful for all the resources God has blessed us with and likewise be thankful that from these blessings we can bless others. When we do so we take away from this idea of, ‘Wow, look at what I did’ and turn it to, ‘Wow, look at what God has done, is doing, and continues to do.’

Father, thank you for your many blessings day after day; I ask for forgiveness when I take your blessings for granted. I pray that you would help me have a cheerful heart when I give to you and to others, but also help me not to twist that cheerfulness into pride. Instead help me to remember that all good things, including all that I have, truly originates from you. In all things may I remain thankful and humble.

--Garrett Koch

October 6

Philippians 4:15-20. As you know, you Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I first brought you the Good News and then traveled on from Macedonia. No other church did this. Even when I was in Thessalonica you sent help more than once. I don't say this because I want a gift from you. Rather, I want you to receive a reward for your kindness. At the moment I have all I need—and more! I am generously supplied with the gifts you sent me with Epaphroditus. They are a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God. And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.

The words still ringing in my head after reading these verses are: “No other church did this.” What a beautiful thought to imagine Nova living into this truth and being a church that acted and gave in an unthinkable way. Paul says these things without blame. He is not blaming the other churches that did not help him; however, he is recognizing that the Philippians were the ones equipped to best meet the needs of Paul. Of all the churches in the world, there is only one church that has the address of 4345 Emerald. There is only one church that has the exact unique perspective that our church does. There is only one church that daily sees the needs of the surrounding community in the neighboring houses and businesses. I do not know about you, but this is deeply inspiring to me. Just like the Philippians, together as Nova we have the opportunity to move and give in such a way that God has specifically and uniquely equipped us for. Do you ever feel like you don't have enough to give? Do you ever feel like your house is not big enough to invite others in? Do you ever feel like you don't have the words to say? I know I do, but the Philippians remind us that all it takes to give in a life-giving way is to have an open heart to move in the way the Lord calls us to.

Lord, we thank you for the way you have put it on our hearts to better serve and reach those in our communities that might not yet know you. We pray that you can continue to move in our hearts and lead us in the way you would most delight in. Amen.

--Kelli Capel

October 9

2 Corinthians 9:6. Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop.

My aunt and uncle have owned a fruit farm in the Gorman area since 1978. They have about 45 apple trees and 35 pear trees on three acres. Every Spring, for the last 30+ years, my family has helped prepare for the coming harvest. We prune, cut off dead branches and pick up the brambles (clippings). All the hard work pays off because each Labor Day weekend we are blessed to pick bags and bags of fruit--as many apples and pears as we can carry home in our cars!

However, not all the fruit survive to harvest. A lot can happen to a fruit tree. From the weather (drought), to insects (wasps), to four-legged creatures (squirrels) and--even worse--two-legged creatures (man) poaching the helpless fruit trees. But because my aunt and uncle planted so many trees, the harvest is still plentiful year after year. Imagine if only five apple and only five pear trees were planted? We would be lucky to take one bag of fruit home.

This is how the apostle Paul was trying to encourage the people of Corinth. Those who give generously to God's church, like planting generously, will be generously provided for by God. Just like a generous crop! My aunt and uncle are blessed almost every year with more fruit than they know what to do with. Therefore, like our Lord, they bless family and friends with home grown, sweet, organic, God-ripened fruit!

Lord, my prayer is that You would give me the faith to joyously give generously to Nova Community Church's Open Campaign. In turn, You will generously provide the needs of Nova, and the faithful, loving people of Nova can bless our South Bay community and beyond. Amen.

--Raul Chipeco

October 10

2 Corinthians 9:7. 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.

God wants the best of us; he doesn't want what is leftover. I know this isn't always easy with the business of life getting in the way. It can be a daily struggle. God isn't concerned with our outside appearance, but He is concerned with our heart. God loves us and wants to be in relationship with us. He wants us to put him in the center of everything we do. If we are doing *all* that we do for Him, then *all* of our intentions are based on Him and what He desires for our lives. Then as we are serving, giving, and loving one another, it's *all* being done with a cheerful and grateful heart honoring our Lord and Savior. If you are struggling or just want to thank God, He is always listening and waiting for us to reach out to Him.

Dear Heavenly Father, You know my heart's desires. If you find that my heart is hardened, please soften it so I know your will for me. I want to give you my all, cheerfully and with a grateful heart. In Jesus' precious name I pray, Amen.

