



2026 Weekly Devotions

Week of: October 5th - 11th

Sermon: October 4th



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH
building community • equipping believers • serving Jesus

October 5

1 Corinthians 15:12-19, 30-32

I want to begin this week of “Points to Ponder” by focusing on this question: Why would a sane, decent person even consider, much less live, in accordance with biblical teachings? To state it even more clearly, why would a person choose willingly to give his/her money away? Why not keep it for our own comfort, pleasure, security, and wellbeing? The answer lies in what Paul wrote to the Corinthians in the 15th chapter of the book of First Corinthians. Today we will consider the motivation that encourages godliness and generosity in particular.

It may seem like a strange place to start but I hope you will quickly agree that it is not. The gist of what Paul said in our chosen passage for today is that if there is no resurrection, then we may as well just focus on self and this one life that we get to live. He says far more than I am going to mention today in these verses, but for our purposes I will focus on verse 19 which says, “If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.” In other words, if there is nothing beyond the temporary world in which we are living, why worry about how we live? It would actually make sense to look out for “number 1” and to not waste your resources on doing good.

He is actually saying that if we have chosen to live the sacrificial life of a true Christian and there is nothing to gain in doing so, then we are rather stupid and should be pitied more than any others. It would be rather moronic to deny self, put other people’s wellbeing before your own, or to forego the pleasures of this world if this is all there is. Later in that same chapter, Paul writes, “Why are we in danger every hour? What do I gain, if humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus” (1 Cor. 15:32)? Then follows the more familiar phrase, “If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” His point is that because we are resurrected and because there is an afterlife, what we do now matters greatly. We endure the suffering for the joy set before us; like Jesus did.

We are encouraged towards faithfulness and biblical obedience because our actions will gain for us rewards in heaven. We are not to make decisions and live our lives as if there are no eternal consequences at stake. Friends, what I am getting at today is that we are called to make decisions NOW with the future in mind, not solely the present. I choose to be obedient, deny self, and am willing to make significant sacrifices because I believe they will pay off in the long run not necessarily the short term.

Why else, dear ones, would a person be willing to suffer and remain faithful if it were not for a strong belief that a better day is coming. We make decisions and sacrifices because we are living for a day beyond the ones we are currently in. Like Paul said, if there is no resurrection or no future beyond this life, eat and drink for tomorrow you die. Fortunately, we know there are wonderful reasons to live a life surrendered to the Lordship of Christ, for His glory, and for the wellbeing of others. I don’t know about you, but I’m living with my eyes on “a city not made with hands, but whose designer is God” (2 Cor. 5:1, Heb. 11:10).

October 6

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

I want to build off of yesterday's devotion today. You see, if we get the point, which was making personal decisions to suffer well or to sacrifice willingly in light of the resurrection of Christ and our promised future, then this passage for today makes a great deal more sense. Paul wrote, *"The point is this, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver"* (2 Cor. 9:6-7). Verse seven addresses the heart from which our giving comes.

God does not need our money. I think it is important that we remember He already owns everything and it would be nothing for Him to speak into existence anything that He might *need*. You may have heard it said before, God wants your heart not your money. This means that He wants you to want to give in ways that will advance His kingdom and bring glory to Him and knowledge of His goodness on the earth. He wants us to give with a joyful heart because we realize the privilege of being invited into kingdom work and to serve Him.

In a sense, yesterday's devotion addressed the why to giving and today's devotion speaks to the how. I give willingly because He has planned for me a future that is out of this world and beyond any comparison of suffering or tribulation that the momentary and light afflictions may cause me (2 Cor. 4:16-18). I give because it makes sense now and for all of eternity to store my treasures in heaven where rust and moth cannot touch (Matt. 6:19). I give because He has captured my heart, rearranged my priorities, and gave me a love for Him and His people. I give because I know that I can't hold on to these material things forever and they are given to me, by God, to be stewarded well. I give because I think it is really stupid not to!

