

Stewardship Messages Part 2

LIVING AND GIVING ABUNDANTLY

Mark 12:41-44; 2 Cor. 8 & 9

Opening: Good Morning and welcome to the Calvary Family. Friends I count it an honor and a joy to be able to come to you this week and share a message with you. Let's take out our message notes and get started.

And I don't ever want to get away from telling you every week.../ encouraging you every week that it doesn't matter where you are in life or who you are.../ Friends, the only thing that matters to God starts today. God is a God that's all about new beginnings. See God's not concerned with your past, with your yesterdays and neither are we! Our purpose here at the Calvary Family is to encourage you to begin this new life, to start this

new beginning in life that's available to you and then we want to provide you with the tools and resources to grow and enjoy this new beginning. And here today at the Calvary Family Church you are surrounded by people who have found this new beginning and are now growing and enjoying this new life that comes through the power of God through a relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Last time I spoke to you we looked at what is stewardship and what is God's plan for man. And we saw from God's Word, the bible, that God is the owner of everything. God is the creator and we mankind were put here to be the manager of all of His creation, to be the steward of everything.

And today I want to continue to talk about stewardship but this week I want to talk to you in the context of giving. Today's message is titled:

Living and Giving Abundantly.

You know sometimes I think I'm on more mailing lists than anybody in the whole world? I probably get four or five requests it seems every week for financial support. Everybody wants money. Pat Robertson wants money, Benny Hinn wants money, Billy Graham wants money, Men's Promise Keepers wants money, Compassion International wants money and the list goes on and on.../

And I have to confess that I think from all of these request that I get... I am often reluctant to teach about giving. The fact is I've seen so many people over the

years manipulated, pressured and even hurt and burned by high powered sales pitches with stories that are only meant to manipulate people's emotions. And these things I don't think God wants us to have anything to do with.../ if we are not taking care of our immediate family here at Calvary.

So today I want to simply look at what does the Bible really say about giving. I want to encourage you to throw away all the techniques and the Madison Avenue sales pitches. **What does the Bible say about giving?** And from this then you'll be able to evaluate when you get all these requests in the mail and you hear the guy on TV saying "This is our last week and if you don't give something tragic is going to happen. We're going to go bankrupt." Or "God's going to allow me to

die and after the broadcast he drives away in his Mercedes. After today you will be able to evaluate things by the Scripture.

It's a fact of life that the essence of Christianity itself if you think about it is all about giving. The Bible says that God is a giver. The Bible says "*God so loved the world that He gave.*" When God wants us to give, all He wants us to do is become like Himself. God is a giver. He's given to us. Now He wants us to learn to be givers and listen careful to this, you will never be happy in your walk with the Lord until you become a giver

The word "give" is used over 1500 times in the Bible. The essence of Christianity is giving. But when we look at what Jesus has to say and what Paul has to

say, we discover that Jesus was much more interested in the **motive** of someone's giving, not the amount of giving. In other words, He was much more interested in why we give, not how much we give. He's much more interested in the quality of the giver instead of the quantity of the gift. He's saying **attitude** in giving is much more important than amount. In fact, God says if you have a bad attitude about it, don't bother. Don't give. Don't give just to be giving. **If your attitude's not right, don't even worry about it.**

See Friends giving is a responsibility. But more than that, it's an opportunity. I want to share with you the reasons why the Bible says we're to give. There are three reasons. Then I think you'll see how things like

manipulation and pressure and guilt motivated giving in Gods eyes has no place in the concept of stewardship.

The Bible teaches that our giving is to be a response to God in three ways:

- It's to be a response for what God has done for me in the past.
- It's to be a response for what God is doing for me in the present.
- It's to be a response for what God will do for me in the future.

And that's it. Not for any other reasons, not for gain, not for building up my ego, not to get my name on a plaque, not because I feel guilty if I don't give, but for those reasons I just gave you.

Why do we give? I want to encourage you to READ this week 2 Corinthians 8-9 they are the classic passages on giving.

I'm excited about sharing this with you. I know that the results of giving in your life will be beneficial to you, because they have been in my life. So why do we give? That's what I want to answer today. Maybe it's because God needs the money? He just is going through some hard times. Maybe God needs your money? He's poor? No that not the reason. Well if that isn't it then maybe we are to give because God wants us to be poor? That's it.../ No.

But He does give us for three reasons in His Word, the bible, and were going to look at two of them this week and the third next week. In 2 Corinthians 8:7.

Paul is talking about giving. He says, *"Just as you excel in everything else, 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**."* Circle that word GIVING. What God is saying is He wants you to grow in your giving, as much as you grow in your faith, as much as you grow in His love, in His knowledge. He wants you to grow in giving, too.

1. So Giving allows us to express appreciation for past blessings. Where we were and where He has taken us too. That's the first reason we give and it's the greatest reason. God says your giving is gratitude for yesterday's blessings that I already gave you. It's the highest motive. It's Thankfulness. Look at the scripture in your

notes. 2 Corinthians 9:7 *"Each man is to give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion. [God says you shouldn't give because you're pressured to give or because you feel guilty.] For God loves a cheerful giver. ... This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but it's also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God."* The number one reason we give is out of gratitude for His past blessings to you.