--Rebecca Hester

October 11

2 Corinthians 9:8. 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 good work.

What are some of the blessings that God has given you? Perhaps it is your current job, your home, your time, your faith life, or any other resource that you have. God has given us every good thing that is in our lives. How often do you take the time to recognize these blessings as gifts from God? If we do not take time to recognize what we've been given, it will be difficult for us to give of that abundance to others. God has not only given you these blessings because he loves you, but he also wants to equip you to be a blessing to others. The word "abound" means "to be rich or well supplied". God has supplied you with all that you need to accomplish the good works he is setting before you.

Take time to consider a good work that Jesus is doing in your life. What is Jesus teaching you through this good work? How can you share what you are learning about Jesus with others?

Father God, give me eyes to see the good works that you are doing in my life. Please give me boldness to share what I'm learning with others so that they may also experience your blessings. Amen.

--Coral Taluban

October 12

2 Corinthians 9:10-11. For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.

Paul describes a process that we can expect to go through as Christians whom God is making into generous conduits of His blessings. First, He will provide resources. What are the resources that God has given you? These could be natural abilities, skills, opportunities, social background, job, money and material things, etc. Next, we can expect that He will increase our resources. Sticking with the analogy of the farmer, we should also expect that we play a role in this step. Which is the resource that is most important to who you are? Which is the one that you have really seen grow and that you measure your 'success' by? This is probably the one that God is wanting to use to bless others. The way to transform it into a spiritual resource is to offer it to God, prayerfully, diligently, and cheerfully developing it and watching it grow. Take responsibility for the gifts God has entrusted to you, asking Him to grow within you a vision for how you can use your skills, possessions, and spiritual gifts to pour out blessing on others. Pay attention to stories of how other people are sharing their resources and talents with others, and be sure to talk with others around you about how you are responding to God's call to turn your resources into gifts for which other people will thank God.

God, I offer back to you the resources you have entrusted to me. I repent for the times I have squandered them on myself or have neglected to develop them so that they can become a blessing to others. I pray expectantly for this great harvest of generosity that Paul talks about.

--Amy Martin

October 13

2 Corinthians 9:12-15. So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God. As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God. For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you. Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!

Giving goes against our sinful desires. As humans, we want to consume and receive, not share or give away. The irony is, when we give to God, He provides even more. Not only do we receive more than we gave, but when we give to God, we are also tangibly demonstrating our faith and gratitude in Him. Earlier in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 we see that, “Whoever sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously”. The Lord loves a cheerful giver, and throughout scripture we can see all of the times the Lord gave to others. Giving to the Lord is not meant to prove our worth or earn a reward; rather, it is an intentional practice in which we show our trust in Him. Giving to the Lord is not always an easy decision. The Lord asks for our most valuable resources, time, and money, to see how much we are willing to trust in Him. But think of this: when you reach the end of your life here on this earth, will you regret giving too much money or too much time to God’s Kingdom? I don’t think so.

Lord, help me to give joyfully. Let us ask how much we can give, instead of how little. Let us trust and love you so much that we cannot help but desire You and Your kingdom.

--Lance Capel

October 16

Luke 6:38. Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.

When God urges me to give my money, I can respond by picking up **earplugs**, a **teaspoon**, or a **shovel**. The **earplugs** help me ignore His voice. Fearful of losing what's mine, I catalog the current and upcoming expenses. By 'doing the math' and counting the cost, I can drown out His voice and excuse myself for giving nothing. However, the tighter I grasp my possessions with closed fists, the more I prevent God from pouring His blessings into my hands. There's no trust, no love, and no joy!

Now, that **teaspoon** comes in handy when I'm 'guilt-giving'. Reluctantly, I look at my limited resources and scoop up a teaspoon of help for those in need. So, God responds in the same fashion! He reaches into His vast storehouse of blessing, scoops up a *teaspoonful*, and sprinkles it over me! Trust, love, and joy? . . . They barely fill a teaspoon!

Of course, the **shovel** is God's tool of choice! I am free to give lavishly, knowing that our God has given everything - even His life - for me! All I possess was given to me by God. If He wants me to give it away, I can be assured that He will out-give me, supplying my need and heaping on more blessings than I can contain! That's what our God does! That's who He is! And, that's how He wants me to live. Let's trust Him fully, love extravagantly, and enter into the joy of our Master!

