

Stewardship Messages Part 3

LIVING AND GIVING ABUNDANTLY

Mark 12:41-44; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9

Today we're going to continue to look at what does the Bible really say about giving to us.

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 us to give, all He really 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 carefully to this, you will never be happy in your walk with the Lord until you become a giver, why, because your creator is a giver.

The word "give" is used over 1500 times in the Bible as I said, "the essence of Christianity is giving." But when

we look at what Jesus has to say and what Paul has to say to us, 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 and what He is saying to us is **attitude** in giving is much more important than amount. In fact, God says if you have a bad attitude about giving, don't bother. Don't give. Don't give just to be giving.

Now last week Bob Goslee talked to you about two reasons from God's Word, the bible you should give, and today I am going to give you the third reason God's word, the bible tells us to give. It comes from 2 Corinthians 8:7. Paul is talking about giving and 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 to us 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. Last week we said that:

1. Giving allows us to express appreciation for past blessings.

2. Giving allows me to examine my motivation in the Present.

And today were going to look at the third reason:

3. We give because it allows us to enlarge our expectations of the future.

Giving is a three-focused activity we have seen from 2 Corinthians 8 and 9.

1st it is showing gratitude for the past.

2nd is keeping my values and my priorities balanced in the present. And

3rd it is also a demonstration of faith into the future. We express our expectations of what God wants to do in the future. 2 Corinthians 9:6 Paul says, "*Remember this, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. And whoever sows generously will also reap generously.*" He's using the analogy of a farmer. Just like a farmer goes out and scatters a whole bunch of seeds, he's going to get a big crop. If you go out and throw one little corn seed in the field, what will you get? Not much.

You sow bountifully, you reap bountifully. This is a basic principle taught all through scriptures. It says in Galatians, "*You reap what you sow.*" Here it says, you reap in proportion to what you give. If you sow sparingly, you will reap sparingly. **I believe that giving is the number**

one way we demonstrate faith in the Christian life. And why do I say that because nothing is more important to us than our money. A person has never been dealt with by God until He's dealt with his finances. Giving shows our faith. God says it's like planting seeds. It's like a deposit. No deposit, no return, giving means making an investment in God for the future.

Jesus said, *"Don't just store up treasures here on earth. Lay up treasures in heaven."* Jesus is saying invest for the future. How do you invest for the future? Simple every time you give cheerfully you're investing for the future. God says every time you give, you're investing in the future. That's why in Proverbs 19:17 it says (Living Bible) *"When you give to the poor it's like lending to the Lord and He repays wonderful interest on your loan."* God says, "I see you're giving not just as gratitude for the past

and not just as helping you maintain your balance in the presence. But I see you're giving also as an investment for the future." The Bible says everything will be rewarded that you do. Even if you give a cup of cold water in His name, it will be rewarded. That's how you lay up treasures in heaven. **You can't out give God. He is a much bigger giver than you are.** The more we give the more we get back. The more we're blessed.

In the book of Malachi in God's word, the Bible it talks about tithing *"Bring the whole tithe [the ten percent] into the storehouse that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the Lord [God says, I dare you! He's laying down a challenge to you. I dare you to try it] and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have enough room for it."* **God says, "I dare you! I dare you to try and see if**

you can out give Me. The more you give back to Me, the more I bless your life. The more I will bless you in return."

All of this is saying what we read earlier, Whoever sows sparingly reaps sparingly. Whoever sows generously will reap generously. It is saying, **"Your giving determines what God can do in your life. That is a fundamental principle of stewardship. God says we reap what we sow. Our giving determines what He does in our life."**

Let me ask you a question? What are you expecting God to do in your life? How much do you want God to be in your life, to bless your life? How much are you expecting God to act? How much do you believe in Him for this year for your life? If you want the answer to that question, if you want to know how much God is able to do in your life this year.../ just look at your giving and that

will tell you. The Bible says you will reap what you sow.

Abundant living begins with abundant giving.

God says don't give because somebody manipulates your emotions. God says don't give because you feel guilty. God says don't give because you're under pressure.

God says you give as an act of gratitude, as an act of keeping your priorities in order, and as a statement of faith saying, "I believe that God is going to bless me this year, so I will give to Him." It's a statement of faith. God says, "You cannot out give Me." Try me!

