

# The Blessing of Giving Day 22

*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also  
(Matthew 6:21).*



Can't find the heart? Look for the treasure. Why would we need to look for our heart? Because we need to give it to Jesus! When a young man came to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what must I do to get eternal life?" Jesus told him to obey the commandments.

"All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?"

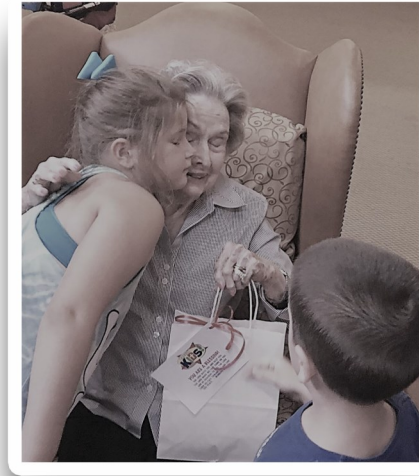
Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come follow me." The man went away sad because he had great wealth. The young man had to give up his heart to Christ for eternal life.

If your heart is set on earthly things, there your treasure is also. Obeying the commandments is an expression of our faith, not a point system with God, as the young man had hoped. He failed to realize that storing his treasure in heaven is far greater than accumulating wealth on earth. It may seem obvious to us, yet the one thing Christ wants, we find extremely difficult to give. Christ knows what treasure we have—money, possessions, jobs, personal achievements. These are not bad in and of themselves, but our hearts do not belong there!

In order to live in God's will each day, I must remember my treasure must be in heaven for my heart to belong to Christ. As a church, our success in God's will can only result from putting our treasure chest in heaven.

# 2017

# THIS IS US



**Are you a cheerful giver?**

**Do you know what it means to give freely?**

**Have you asked God lately how much He wants you to give?**

Periodically it is good for us to re-examine our giving; to ask ourselves if we are giving out of habit or if we are seeking and following God's direction in the area of our life that deals with giving back.

This devotional is intended to help us do that.

We encourage you to use this devotional for the next 22 days.

Think about the Bible verses that the devotionals are based on.

Apply the devotionals to your own unique situation. Talk about them with your children.

And pray. Pray that God will reveal to you how you need to respond to these biblical instructions.

The devotional topics are:

- The Necessity of Giving
- The Joy of Giving
- The Freedom of Giving
- The Measure of Giving
- The Manner of Giving
- The Blessings of Giving

## The Blessing of Giving Day 21

*... and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail (Isaiah 58:10-11).*



Who are the oppressed and hungry? All too often, we think of far-away people in far-away places. If this is all the involvement we have with the hungry and oppressed, we are missing the point. Isaiah teaches us to “spend yourself on the hungry” and “satisfy the needs of the oppressed.” We’re told to get involved in a way that goes beyond just giving money. If we are to meet people’s needs in a way that consumes us, then we need to get involved on a personal basis. We need to meet people where they need us most—to pour ourselves into meeting their needs physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Where are the hungry and oppressed? Sitting next to us in church, at our kids’ soccer practice, in our back yard—anywhere there are people. It’s amazing that God uses the act of us pouring ourselves out for the needy as an avenue for blessing us. He promises light for our darkness, guidance when we feel lost, strength when we feel weak and water for our parched lips.

# The Blessing of Giving

## Day 20

*You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you (2 Corinthians 9:11-14).*



Paul is writing to a maturing church to offer love, guidance and exhortation. One of the issues he writes about is generosity. Verses 11 and 12 relate to the scope of our giving. In verse 11, Paul says, "You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion." What a powerful promise! I am assured God will equip me so that whatever situation I find myself in, I will be able to give generously.

Whether giving involves helping others with material items such as food, clothes, and money or simply donating my time to someone, God will provide me with the resources to serve others. Verse 12 broadens our view of giving by stating that giving is a direct way to thank God personally for His blessings. Not only are we satisfying the needs of others with our gifts, but we are also praising God through our giving.

Verses 13-14 describe the results of giving. First, the recipients of each gift are blessed directly as a result of receiving each gift. Then these people pour out blessings to God through their praise for His generosity and grace. Finally, the giver is blessed through the prayers of the recipients and through God's promises for faithfulness.