*What a joy it is to give cheerfully,
To bless His servants doing His will!
We give from the bounty the King has given,
Fearless and free - by His Spirit driven,
He smiles, and His joy overflows from heaven,
When we empty the cup, He delights to refill!*

--Rick D'Amico

October 17

Luke 16:9-12. Here's the lesson: Use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends. Then, when your possessions are gone, they will welcome you to an eternal home. If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? And if you are not faithful with other people's things, why should you be trusted with things of your own?

What is your most prized possession? Have you ever considered what it would be like to use valuable materials, wealth, and relationships for the Kingdom of God? We live in a society that constantly tells us that more is better, and that our resources and wealth are for our own personal gain. Jesus is challenging his followers to consider using their wealth in ways that will have eternal implications. And that might require us to take risks in generosity.

Jesus doesn't ask us to completely give up our wealth, but instead invites us to think differently about how we use our wealth. The way we use our wealth and our ability to be trusted points to our character. It doesn't matter whether the wealth and resources that we have are considered big or small. Jesus wants us to be faithful to use what is right in front of us, both spiritually and physically.

What are the things that God has entrusted you with, and how is He inviting you to use them to bless another person in your life?

Father God, help me to be faithful and trustworthy with the wealth and resources you have given me. Teach me how to use my spiritual and physical wealth in ways to impact my loved ones, coworkers, neighbors, and communities. Amen.

--Coral Taluban

October 18

Luke 16:13-15. "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other, you cannot serve both God and Money." The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight."

The word translated *serve* comes from the Greek word *douleuo* meaning to be a slave to something, to be in bondage. It is one who belongs body and soul to his or her master. Their purpose and will is to obey their master's dictates. Their master has absolute possession of them. Jesus said that being a slave to money is BAD NEWS. Being a slave to God is GOOD NEWS. There is no middle ground. You can't have it both ways. God knows how the power of money can take His place in our lives.

How can you tell if you are a slave to your money? The Life Application Bible has some ideas:

Do you think and worry about money frequently?

Do you give up doing what you should do or would like to do in order to make more money?

Do you spend a great deal of your time caring for your possessions?

Is it hard for you to give money away?

Are you in debt?

Bottom line: You can't be devoted to God and money at the same time. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Luke 12:34)

My gracious Lord, money is an integral part of life. My prayer is that I will never allow it to enslave me. So search me, O God, and see if there is any portion of my heart that is a slave to money. Cleanse me, Lord. I only want to serve You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

---Ron Graff

October 19

Luke 19:12-19. Jesus said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.' But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' 'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' The second came and said, 'Sir your mina has earned five more.' His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.'

This parable is actually based on a true story. When Herod the Great died, his son, Herod Archalous traveled to Rome in order to be made the puppet king of Israel. The Jews hated him, so they sent a delegation to Rome to oppose his nomination. (He was eventually made ruler, though with the title "Tetrarch" rather than "King" as a small compromise to the Jews.) In the meantime, Archalous left his servants in Palestine to increase his wealth by buying businesses and farms and managing them to generate income. It was a very difficult situation for them to be in. The general population was antagonistic toward anyone who was loyal to Archalous. If he failed to be made king it was very possible that his property would be taken and his servants killed or left destitute. Only those servants with faith that he would return as king had the courage to publicly invest and work on his behalf. How we use money is a clear indication of our level of faith. If we believe that Jesus is the King of the world who will someday return to judge and rule, and if we believe that we are his servants who have been entrusted with money for the expansion of his kingdom, it will greatly affect how we use our finances.

Lord, grant me the grace to remember that you are the King of the world and you are returning soon. Remind me that I can't take earthly treasures with me when I die, but I can invest them in eternal treasures that will last forever.

--Dave Martin

October 20

Luke 19:20-26. But the third servant brought back only the original amount of money and said, 'Master, I hid your money and kept it safe. I was afraid because you are a hard man to deal with, taking what isn't yours and harvesting crops you didn't plant.' 'You wicked servant!' the king roared. 'Your own words condemn you. If you knew that I'm a hard man who takes what isn't mine and harvests crops I didn't plant, why didn't you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.' Then, turning to the others standing nearby, the king ordered, 'Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one who has ten pounds.' 'But, master,' they said, 'he already has ten pounds!' 'Yes,' the king replied, 'and to those who use well what they are given, even more will be given. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away.'