Now, Paul adds to that this exhortation to make sure my heart is right when I do give. He states clearly that the Lord loves a *cheerful* giver. This must mean that the person who gives grudgingly or from coercion, is not pleasing to the Lord. Notice that the gift, or the size of it, is said to flow from a person's heart. You must decide what you think God, His Kingdom, and His people are worth. Dear ones, when you consider giving to the Lord, have you thought about the reality that what you have is a gift from Him? Giving demonstrates that you prioritize God and the things that matter to Him. Giving demonstrates that you understand stewardship and His desire to bless others through you. Giving also demonstrates that you trust God to provide for your needs while you give to meet the needs of others. Giving is truly an act of faith and love. How are you doing my friend? Are you a cheerful giver.

Oh by the way, a quick note here on verse 6. Paul said that the measure you use in giving to others is the measure God will use in giving to you when your time of needing His provision comes. If you are stingy, He will be towards you. If you give freely and cheerfully, He will give to you in like manner.

October 7

Mark 12:41-44

This passage for today addresses how God assigns value to our offerings. One might easily think that the larger the gift the more value to God's kingdom. Keep in mind an important fact that I mentioned yesterday: God does not need our money but wants our hearts. By that I mean that He wants us to love Him, trust Him, and obey His will. Money is often simply a tool that God uses to reveal where our hearts truly are. Think for a moment of the familiar passage from Matthew 6.

In Matthew 6:24 it is written, *"No one can serve two masters, for 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 God and money."* Money and possessions tend to compete with God for the first place in our lives. Recall what Matthew wrote earlier in that same chapter, *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (v.21). Friend, it can't be any clearer than that. The things that you treasure the most will indicate what has captured and controls your heart. So, if God does not have the first place in your life, then what does will control your spending, giving or not, and your priorities. Don't play games with God – whatever matters most to you is clearly revealed in the passions of your heart.

In our passage for today, the poor widow woman reveals the condition of her heart by what she treasured the most. For her, her heart belonged to God, and she wanted to do what little she could to be a blessing to Him and others and to trust Him with her own life. She only had two copper coins, which monetarily did not add up to much. By faith and out of love, she gave all that she had to God's Kingdom. One can only imagine the joy that she felt when she exercised that level of sacrifice, trust, and obedience. One can also imagine that she walked away believing that God would provide for her but maybe wondering how.

The rich people put far more money into the coffers than she did. Their money could be used to do all sorts of good things in the temple, we assume, and would be worth far more than that which the widow woman gave. What we find however is that Jesus was not impressed by what the rich people gave but was moved deeply by the widow's faith and generosity. We are not ignorant. All of us know that the large gifts seem so much better and more helpful, and yet Jesus did not see it nor interpret it that way. I would suggest that we should follow His heart in this matter.

Let me say first that the problem with the rich people's gifts was not that they would not be helpful. Again, keep in mind that God does not need our money. What their gift demonstrated was that He did not have their hearts. They could have easily given more but for some reason valued keeping their riches beyond the joy and freedom to bless God and others with it. The simple lesson is that we should do all that we can to give as much as we can for the glory of God. We can take good care of ourselves and still give generously. The moral of the story is that God had the widow's heart but not the rich peoples. That is all that matters in this passage of Scripture.

October 8

Psalm 50:10-15

Several times this week I have mentioned that God does not need your money. Today I want to address that more clearly from God's own Word. Notice what Asaph, the writer of the 50th Psalm wrote, "For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills, and all that moves in the field is mine" (Ps. 50:10-11). A similar Psalm of David contains these words, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers" (Ps. 24:1-2). We could go on and on showing that God owns everything. This is of course the foundation for why I say, and more importantly why the Bible says, He does not need your money.

Let's go back to the 50th Psalm and note a couple more important lessons from that Scripture. God says in verse 9 that He will not accept their animal sacrifices because He already owns all of the animals. God is not changing His mind about the sacrificial system He established to make atonement for the sins of His people. The problem that Asaph is dealing with in this Psalm is that the people were making meaningless offerings while their hearts were far from God. It would be the equivalent of dropping money in the offering plate while you cared very little for ministry, the Kingdom of God, or obeying God from a cheerful heart. It was an act done under compulsion rather than love for God. He doesn't want that.

