

Stewardship Messages Part 2

LIVING AND GIVING ABUNDANTLY

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

Billy Graham was returning to Charlotte after a speaking engagement and when his plane arrived there was a limousine there to transport him to his home. As he prepared to get into the limo, he stopped and spoke to the driver.

"You know" he said, "I am 87 years old and I have never

driven a limousine. Would you mind if I drove it for a while?" The driver said, "No problem. Have at it."

Billy gets into the driver's seat and they head off down the highway. A short distance away sat a rookie State Trooper operating his first speed trap.

The long black limo went by him doing 70 in a 55 mph zone.

The trooper pulled out and easily caught the limo and he got out of his patrol car to begin the procedure.

The young trooper walked up to the driver's door and when the glass was rolled down, he was surprised to see who was driving.

He immediately excused himself and went back to his car and called his supervisor.

He told the supervisor, "I know we are supposed to enforce the law.... But I also know that important people are given certain courtesies.

I need to know what I should do because

I have stopped a very important person."

The supervisor asked, "Is it the governor?"

The young trooper said, "No, he's more important than that."

The supervisor said, "Oh, so it's the president."

The young trooper said, "No, he's even more important than that." The supervisor finally asked, "Well then, who is it?" The young trooper said,

"I think it's Jesus, because he's got Billy Graham for a chauffeur!"

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 every 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 encouraging you every week in some way... See to God it doesn't matter where you are in life or who you are... 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 here at Calvary! Our purpose here at the Calvary Family is to encourage you to begin this new life that available to all. Our purpose here at Calvary is to encourage you to start this new beginning that's available to you through a relationship with Jesus Christ and listen it doesn't stop there... Then we want to provide you with the tools and resources to grow and enjoy this new life that comes

through the power of God through a relationship with Jesus Christ. **PRAYER**

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, in the Book of Genesis that God is the owner of everything. God created everything including you and He put us here to be the manager of all of His creation, for us 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 from someone. Everybody wants money. Pat Robertson, Benny Hinn, Billy Graham, Joyce Myers, Men's Promise Keepers, Compassion International. They all want money.

And I have to confess that I think from all of these request that I get... I am often very reluctant to teach about giving here at Calvary. The fact is I've seen so many people over the year's manipulated, pressured, high powered pitches with stories that are only meant to manipulate people's emotions to give money. And these things are okay but I don't think God wants us to have anything to do with them if we are not taking care of our immediate family here at Calvary. What does God say about this and that a good question.

So today and next week I want to simply look at what does the Bible really say about giving to us. 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 to this ministry or me. We're going to go bankrupt. Or God's going to allow me to die and after the broadcast as he drives away in his Mercedes. So today and next week you will be able to evaluate things by the Scripture and make a decision. Let start by saying this:

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 calls you and

I to give, all He is asking is for us to 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 the giver God has created you to become, why, because your creator is a giver.

The word "give" is used over 1500 times in the Bible. The essence of Christianity is giving and when we look at what Jesus taught, we discover that Jesus is much more interested in the **motive** of someone's giving, then He is in the amount of giving. In other words, He was much more interested in why we give, not how much we give. Jesus tells us that **attitude** in giving is much more important than the 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. God says, **If your attitude's not right, don't even worry about giving.**

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

I'm excited about sharing this with you. Because 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. Let think about it for a moment... Maybe were called to give because God needs the money? Maybe he is just going through some hard economic times Himself and just needs your money. No that not the reason. Well if that isn't it then maybe we are to give because God wants us to be poor? No, that's not it either.

But He does give us for three reasons in His Word, the bible, and today were going to look at two of them this week and the third next week. Let's read 2 Corinthians 8:7 together. 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. So what does that mean really? We'll first:

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 we give. God says your giving is gratitude for my 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 don't take a physical offering here if you noticed.

We put a basket in the back and encourage you to give to the work of the Lord...

We know that God is the source of all that we have. We know that God is 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 lets 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."*

Let me try and give you an example here. In 6 months, 26 days, 12 hrs and 45 minutes. But who's counting.../ my wife, Edna-Wynne 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 our 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 and when I sit down and I write out my giving check, that is a reminder to me. When I write out my tithe check 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, it's all His, I'm just a manager of it. It a constant reminder, it helps me clarify my priorities and values in the present. It helps me examine my motivations and stay on God's program not my program.

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 mangers, 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 stewardship and began hearing about tithing – and just for knowledge when I use the word tithe. Tithing is giving the first ten percent of our income back to God. When I first struggled with the concept of tithing being part of stewardship, 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 all my bills look at all 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, that what 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 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 and helps us focus on whose everything really is:

So why do we give? Is it because of guilt? No. Is it because of pressure? No. Because of our sob story some told you? No. It is because, number one, we express appreciation for past blessings God has given us.../ 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 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, who owns your pocketbook? (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.