Yesterday, we saw that the servants of Archalous were in a difficult spot while he was gone seeking the kingship. The Jews hated him, therefore, if he failed to be made king it was very possible that his property would be taken and his servants killed or left destitute. Only those servants with faith that he would return as king had the courage to publicly invest and work on his behalf. It's clear that the third servant in this parable did not have faith that his master would return, otherwise he would have tried to obey him. Instead, he figured that since his master was not coming back, it would be foolish to work hard for him. He simply buried the money on the off chance that if his master did return, he could not be accused of stealing. When his master returned and asked why he had not obeyed his instructions, the servant made things worse for himself by saying that he didn't trust that his master would let him keep a portion of whatever profits he generated. In other words, he didn't trust that his master would reward him for being faithful. It's easy to view this third servant as incredibly foolish, but this is the attitude that professing Christians are demonstrating toward Jesus when we refuse to invest the money he gave us into his kingdom. We either don't think it's likely that he is actually the King of the world who will hold us accountable for how we spend money, or, we doubt that he will reward us in a way that makes financial obedience and sacrifice in this life worth it. We must take his warning at the end of

this passage very seriously. Those who demonstrated the reality of their faith in Jesus by investing in his kingdom will be given much, while those who demonstrated their lack of faith in Jesus by not investing in his kingdom will lose everything.

Lord, help me to take your warning in this passage seriously. I want to have genuine faith in you that is demonstrated by my actions. Help me to invest in your kingdom and live for you as your servant, not for myself. I know that those who try to save their lives will lose them, but those who lose their lives for you will save them.

--Dave Martin

October 23

1 Timothy 6:17-19. Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Paul is saying we need to demand this of ourselves: to not be proud, but to put all our trust in God, not in earthly possessions. Having riches makes us susceptible to the evils of pride; as we are shown through Jesus' example, we need to act with humility--the opposite of pride. Simply put, humility is a complete and utter dependence on God. C.S. Lewis writes, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less." These are direct commands to all with riches and resources: to use the blessings God has given us to do good, to be rich in good works, and to trust God will provide. I used to have trouble praying for myself. I would pray for everyone else, essentially saying, "Take care of everyone else, God; I got me." I have also stopped myself from giving more of my money in the past, because I thought I was in control. I justified my actions by saying I would do more later when I was in a better position: a brand new car, a bigger place to live, a promotion at work. How much more did I need to be happy? Ask yourselves that, and you'll find you'll most likely want more: more money in your 401k, higher annual salary, an upgraded home. God is telling us directly in this scripture that those who give richly will be able to experience true life.

One day we will all stand before God, and He will ask: "This is what I gave you, what did you do with it? How did you use your time? How did you use your talents? How did you use your money?"

Father, I pray, as in the parable of the bags of gold in Matthew 25:23, Jesus will say to me on the day of my judgement, "...well done, good and faithful servant." I pray for guidance on how to use my money and wealth to glorify you and to humbly give and serve you, Lord.

--Butch Paredes

October 24

Proverbs 11:24-25. Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything. The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.

The generosity of a Christian flows naturally from a heart that is captivated by the nature of God, most perfectly exemplified by the gift of Christ. The early Christian Church was known for its great generosity. In Acts 2, Luke writes that believers “had everything in common” and “sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.” In later years, as plague ravaged Rome, history records that Christians sacrificed their own lives to tend to their sick and dying neighbors.

Proverbs 11 speaks to the divine nature of giving. Many of us have experienced the heavenly joy that comes from following Christ’s example and giving cheerfully and generously – to a person in need, to a worthy cause, or to support God’s kingdom purposes at Nova or elsewhere. As a child, Christmas is all about receiving gifts! But as we grow, we learn that giving is its own gift, and that as we give, we ourselves are enriched as we enrich others.

God’s call to be generous is not to deplete us, but to be a reflection of his nature. And as we reflect God’s image through our giving, the Giver continues to fill us and provide for us, often in ways that we could never have imagined.

Lord, soften my heart and open my eyes to be generous like you. Help me to become more like Jesus who did not cling to what was rightfully his, but gave himself up for others. Thank you for being a Father who blesses me with gifts in this life and the life to come. Show me ways that I can give of myself and my resources to better reflect who you are and to further your Kingdom.

--Andrew Pitman

October 25

Proverbs 11:4, 28. Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death. Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.