Verse 12 of that same Psalm says, *"If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine."* Again, the point in that verse is that God does not need what we have. It is clear throughout His Word that He is far more interested and concerned with the condition of a person's heart than what they can offer Him. In fact, if our hearts are not right, He doesn't want our offerings. This is why the widows meager offering touched the heart of Christ so much more than the larger gifts of the rich people. Oh how wonderful it is when God has entrusted worldly wealth to a person or a couple who loves Him dearly and blesses Him and others with the riches they have. Riches dear friends are not the problem; Loving riches more than you love God is!

I hope that for those of you who feel you don't have much to offer, you will see the tremendous value and kingdom impact in your giving what you can from a cheerful heart that loves the Lord our God. A church full of people who love the Lord, are good stewards with what He has entrusted to them, and are being obedient to His Word, even though we may not be rich in the eyes of the world, are a mighty tool in His hands for kingdom advancement and His glory. I love where we are as a church and the fact that so many, a majority in fact, give generously and you do so from a cheerful heart that has fallen in love with our great God and King.

October 9

Luke 14:23

We will turn our attention from biblical motivations to some more, what I will call, practical encouragements to give. In other words, what I hope to do beginning today is to cast some vision for what our future here at Smyrna can look like if we embrace God's call to give generously to His Kingdom; this certainly includes the ministries of the church. I will do my best to paint these pictures in color so that you might more clearly see what our future can hold and what joy lies in front of us as we serve our King together.

I know that many of you have felt the pressure of a crowded sanctuary and Sunday School classrooms. I know that for some, depending on what time you arrive, even the parking lot can feel tight. Some 250 of you know what it feels like around our church on Wednesday nights. It has become increasingly more challenging to get everyone fed before 6:30 because the line extends from the gym down the hallway, and into the sanctuary. With 116 children attending Awana and the 40+ volunteers for that ministry, our rooms are full and the teachers are stretched. We love it but it is still a growing issue.

If you make it over to the back building where I teach the midweek Bible study, you will once again have to look for a seat. We are noticing that it is harder for people to get there by 6:30 because it is taking longer than before to get your evening meal. Then, when you do get to the Bible study room you find people filling all the chairs and even sitting in chairs half-way out the door. We are having a ball, and everyone is seated but there is little room for growth. I love it but it is a challenge. Did I tell you that my senior adult Sunday School class is filled to the max and we had no chairs available last week. I love it but it is a challenge.

I write this today not to discourage you from coming. Come on and we will make room for you. The hope that we have is that as we all feel the pressure of tight spaces, that we will see the need to give generously so that we can continue to make more room for God's people to be disciplined and even found through evangelism. God desires that His house be full and that we be good stewards with the resources that He has provided for us. I think our Lord is pleased and I hope you see that we are doing everything we can to accommodate as many as possible for the growth of His kingdom.

Brothers and sisters, we give because we want to make it possible for as many people who desire to be a part of our local body to be able to. Every soul that we win to Christ and that we disciple into spiritual maturity becomes another reason why our communities get better, our families grow stronger, our children are raised properly, and our homes are safer and more secure. We need more space and it requires all of us working together and sharing the financial load to make it happen. As we continue to make space, the people continue to come. Let's keep it going friends.

October 10

Proverbs 11:24-25; Acts 20:35

Church family, it may sound strange, but I hope each of you will come to the place, if you haven't already, where you find yourself wanting to give, rather than feeling like you have to give in order to please God. I know you join me in thanking God for His amazing gift to us. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Love prompts in us the desire to give. Because God loved, He gave. We will do the same when our love for Him captures our heart. Remember how important love is as motivation for giving.