That's why so many of the greatest promises in the Bible have to do with giving. Luke 6:38 *"Give and it will be given to you."* Who's saying this to you. Your Creator... God is talking to you. God is saying *"Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over."* God says, You give me a little;

just see what kind of results you get back. *"... it will be poured into your lap for with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."* God says, "You cannot out give Me."

Let me try and summarize last weeks and today's message to you. What I'm saying is giving is so simple. It's not all this high powered techniques and all these things -- appeals through the mail and on television. Giving is not asking you to make some kind of decision today.

Giving is something you ought to think about, something you need to pray about... I think is something you ought to consider. I'm going to ask you to take the next seven days and consider this... ask yourself this question. How much do I believe God? How much am I grateful to God for? Ask yourself, "Where are my priorities?"

Talk with God and ask Him to help you set up this kind of regular program -- regular, planned, and proportional giving. Let God do it.

For some of you this may mean you start tithing. You start giving for the first time the tithe, the 10%. For others it might mean going beyond that tithe. I don't know. It's your decision. God says, "But if your attitude isn't right, just don't bother, don't worry about it. God doesn't want your money. God says, what I want is you and what money represents to you."

I want to make sure you get this... Friends, don't ever let anybody ever tell you that God doesn't expect you to give back to Him ten percent of your income and give it back to Him in gratitude. I don't care how you justify it. I don't care what you think. In view of what we just heard from God's word, the bible we all need to throw all our old

thinking and all our old ways... Throw them all away. God expects you to give 10 percent of you income! (90 with God is worth more than 100 without)

Why? It is a reminder that all of what we've got came from Him in the first place. It's a reminder. God doesn't own ten percent of my income. He owns it all. I am the manager of it. He just lets me live on the ninety percent left over. The ten percent is a reminder of where it all came from. God is saying, "I just want you to remember and never forget that if it weren't for Me, you wouldn't have anything and you could lose it all overnight."

You say wait a minute Bill, "It was my ideas that got me where I am today. It was my creativity. It was my hard work." Well my only respond to you would be.../ who gave you your mind? Who gave you the ability and

strength? God could have made you a vegetable. You could have been a rutabaga, or an onion, oakcra!

You maybe sitting there thinking "Everything I have in life, I got it because I worked hard! I'm a self made person!" "I did it all!" Friends, if it weren't for God, you wouldn't even get out of bed in the morning. If God took His hand of blessing off of your life, you wouldn't even have the health you have to work, you wouldn't have the mind you have to think. Who gave you that creativity? Your Creator. Who gave you that ability to work and to produce and to create? God did and only God did! And God just says, "I want you never to forget that I'm the source. I'm the creator. If it weren't for Me, you wouldn't have your job. You wouldn't have your life. I made you. I'm your maker."

Friends, that's what tithing is all about. God says I just don't want you to **forget** where it's all coming from. I don't want you to forget that I am the source of your blessing. That I am the creator, God says, I own it all. And you are my managers, not the owners. We get to manage it and we get to enjoy it and use it and develop it. But we don't own it. It's all God's.

Deuteronomy 8:17 *"You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hand have produced this wealth for me.'..." "You may say 'My power and the strength of my hand have produced this wealth for me' but remember the Lord your God for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth."* God has blessed us so much in this country that we live in, so much in this area we live in. We live in one of the most affluent areas.../ one of the most affluent countries in the world. And God has blessed

us and He says, "I just don't want you to forget that I'm the one who gives you the ability. I'm the one who gave you the creative ability and the desire to work and the desire to produce and the desire to invent and to change and develop and manage. That's what I put you here for and I get pleasure out of watching you do a good job of it. But don't forget I'm the owner and you're responsible to Me." Never forget the Lord your God for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth.

Listen to God's Word, *"Be sure to set aside a tenth of all your fields produce each year. ... So that you may learn to revere the Lord your God always* Deuteronomy 14:22 is talking about tithing. Tithing is the concept, God says, of giving the first ten percent of all of our profits, of all our income back to Him. God's Word, the Bible says, *"Be sure to set aside a tenth of all your field's produce*

each year." Why? Last part of v. 23 *"... so that you may learn to revere the Lord your God always."* That's the purpose of tithing. The Bible says "The purpose of tithing is to teach us to put God first in every situation." We don't give to help out God. God doesn't need our giving. We give for our own **benefit**. It's a reminder that God's the one who blesses and if it wasn't for Him, we wouldn't have anything. The purpose of tithing is to put God first