# The Necessity of Giving

## Day 1

*Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops (Proverbs 3:9).*



Leftovers. They are a wonderful time saver in the kitchen and sometimes even seem to taste better than the original meal. But when we honor someone with a meal, we would never think of using leftovers.

The same is true when it comes to the way we worship and honor our King, the Lord Jesus Christ. If we truly want to honor Him, it will not be with our "leftovers." Everything we have, everything we are and everything we hope for are rooted in God's creation of us and His graciousness toward us through Christ. Our time, money and abilities are actually His. We should not give Him our time, money or abilities "if there is some left over." We only honor God when we give to Him first, trusting that He will provide for the rest of our time, money and energy needs.

Proverbs 3:9 urges us to honor God by practicing first fruit giving with our money. We basically have five general alternatives when it comes to what we do with our income:

- 1) The support of a chosen lifestyle;
- 2) Whatever is needed for the repayment of debt because of that lifestyle;
- 3) The payment of taxes;
- 4) What we save and invest for the future; and
- 5) What we give away.

What order of priority do these five alternatives take in your life? Does Proverbs 3:9 make a difference in helping you determine those priorities?

# The Necessity of Giving

## Day 2

*A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord (Leviticus 27:30).*



This verse appears in a section of Leviticus dealing with the rules regarding making promises to God. An Israelite would promise a servant an animal, a house or some land to God as an expression of gratitude and thankfulness to Him. Hannah, for example, dedicated her son, the prophet Samuel, out of gratefulness to God for answering her prayers.

Once a person devoted something to God, it became the Lord's possession. The Hebrew wording speaks to the "irrevocable giving over of things or persons to the Lord." It was His and He could do with it as He pleased. Furthermore, the Lord declared it holy: sanctified, set apart for special use, consecrated for service.

Paul tells us in I Corinthians 6:19-20, "... You are not your own; you were bought at a price." Because of Christ's sacrifice for us, we are now the Lord's possession. All that we are and all that we have are irrevocably His.

In I Peter 2:9, Peter writes, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light."

Like the dedicated things of Leviticus, we not only belong to the Lord, but we are also holy, set apart and consecrated for His use. We are His and all that we have is His. As we give ourselves and give of what we have to this reality, we declare the praise of the One who has called us His own.

# The Blessing of Giving

## Day 19

*Remember this. Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously (2 Corinthians 9:6).*



Although many of the Bible's teachings are not practiced in the business world today, this principle is adopted regularly. Many business investors use the motto: Invest a little, make a little; invest a lot, make a lot! Although this principle has worked for some people, it has been a catastrophe for others who invested in the wrong thing. Investing can be risky if you don't understand what you are investing in. The beauty of giving to Kingdom work is that you're investing in an unchanging God who freely gives eternal life for those who seek Him.

God calls us not only to give, but to give generously and for the right reasons. King Solomon expressed the principle of generosity in Proverbs 11:25, "Be generous to others and you'll grow prosperous; refresh others, and you'll be refreshed." God does not want us to give with a selfish intent. Galatians 6:7-8 warns, "Don't make a mistake: you can't fool God. Whatever you sow, you'll reap. If you sow to please your own flesh, you will from your flesh reap destruction."

Second Corinthians 9:12-15 also warns us not to expect to be wealthy through our giving. Instead, our gifts will praise God and help others who receive our gifts. When we bless others, we also will be blessed, not necessarily with earthly gifts, but with spiritual rewards.

# The Blessing of Giving

## Day 18

*Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine (Proverbs 3:9).*



In Proverbs, a book of advice and wisdom, we are told to honor the Lord with our first fruits. Not many of us, however, have olive trees, grain fields and vineyards. So how do we apply this nugget of wisdom to our lives? In Revelation 14:4, it says that believers "... were purchased from among men and offered as first fruits to God and the Lamb." We are ourselves an offering! The Lord wants us to willingly give ourselves to Him. We are to give of our time and money because we want to, and not because it is required. God wants us to give to Him first, not with what is left over.