Chinese people have the tradition of burning paper objects and making offerings at the graves of their ancestors. They believe the dead will receive these items in the afterlife and put them to use. Some of the items that are offered include the latest paper iPhone and iPad, along with private jets and helicopters. I remember approaching one of the vendors of these paper products and asking, "Is there any cell phone towers in the afterlife?" His reply was that he is selling these items to make money.

We cannot take any of our worldly possessions with us when we die, and no one can send anything to us. "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return," said Job. Is your focus solely on gaining things for yourself? Take time to reflect upon how you are investing the resources God has given you--especially your time and your money--and seek ways to honor God with what you are given.

Dear Jesus, Thank you for all you have given me. I acknowledge that these are gifts from you and that these are temporary possessions that are here today and can be gone tomorrow. I ask for your wisdom and guidance to use them for your kingdom. Amen

--Wilkin Lee

October 26

Proverbs 17:16. Of what use is money in the hands of a fool, since he has no desire to get wisdom?

Handling money--the potential other god we might serve--daily challenges us to relate to money in a righteous way. In *The Lord of the Rings* (yes, I'm going there!), the Ring of Power provides a similar challenge. Perhaps we can learn some lessons from the characters who came in contact with the Ring.

Gollum held on to the Ring for 500 years, living in the darkness of a cave away from his family, caring only for his "Precious." When the Ring left him, he spent the rest of his life pursuing it, even into the flowing lava of Mount Doom. An apt visual image.

Galadriel's past was full of treachery, and she desired the power the Ring might give her. When Frodo offered her the Ring, she said, "I do not deny that my heart has greatly desired to ask what you offer. For many long years I have pondered what I might do, should the Great Ring come into my hands..." And yet she refused the Ring and said, "I pass the test."

But one character's interaction with the Ring is even more remarkable than Galadriel's--Tom Bombadil. "Then Tom put the Ring round the end of his little finger and held it up to the candlelight. For a moment the hobbits noticed nothing strange about this. Then they gasped. There was no sign of Tom disappearing! Tom laughed again, and then he spun the Ring in the air--and it vanished with a flash. Frodo gave a cry--and Tom leaned forward and handed it back to him with a smile." Tom had no desire for the power of the Ring, and so the Ring had no power over him. His heart was completely free. What is your relationship with Money like right now? Are you a slave to it, unable or even unwilling to free your heart from its allure? Are you in transition, thinking about what Money can offer you and feeling the tension of the struggle within you? Or is your heart completely free from the deceitfulness of wealth?

Jesus, I ask you to free my heart from the power and control that Money has had over me. Give me wisdom and open my eyes to Reality; show me what it looks like to be free. I pray that you will fill my heart with the understanding of what it feels like to live completely dependent on you.

--Amy Martin

October 27

Matthew 25:1-10. The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, for they took no oil with them. But five were wise, taking extra oil in flasks along with their lamps. As the hours passed and the bridegroom delayed, their lamps grew dim, and they all fell asleep. At midnight there was a shout, "The bridegroom is coming! Go out and greet him!" While those five who were prepared refilled their lamps, the foolish cried out to them, "Give us some of your oil! Our lamps are going out!" "No, there will not be enough for us and you too!" they replied. "Instead, hurry to the dealers and buy some for yourselves." The foolish girls ran away to buy more oil for their sputtering lamps, but those who were wise prepared their lamps and ran joyfully to greet the bridegroom! They went in with him and joined the wedding feast! Much later, the others returned, but the door was locked, and they were not allowed to enter.

What can we learn from the wise women in the parable? They had put their resources (lamps and oil) at the service of the Bridegroom. *Are you using your resources, talents, and spiritual gifts for God's glory?* They had planned for delays. *As Jesus is staying away, are you looking toward the future of the church and thinking about what you/we need to be doing NEXT?* They esteemed the Bridegroom and organized their lives around His pending arrival. *Is your life and purpose organized around Christ's return?*

Dr. Ray Anderson writes, "We often hear churches ask how to recreate the first century church. What they should be asking is, 'How do we become the church Christ wants to meet Him when He returns?'" As we begin to reshape the Nova campus, let's watch and pray and plan for spiritual awakening in our hearts and the hearts of many in the South Bay. Let's follow Jesus' clear instruction to use the resources, talents, and gifts He has provided to prepare for His return, "bringing many souls to glory".

Lord, take my heart and form it; take my mind - transform it; take my will - conform it to Yours.

--Rick D'Amico