We know that God is the source of all that we have. He's the source of our life. He's the source of our abilities. He's the source of our creativity. He's the source of all the natural resources. He's the source of everything. **We give because God first gave to us.**

Now let's look at the next scripture in our notes

2 Corinthians 8:9 *"For through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich, yet for your sakes, He became poor so that you through His poverty might become rich."* God says we give because God first gave to us. Jesus said *"Freely have you received, now freely give."*

In 5 months, 26 days, 12 hrs and 45 minutes. But who's counting.../ my wife is going to have a birthday. I can guarantee you that I will go out and I will buy her a gift. Why? Because I love her. Why? Because I appreciate her. Why? Because giving a gift is the most practical way for me to express my appreciation to her. And when we give to God we are expressing our love and appreciation to Him. We're saying, "God, I love You. God I care about You. God I'm grateful for all

You've done for me." We read in 2 Corinthians 8:8 Paul tells us, *"For I'm not commanding you. But I want you to test the sincerity of your love."* **God says our giving proves our love to Him.** No matter what we say, the truth is in your actions and what we do with our money tells what we really value in life. It tells us where our feet are heading.../ God says, put your money where your mouth is. The first reason we give is not because we're under pressure but simply because we want to express appreciation for God's goodness to us.

2. Giving allows me to examine my motivation in the present. Giving allows me to examine my motivation in the present. It helps me to look beyond my own needs, my own self. See all of us by nature are self-centered.

We all have a tendency to only think, "What's in it for me, Does it make me feel good?" And we have a tendency to start thinking everything is mine, mine, mine. It's my time, my money, my resources, my everything. All that we can see sometimes is ourselves, our desires, our wants. And what giving does is help us examine that motivation. Periodically, I need a values check up. I need to look at my motives and my values and my priorities and see, Am I just living for myself or Is there somebody else that I'm living for, something else. When I sit down and I write out my giving check, that is a reminder to me. It is a reminder to me that, one, God's the source of all I have. He is the source of it all. And two, I'm just a manager of it. It's a constant reminder. Giving helps me express appreciation for my

past but more than that, it helps me clarify my priorities and values in the present. It helps me examine my motivations and stay on God's program not mine.

The Bible says the second reason we give is to **prevent** selfishness.

It helps us to keep our priorities in balance. That's what God's Word, the Bible says, Deuteronomy 14:23 the purpose of tithing is to teach us to put God first. Matthew 6:33 says *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these other things will be added unto you."* Put your priorities in place.

When Edna-Wynne and I first started to understand that all we had was God's and we were just His managers, one of the first things we decided was that no matter what else happened, God would get paid first.

No matter what.../ we would be faithful to His Word.../
Why did we decide that.../ we did it because He's is.../
and we want Him to be number One in our lives in
everything about us. We want Him to be number One.

I have to admit that many years ago when I first
struggled with the concept of tithing – and when I use
the word tithing. Tithing is giving the first ten percent of
our income back to God. When I first struggled with the
concept of tithing, I kind of prayed, "God, are You really
sure You need this ten percent more than I need it?"
Now next week we will look at this in more detail. But I
would say, Hey God, look at my bills look at my debt.
And I felt the Lord answering back, "Bill, you've missed
the whole point. I don't need your money Bill. It's not
your money that I want. What I want is what it

represents in your life. Your money represents your life.
That's what I want, God told me."

God does not want your money either. What **He wants**
is what it represents. He wants you. He wants your
life. He wants you to commit yourself to Him. Then
you can give in gratitude.

Notice in your notes this is what Paul's talking
about in 2 Corinthians 8:5. He's bragging on these
people and their generous giving. He says they did it in
the right way. *"They did not do as we expected but they
gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in
keeping with God's will."* First they gave themselves,
their lives, to God. Then they gave their offering to help
out other people. To help out furthering the "Good
News." That's the priority. God says, "Don't worry

about giving Me your money if I don't have your life. I don't need your money." **We don't give because God needs it.../ but because we need it, we need to give. Because of what it does to us. It keeps us from being selfish.** It keeps us from being scrooges, from being self-centered and thinking we're our own god and the whole world revolves around us.

So why do we give? Is it because of guilt? No. Is it because of pressure? No. Because of our sob stories? No. It is because, number one, we express appreciation for past blessings God has given.../

And number two, we examine our motivations in the present. It helps us keep our priorities straight. That's what God says. Luke 16:11 *"And if you are not faithful with money, God will not entrust to you true*

riches." See **stewardship and spirituality are absolutely linked together.** God is saying one influences the other.

I've talked to a lot of Christians who don't understand why they're not growing in their faith. Why their not growing in the Lord. Why they never have any answered prayers it seems in their life. Why they don't see any fantastic changes in their life and victories over their hurts, habits and hang-ups. They just stay the same year in and year out with the Lord. And I encourage them well maybe it's because you've never dealt with this vital area of your life – I ask this question to them. Who owns you? (REPEATS)

That's what stewardship is all about. Stewardship is simply lordship. It's saying, "Jesus Christ, be Lord of

everything – my time, my money, my physical, my
everything is your, you are the Lord of it.../ I am the
manager, the steward of it." So we give to express
appreciation. We give to examine our motivation. It
keeps us on track. It keeps us balanced.

Let us prayer.