



# 2026 Weekly Devotions

Week of: April 6<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup>

Sermon: April 5<sup>th</sup>



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH  
building community ◦ equipping believers ◦ serving Jesus



April 6

**Exodus 25:2**

Over the years, we have had many folks ask some version of this question, “why don’t we talk more about giving?” The answer, in a nutshell, is that we endeavor to preach the full counsel of God’s Word, in proper proportion! This means that we want to speak about what God speaks about and we want to do so with the same frequency. As we preach, verse by verse and chapter by chapter, through the Bible, we will inevitably encounter passages that discuss the topic of giving and, when we do, we will speak about that reality!

Our goal, as pastors, is to have a biblically based, and biblically faithful ministry. Stated in the negative, many ministries are warped in their teaching, not because their teaching is false but because the instruction only deals with certain topics OR alludes to some doctrines far more than others in relationship to the biblical admonitions on the subject. To summarize, we are not concerned about speaking on the topic of giving but we do want to make sure that we are proclaiming God’s Word and not merely talking about the things that seem most “relevant” or “necessary” to us.

The last two paragraphs are intended to set up the rationale for this week’s devotions. It is quite obvious that the exhortation to give is present in our passage and so we will be spending 7 days talking about the biblical instruction on the topic of giving. To be clear, these devotions are not written out of desperation or selfish motives (the truth is that we are doing quite well in this department this year and I marvel at our church’s devotion to support the Kingdom ministry here). Instead, these devotions are simply the product of the clear teaching of God in Exodus 25.

My prayer for you is twofold. First, I pray that some would be reminded that giving is a privilege which would spur them on to faithfulness and joy as they see the fact that they are blessed by God in order to make much of God. Second, I pray that some of you who are reticent to give would be encouraged to faithfulness in this area, not primarily because we are in need of your money, but chiefly because you are commanded to obey your Savior!

This being said, let me point out a truth today that will bridge the gap into tomorrow’s devotions. Notice here that God commands “every man whose heart moves him” to give. God does not desire the gifts of those who don’t want to give! If our giving is ritualistic or merely obligatory, the act itself is nullified. God doesn’t “need” our money but He does desire our hearts and our hearts are devoted to Him when we are willing to part with resources in order to joyfully adhere to His admonitions.

April 7

## **2 Corinthians 9:7**

You will see a clear relationship between Exodus 25:2 and 2 Corinthians 9:7. In Exodus 25, God limits those who should give to individuals “whose heart moves him” and in 2 Corinthians, God tells us that He does not desire the gifts of those who give “under compulsion.” The term “compulsion” means out of constraint or duty. It denotes the kind of act that is reluctant and forced. God does not desire giving that comes from a cold but dutiful heart.

This is a key in our worship overall. While the actions matter, God looks upon the heart (1Chronicles 28:9). The posture of our hearts towards the Lord either sanctifies our acts of worship or negates them. We all have a category for this! Isn't there a marked difference between a Christian who stands to sing, only mouthing the words of the song while being obviously distant or cold and the believer who stands to sing the same song, with the same lyrics, with exuberance and gusto. The act itself is technically the same, but the heart radically alters its beauty and worth.

This is one of the reasons why we don't intend to “hammer home” the topic of giving. Certainly, we will preach the truth and relay to the saints what the Bible says, but God is clear that He doesn't desire giving from compulsion, so we want to make sure we don't preach in such a way as to encourage giving out of sheer obligation.

Now, to balance that last statement, we must understand that the kind of believer who would give only out of compulsion is very sick and needs to repent. We obey the Lord because of His great love and mercy towards us. Our obedience in all things (including giving) should be bathed in faith in His future blessing and in gratitude for His sacrificial act in securing our salvation. If you continue to look at the money in your bank account as “mine” when the Father did not look at the Son as “His” alone, you are not thinking biblically. If your impulse is to hold what you've got when God gave the most precious thing in the universe in order to redeem us, you are not thinking in accordance with the Gospel.

God's act of generosity and His promises to keep and provide for us serve as the proper motivation for giving. How could we not give when God has given so much for us? Is it really that much of a stretch to offer up a small percentage of our pay when the Lord offered His Son? Additionally, what cause could we possibly have to withhold our funds? Do we not trust that God will protect and provide? Are we reticent to embrace the promise that He will provide for all of our needs? Isn't there ample proof that He is Protector and Provider?

Let me close this devotion by summarizing. Folks, we don't want you to give out of obligation because God doesn't want you to give out of obligation. We desire for you to give because of your great love for the Lord and the Kingdom work that is happening in this place but don't let that be an “out”. Just because we want you to give with righteous and willing hearts doesn't mean that a lack of desire to give at all isn't sin! God does deserve your offering (He deserves far more) and if you disagree or don't want to give it to Him, there is a deeper problem in your heart than finances.