We also have a promise that "your barns will be filled to overflowing and your vats will brim over with new wine." Is God promising to make us rich? Yes! We will be abundantly rich in blessings from the Lord—too numerous to count. He gives to us and we give back to Him and He gives back to us again what is His. We cannot out give the Lord!

This is especially true in the realm of our spiritual lives. Paul tells us in Ephesians 1 that we have been blessed by Christ with "every spiritual blessing." He has lavished His gifts upon us. We have been given all that we need in Christ.

And now He calls us to present ourselves as a living sacrifice, an offering back to Him. May we respond out of grateful hearts.

# The Necessity of Giving

## Day 3

*But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7).*



Paul loved the church in Corinth as a parent loves a child. He witnessed the outpouring of God's gifts upon the whole believing community. They had been given salvation in Christ, an articulate testimony, knowledge, faith and spiritual gifts that continued to enrich the community. It seems they lacked nothing. Even in the area of material and physical needs, the Corinthian community was very comfortable.

Yet, just as any loving and committed parent would, Paul continued to lead, teach and advise the community at Corinth. In his second letter to the church, Paul encourages the believers to identify themselves with the greater ministry of the early Christian church. Paul recognizes their past support and yet admonishes them to continue to support the ministry going on in Jerusalem. He encourages them that their practice of generosity should match the same standard of excellence they demonstrate in other areas of their walk with Jesus. Specifically, they should count God as the owner of all they possess and give from that posture.

An individual who does not truly count God as the owner of all they have can never be truly generous. Generosity flows from a posture that sees everything as owned by God. Who owns your life, possessions and wealth?

# The Joy of Giving

## Day 4

*Each man should give what he has in his heart to give, not reluctantly decided or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).*



Giving to the causes of God's Kingdom is always a matter of the heart and is between the believer and God. God desires a right attitude, not for us to feel coerced into giving. Paul demonstrates two principles of giving in this verse. First, what a person gives should be deliberate, a matter of thought and planning. A gift given on impulse may be regretted at a later time. One might regret that he has committed too much and cannot keep his pledge. On the other hand, had the giver planned properly, he might find he could have given more. Deliberate planning will be helpful in deciding how liberal we should be in our gifts. Secondly, the gift should be given freely, not grudgingly or out of necessity. Any manner of unwillingness spoils the act of giving. We should give cheerfully, being glad we have the ability and an opportunity to give.

We are objects of God's divine love and His unmerited favor. We will never lose by doing that which pleases God. The love and favor of God is better than anything—even life itself.

# The Blessing of Giving

## Day 17

*Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the Lord delivers him in times of trouble. The Lord will protect him and preserve his life; he will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes (Psalm 41:1-2).*



This passage deals with where our hearts are for the many needs among God's people and the blessings in store for those who use their time, talents or gifts to minister to those in need. John 13:35 says, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." We are the disciples of today.

Paul echoes the comments of the Psalmist when in Galatians 6:9-10 he calls, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." Christ calls us to give ourselves away in ministry to others—this is a mark of a healthy Christ-follower.

There are many instances in Scripture where Jesus dropped what He was doing to restore someone. In this manner, we should be striving to be more like Jesus and to live and work as parts of the Body of Christ.

May we respond to His call and example.

*More like the Master I would ever be,  
More of His meekness, more humility;  
More zeal to labor, more courage to be true,  
More consecration for work He bids me do.*

—Charles H. Gabriel

# The Manner of Giving: Lovingly

## Day 16

*If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing (1 Corinthians 13:3).*



In this familiar chapter on love, we observe to what lengths God has gone to emphasize the absolute necessity of love motivating all we do. The first three verses list spiritual gifts and actions raised to their maximum level, attainable only by the Lord Jesus. It's tempting to think these are impossible to accomplish apart from love. From Balaam to the Pharisees to 20<sup>th</sup>-century monks, however, we are reminded that appearing spiritual or self-sacrificing is not proof of loving the Lord above all else and our neighbor as ourselves. We see only outward appearance, but God sees the heart.

Paul reminds us in Romans 5:8 that God demonstrated His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us. True love always leads to sacrificial giving of oneself for others. To truly love is to give ourselves away for Christ's sake.