Luke recorded these words of Jesus in Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." How can this be? The next time you give as a Christian, I want you to try to think about the fact that you are giving to God. When the offering plate is passed or you go online to give your offerings to the church, keep in mind you are not merely giving to the church, or a ministry, or a needy person which can simply be charity. When you give and you are doing so as an offering to God Himself, it is always an act of worship that expresses love and gratitude to our King, our Savior, and our faithful Provider. Giving is truly an act of obedience, of faith, and of worship.

Gifts obviously benefit the one receiving them. But in God's economy, gifts given with the proper attitude benefit the giver more than the receiver. That is what Jesus said Himself. How in the world is this true? Consider the faithful steward from the parable Jesus told in Matthew 25. After the man's faithful stewardship of the master's resources, he was invited into his master's joy (v.21). So giving brings us into a more intimate relationship with Christ. I love this thought and I hope you will too. "Giving is not God's way of raising money; it is God's way of raising people into the likeness of His Son." I offer to you this incredible insight from God's Word too. Paul wrote, "Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit" (Phil. 4:17). Much is to be gained from a spiritual and experiential perspective in trusting God with your resources by giving.

Read this wonderful principle from God's Word and be encouraged. Solomon wrote, "One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered" (Prov. 11:24-25). This is one reason why it is more blessed to give than to receive. One might point to people in their lives who are rather stingy and yet appear to be wealthy. What you may not know is that those riches will be short lived, and you never know how much misery they are experiencing on the inside where no one sees.

When I think of being "watered" by God Himself, I think of being refreshed by rivers of water and green pastures. I think of being restored when I am tired and weary (Ps. 23:1-3). When I think of the blessings that God bestows upon His faithful children, I do not stop at financial gain. I do believe God will provide all that we need for this life, but His gifts and favor far exceed the benefits of a big bank account. The peace, joy, contentment, and purpose that He gives are gifts more precious than money. He blesses those who give with good gifts.

October 11

2 Corinthians 8:1-7; 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I want to make sure that as we end these “Points to Ponder” for this week, that we do not think that it is a sin or a bad thing to have money. Paul wrote to Timothy that it is the “love of money” that is the root of all sorts of evil, not money itself (1 Tim. 6:10). I believe that God has given some people more resources so that they can channel it into His Kingdom and do great things in the world as His hands and feet. Unfortunately, many who have money fail the test and end up serving money rather than God.

Notice that Paul does not condemn the rich in 1 Timothy 6:17-19 but exhorts them to be careful with their money and to keep their priorities and focus on God. He wrote, “As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasures for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life” (1 Tim. 6:17-19). A financially rich person in the hands of God is of great value to the church. The challenge for the rich is to truly grasp that God, and not riches, are your true security and faithfulness to God with all you have is the path to true life.

I know that you understand a person can be filthy rich and still not truly have life. God provides us with a beautiful picture of not only generosity but of passion to take part in serving Him and living a sacrificial life so that others will be blessed. In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul records the story of the churches in Macedonia. The church had been planted there, and the believers were genuinely saved. They were so captured by God’s mercy and grace extended to them and the reality of redemption that they literally begged Paul for a chance to give for His glory and the good of His people (2 Cor. 8:4). It helps to know that they were not wealthy people. As a matter of fact, he writes, “For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part” (v.2). Paul says that they gave according to their means and even beyond their means, of their own accord (v.3).

I want you to see a necessary reality in this story. It says that they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us (v.5). You see friend, their hearts were captured by God and after that happened, you couldn’t stop them from giving and sacrificing for God’s Kingdom. Please meditate this week on the condition of your heart as it relates to your willingness or reluctance to give generously and sacrificially to God and His causes. Dear one, if you tend to be a bit stingy or if you know that money matters too much to you, then I implore you to examine your heart to be sure you are truly in the faith. I believe the Bible is clear on its teaching regarding money. Not all of us can give the same amount, but all of us can be willing to give all that we can for our Savior’s glory. It isn’t the amount; it is the condition of your heart that matters most.