April 8

### **Proverbs 3:9-10**

One of the potential pitfalls to a biblical theology of giving is corrected by passages like ours for today. Many people are shortsighted as it relates to their Christian walk and subsequent obedience. By that I mean that we are prone to only think about temporal, “horizontal” realities. In practice this means that giving is seen through the lens of “practical” considerations. People will often say things like, “If I give, I won’t be able to meet my family’s daily needs” or “if I invest now, then later I will have more to give.”

These sayings might make sense, and a financial advisor might even give you a hearty “amen” but they are not biblically accurate nor fundamentally correct. The problem with this kind of logic is that it leaves God’s presence and provision totally out of the picture. Today’s proverb brings our minds back to reality in this respect.

The proverb is written specifically to farmers. The principle given is that those who are faithful to give the “firstfruits” (meaning they provide offering to the Lord immediately after He gives provision) are those who are blessed. There is something profoundly faithful about giving of your firstfruits. The very act is a declaration of faith. After all, we are not assured that more fruits are coming! It is possible that a storm could wipe out the crop or pests could infest the harvest, but God still commends giving first.

While some of us are farmers, the application applies to more than those who cultivate a field. The principle here is that we should give immediately when God provides for us. Solomon paints a picture of a man who tithes “off the top”. When that check hits the bank, his check hits the plate!

Notice here the order of God’s Word. As the man gives off the top, the Lord gives Him an abundance. Now, recall that this is a proverb. God is not promising generational wealth, but He is reminding us of something quite profound... He is faithful! Some of you struggle with the prospect of giving for a very simple reason, you don’t know how you would make it if you gave! I understand that mindset, I’ve lived it over the years. When I first got married, our finances were tight! I look back on those years and marvel, not because we were so wise but because God was so faithful. Dear friend, could it be that you are not giving your firstfruits and the result of this is that you are robbing yourself of seeing God’s grace and provision in your life? Ultimately, this is a discussion about faith. Do we believe the principles and promises of God or not? If we do, then we can joyfully give knowing that our God will respond in kind.

April 9

### **Malachi 3:10**

If you know much about the topic of giving, you were probably anticipating seeing this passage. Malachi 3 is a famous text, and it is one that has become precious to many believers over the years precisely because of its unceasing and comforting logic.

Typically speaking, it is a bad thing to put the Lord to the test. In fact, Jesus famously quoted Exodus 17 when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness saying, ““Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” It seems on the surface as if this is a contradiction. Which is it? Should we test God or not?

The general rule is that we shouldn’t test God but, there are often exceptions to the rule, and the Lord has given us one in this instance. God is so vehement in His admonition that His people give back to Him that He gives a challenge. The challenge is simple: test me. Essentially, what the Lord is saying is that we can give to Him (joyfully, sacrificially, faithfully, etc.) and know that He will respond with glorious faithfulness.

To be clear, there is no specific guarantee of the kind of blessing that will result. God is not promising that those who “sow seeds of faith” will reap earthly riches. He simply says that He will open the heavenlies and “pour” blessings upon us. What are those blessings? Well, they could be financial. The Lord does in fact bless His people with abundance in this arena at times. The blessing might also be a closer walk with Him, a window into His work in utilizing the resources we have provided, the chance to grow in our faith by trusting Him or something altogether different!

The real tension in this text is only brought to bear when we consider the juxtaposition that is implicit here. Malachi is teaching us that we can either: hoard our wealth OR give so that God can bless. The question is which would you prefer? Would you rather have temporary resource and the supposed security that such wealth brings or would you rather have God’s eternal blessing?

When we write this question down, the answer seems obvious, but the question is really one of faith. Do you trust God to bless you? Do you believe that His blessings are greater than mammon? If so, you will put Him to the test. If not, you will be tempted to always hold onto what you have, thinking that a bird in hand is better than two in the bush! Folks, giving is a great indicator of the state of our hearts for this reason. It demonstrates what we most want; it declares what we most value and it heralds the source of our security.

April 10

**Mark 12:42-44**

One of the saddest conversations I have ever had in ministry occurred years ago, in Columbus, GA, with a senior adult man who had come by the church seeking to join. The senior pastor of that church and he talked about the Gospel, his personal testimony, his history in churches, baptism and the like. All of this was normal and as expected until the end of the discussion when the man asked about giving envelopes (a relic of bygone years for some of you but a staple of Baptist life for those who remember).

Pastor Steve walked with him into the office and secured a box of giving envelopes and, as the man was leaving, he walked back into the office and put the boxes down saying, "I don't know that you want to give these to me, I'm not sure I'll be giving enough to even cover the cost of the box."

What struck me about that conversation was both honesty and the humiliation that was so apparent in that man's countenance. I don't know his heart, but I do wonder if, perhaps, his thinking was skewed a bit in this regard. Some of us think of giving the way we like to think of business. In business, you have certain customers or products that you appeal to because they have more resources. A good salesman spends more time with his major accounts and less time with those who can only purchase a little bit. A retail store benefits more when you buy the 1,000-dollar appliance over and against the filter for a few bucks.