When God looks at us, does He see a "noisy nothing?" Do we have little love for Him and our neighbor, therefore giving little? Have we given to Him and our neighbor without love, therefore gaining nothing? Or, does our love for Him overflow out of us, propelling us toward using every gift from Him for the love of the Lord Jesus and our neighbor?

# The Joy of Giving

## Day 5

*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 (1 Chronicles 29:9).*



This chapter of Chronicles records the pledge drive and fundraising efforts for the building of the temple of Solomon to the Lord. King David provided all the resources from the public treasury of the building. He also pledged incredible wealth from his personal treasures to the Temple. His model of generosity inspired families, leaders, commanders and officials of the people of Israel to "give willingly" of all they had to the Temple fund. The people rejoiced at the demonstration of giving to the Lord, recognizing that all gifts originated with God and, therefore, belong to God.

This chronicle of God's people illustrates many important themes in Christian giving. First, the giving was deliberate, not by spontaneous accident. Secondly, the giving was done "willingly, freely and wholeheartedly" and not out of half-interested obligation or guilt. Thirdly, the giving was done in praise to God with humble acknowledgement that all gifts are of God. The central theme in 1 Chronicles 29 is that the people rejoiced at the response of giving demonstrated by the leaders. This, in turn, caused David to rejoice.

David's example motivated the others to give because giving is infectious. Those who lead us must model giving and we, in turn, must provide the example to those we lead. This theme requires application in our churches and in our homes. If we as leaders in our church, our homes and in the community hope to praise God through giving, we must first step out by modeling giving, demonstrating our heart of thanks to the Lord.

## The Freedom of Giving Day 6

*Then Hezekiah said, "You have now dedicated yourselves to the Lord. Come and bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the temple of the Lord." So the assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings, and all whose hearts were willing brought burnt offerings (2 Chronicles 29:31).*



In the previous verses, King Hezekiah leads the people into a process of cleansing and sanctification because of their disobedience. They accomplished this by both physically and spiritually removing the "filth" from the temple as well as from their own lives. Only after this process was completed were the priests and Israelites ready to present their sacrifice and thank offerings to the Lord. This procedure is necessary for each of us as well. At that point, we become ready to present our offerings to God in complete freedom and with a clean heart and mind. These particular offerings were not part of a legalistic mandate.

The people gave from the heart out of their own free will. Hezekiah's appeal is so effective that "the priests were too few and could not skin all the burnt offerings ..." (verse 34a). When the people were confronted with their need for personal sacrifice, the response was overwhelming. They gave generously, sacrificially and cheerfully.

After their relationship with God had been restored, "Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced because of what God had done for the people ..." (verse 36a). Each of us has a similar opportunity to worship God with our sacrifices from the heart. Only then will true rejoicing and renewal take place.

## The Manner of Giving: Compassionately Day 15

*He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the Innkeeper; "Look after him," he said, "and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have" (Luke 10:34-35).*



An "expert" in Jewish law came to Jesus and questioned Him about what he should do to inherit eternal life. When Jesus told him to love God above all and his neighbor as himself, the "expert" challenged Jesus on who his neighbor was. He hoped to be given a list of people he had to treat right, but Jesus doesn't let him off so easily. In response, Jesus relates to him the story of a Samaritan who not only stops to care for the injured man, but also pays his expenses.

Jesus is telling the "expert" of the law that our neighbors are everyone around us, since Jews would never have considered the Samaritans their neighbors and vice versa. The Samaritan's response shows us that Jesus calls us to give ourselves away to other people. That is what it means to be a neighbor.

We put others' needs ahead of our own (Philippians 2:1-4). Jesus shows two ways to help others. First, the Samaritan gave his time to help the injured man. Secondly, he used his personal finances to help this stranger. Generosity is not easy; there is a personal cost in giving of ourselves.

How about you? Are you ready to meet the challenges that Jesus gave the expert in the law? Are you ready to be the kind of neighbor who gives of him/herself in both your time and finances? Where will you be involved in giving yourself away?



# The Manner of Giving: Freely

## Day 14

*Freely you have received, freely give (Matthew 10:8).*



I'm amazed at all You've done for me. Who am I that You'd bless me so—I stand in awe of all Your wondrous deeds. You've dealt with me so graciously.

The words of this song touch my heart. They remind me of God's love for me, demonstrated in the ultimate sacrifice of Christ's death for my salvation. Nothing I could do or say could ever pay the debt I owe to God for my sin. God knew His gracious gift of His Son, Jesus, was the only way for me to live. It is truly amazing!

Although God has given His children many gifts—both spiritual and material—we did not deserve them and should not selfishly hoard them. When Jesus told His disciples to go out and freely give, He was specifically referring to the spiritual *gifts* they had received—to preach, teach and heal in Jesus' name. They were called by Jesus to freely give and share these gifts with the lost people they encountered.

The command for us is no less. We should not selfishly claim the spiritual or material gifts God has so freely given us. Jesus calls each of us to examine our hearts and realize the amazing sacrifice of Jesus and the awesome gifts God has freely given us. Our response can be none other than to willingly give of all that we have and are. God did not limit His love and gifts to us. We, therefore, cannot place limits on our giving.

# The Freedom of Giving

## Day 7

*Freely you have received, freely give (Matthew 10:8).*



Jesus just completed an extensive course in basic training with His disciples. He called them, prepared them, trained and showed them the ropes. As a commanding officer gives final instructions to jittery young soldiers preparing for a military strike, Jesus informs the disciples of the battle plan. He provides detailed instructions, warns them of pitfalls and hardships to come and, finally, Jesus offers encouragement.

We are reminded in this text of all that God has given us in Christ. He has lavishly poured out His grace upon us, redeeming us, calling us as His own, giving us new life with Him. Ephesians 1 tells us that we have truly been blessed with every sort of spiritual blessing. We have received all this freely.

God is the source of everything we have—our time, our talents and our finances—enabling us to give to others in His name, so that “they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). What has God given you that you could freely give? Is it time? Do you find yourself with “free” time on your hands that could be used in His Kingdom? Has God gifted you with a particular skill or trade that could be used at our church? Has God blessed you financially? Could you free up some funds to extend His Kingdom? Take a moment and reflect on how God has given you the undeserved gift of grace through His Son, Jesus Christ. Now reread Matthew 10:8.

## The Measure of Giving Day 8

*On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made (Corinthians 16:2).*



In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul emphasizes the need to be purposeful in routinely and systematically saving for God's work. He asks that each one in the church of Corinth set aside a sum of money the first day of the week for later distribution to the church in Jerusalem.

By taking this approach (instead of making a massive effort at the last minute), Paul made it easier for the church to achieve its goals. Paul also wanted the church in Corinth to be proactive in their giving. Their earnest desire to contribute to God's work would be demonstrated by setting aside a sum of money before he arrived, not after.

Finally, Paul was giving a personal challenge to each believer. He asked each individual to examine their income and give accordingly. In the same way, Christ challenges us not only to give our money, but also our time and talents. We can examine the gifts God has given us and give back in a purposeful, proactive and personal way.

## The Manner of Giving: Willingly Day 13

*For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have (2 Corinthians 8:12).*



Many people see tithing as a requirement—the “Christian thing to do.” Paul, however, begins with “if the willingness is there ...” and not “this must be done.” Mark 12:41-44 relates the story of the widow's offering. “Jesus said, ‘I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.’” Jesus' emphasis on the widow's willingness to give all she had despite her poverty indicates to us it was the desire of the widow to give, not the amount of the gift, that's important to God. Ananias, in Acts 5, had much more to give financially, but withheld part to keep for himself. He was not judged on his gift, but rather on the deceit in his heart. As Christians, we should model the willingness in our hearts to share what God has so generously given to us.

Asking God for “extra” money to share bypasses the point of willingness. Our prayer, rather, should center on the words of David in Psalm 51, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love .... Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalm 51:1,10).

A pure heart and steadfast spirit will lead to the willingness to give, without the worry of how much.

## The Manner of Giving: Sacrificially

### Day 12

*As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on (Luke 21:1-4).*



Sacrifice. Does the word conjure up an image of a lamb or a goat being slain and offered on an Old Testament altar? Or do you see Jesus on the cross—the ultimate sacrifice of all time? Do you think of the time you gave up that fishing trip to take your wife to the Mall of America? Or do you remember the time you passed up lunch with a friend to accompany 30 first-graders on an all-day field trip?