Thankfully, the Lord reminded us in Mark 12 that God doesn't see things this way. Our giving is not about providing something that God doesn't already have. We can't give Him anything! Instead, giving is about the condition of the heart. Giving, in other words, is an act of worship and this means that any gift can be pleasing in the Lord's sight if it is given with faith and joy.

One of my favorite things about Smyrna is that we do things together. We are not a church comprised of a few faithful servants and multitudes of lazy or unengaged members. Instead, we realize that God blesses us as we use the gifts He's given in concert with our brothers and sisters. This same principle applies in the realm of giving. Folks, the Lord will provide, He always has and you can be a part! Some of you are able to give more (from a dollars and cents perspective) than others but remember that God sees the heart and He esteems the posture of the giver more than the quantity of the gift.

April 11

### **1 Corinthians 13:3**

We have focused on exhortation so far in this series of devotions. The goal has been to show you the biblical teaching and admonish you to be faithful (both in action and in heart). Nevertheless, there is a second danger that is very prevalent and that is obedience that flows from a disinterested heart.

The heart of legalism is rooted in a desire to earn something with no affection for the Lord in our hearts. It can be very easy to descend into a mindset that says that we are simply doing what we do to earn God's favor. This kind of thinking harbors no affection for Christ, no love for God and no concern for His people. Giving, with this mentality, becomes very transactional.

This is Paul's point in 1 Corinthians 13. In fact, the specific verse lies in the midst of a much larger context in which Paul labors to show that all our actions should be rooted in love (for God chiefly and for one another secondarily). Our giving should be an act of worship, not one of merit. If we are giving in order to demonstrate our faithfulness or earn influence within the body or the like, then we are giving for the wrong reason. Many seem to give to get, not because we love the Lord and desire to please Him. This is the spirit of cold, dead religion. It is manifested in many activities that are otherwise very good. We see worthless religion when men sing songs they don't mean, or endure sermons they don't care to listen to, or serve others for the photo-op or commendations they expect to receive. None of these activities are wrong, but the condition of the heart is repugnant to our great God.

Our gifts should be an overflow of the affection we feel towards the Lord in light of all that He has done for us. We should be giving in faith that God is going to expand His Kingdom, thereby gaining more glory for Himself and blessing more people with the undeserved grace He has given to us. We should be giving with love in our hearts for those who need to hear about Christ, with faith that God's church will steward these gifts well to disciple others in our congregation and with a conviction that there is nothing more worthy to invest in than the work of the Lord.

Is this your heart today? If giving is a show or a declaration of your righteousness, then I worry about you as well. Giving is an act of worship precisely because it is rooted in love for the Lord. Do you love Him today? Are you joyful because you realize that you have been given a part to play in making Him known? Are you prayerful that your gifts might lead to eternal blessings for others? If so, then know that whatever you give is blessed.

April 12

**Matthew 6:19-21**

If you've noticed, the primary motivation I have cited for giving is temporal (growth of the Kingdom on Earth, God will provide for you needs, gratitude for what He has done for us in Christ, etc.). It is true that God blesses us abundantly, that He uses our gifts to grow His church and that He will provide for you. It is also true that we should be grateful for all that He has done for us in Christ but there is another reason that must be acknowledged as we close this study on giving and that is the motivation of eternal blessing.

Notice the contrast that Jesus makes here. He states that we have a choice to make, we can either store up for ourselves treasures on earth (think savings, houses, possessions, etc.) OR we can store up treasures in heaven. The contrast is clear in the passage. Those things that we wish to store on earth inevitably fade. Houses deteriorate, savings diminish, cars break down, and the like. Conversely, those who store up treasures in heaven have an eternal inheritance waiting upon them.

The point of the passage is clear: those who are wise store up treasures that won't break down and can be enjoyed forever. The implication of the passage is that we gain those treasures by giving our earthly treasures to further God's glory and Kingdom. After the logic is unveiled, Jesus hits us with an absolute haymaker saying that what we choose demonstrates the condition of our heart saying, "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

I've noticed that this is true. If you look at my bank account, you can quite clearly see what I value. My heart is unveiled by the way I spend my "treasure" or resources. There is an inextricable connection between what I love and cherish and how I spend my money. This means that my reticence to give my money towards something says an awful lot about what I value or don't value. While this logic is inescapable, it is uncomfortable! We don't like to think this way, and we can be masters at justifying our actions. Nevertheless, you are deciding, at this moment, where you want to build treasure and that decision is based on what you love the most.

Folks, a choice to give is not ultimately a financial decision, it is finally a declaration of what you love. If Christ has saved you and changed you, that transformation will work its way into every aspect of your life and this includes where your treasure is located. What or who do you love today? Where are you storing your treasure? The answer to that question doesn't just have accounting implications, it sheds light on eternal realities that are incredibly important.