Sacrifice hits us where we live. Whether it be time, service, assets or money, it requires us to give up something we hold dear. Why is sacrifice difficult? We are prone to an attitude of entitlement. Our society encourages individualism and success, often at the expense of others. The first step in becoming a truly sacrificial giver is to recognize that all we have comes from God and belongs to Him. Without Him, we would have nothing. A second step to being able to give as this widow did, is overcoming our fear of not being able to provide for ourselves and our loved ones. Giving beyond our means, however, is not to be confused with living beyond our means. As seen in this example and in the example of the widow who provided for Elijah and never ran out of flour and oil, when we give all we have back to God, He will provide for us beyond our wildest imaginations.

Let's take God at His word. We've seen how He blesses those who give from a heart that recognizes the great sacrifice God made for us and that we can trust Him enough to provide all we need. Can we love and trust Him that much?

## The Measure of Giving

### Day 9

*As soon as the order went out, the Israelites generously gave the first fruits of their grain, new wine, oil and honey and all that the fields produced. They brought a great amount, a tithe of everything (2 Chronicles 31:5).*



In several places throughout the Bible, God encourages us to give the first fruits of our "crops" (income). Why did God specify the first fruits—not the middle portion, not the last portion, not the leftovers—but the first fruits? While it is true that God called the children of Israel to offer the choicest and best of what they had to Him, could it be that the issue God was addressing was more about our trust than about money? Would it really matter which portion you gave if it was the exact same amount? Probably not, but the issue is really not about giving as much as it is about trusting God. Giving the first fruits requires greater trust than at any other time.

Do we believe God will truly supply all our needs, including our finances, if we freely give a tithe of our first fruits? The Bible clearly states, "Blessed is he who trusts in the Lord" (Proverbs 16:20).

A close walk with the Lord requires us to put our complete trust in Him, including areas of our life where we are prone to forget who really owns it all. We can be assured that "God will meet all our needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Remember, "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the *first fruits* of all your crops; then your barn will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9-10).

## The Manner of Giving: Freely Day 10

*And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give, but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have (2 Corinthians 8:10-13).*



After church, a family was discussing the service over Sunday dinner. Dad commented on how badly the organist sounded. Mom said the choir wasn't prepared. Nancy complained the preacher was boring. Jack listened thoughtfully for a moment, and then he said, "It wasn't that bad of a show for a buck." Paul was complementing the church in Corinth on their attitude toward giving, not just on the act or amount of their giving. In the previous verses, Paul said he was testing the sincerity of their love by their desire to give.

Likewise, our love is tested by our willingness to offer our prayers, funds, time and talents. He points out two very important points in this passage. Giving is an important part of Christian discipleship—the completion of this act is important. But equally important is the willingness and desire to do so. As with most issues in the Christian life, attitudes are as important as actions. Our attitude toward giving reveals our values and the sincerity of our love for others and God. If you need a change in attitude, ask God to fill your heart and motivate you to give in love.

## The Manner of Giving: Generously Day 11

*Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share (1 Timothy 6:18).*



Generosity never stands alone. It is always associated with other traits. It is a symptom, not an independent entity. Find a generous person and you will find contentment, gratitude, humility, love and compassion. The person cannot help but be generous because everything he is and has is tied up in relation to God. The generous person, for example, might be so thankful for the family van that a natural expression of their stewardship would be loaning it to the youth group for a weekend outing.

Contentment is a key factor to generosity. It walks hand-in-hand with gratitude because only when a person no longer desires for self is generosity perfected. Maybe that's why Paul is speaking to the rich in this passage. In the preceding verse, Paul instructs Timothy, "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." The product of arrogance and trusting in riches is to hoard wealth and continue to be greedy. It's so easy to want more and more, isn't it?

That's why Paul commands the rich to adjust their behavior and elevate their motives, because greed, to any degree, closes the door to generosity. Many years ago, I wrote "A Page of Priorities" at the top of the page in my Bible where 1 Timothy 6 appears. I encourage all of us to be content and grateful. May generosity overflow from our cup of humility, gratitude, contentment and love. Let's take hold of life that is truly life!