

# Daily Devotions

for the whole family!

## Week 3: Embracing a Lifestyle of Giving Joyfully and Generously

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By Ron and Phyllis Chewning

### Week 3 – Monday – Bible and Money

**Scripture:** “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils” (1 Timothy 6:10).



Did you know that money is mentioned more frequently in the Bible than heaven, faith, prayer, or eternal life? Richard Halverson had this to say: “Jesus Christ said more about money than about any other single thing, because, when it comes to a man’s real nature, money is of first importance. Money is an exact index to a man’s true character. All through Scripture there is an intimate correlation between the development of a man’s character and how he handles his money.”

Jesus talked about money in 16 out of 38 parables, and in the Gospels one out of ten verses concerned money. There are over 2000 verses on money and possessions. Jesus said you can’t serve God and money (Matthew 6:24). He talked about the Rich Young Ruler who cared more about his money than he did the things of God (Luke 18:18-25). He gave us the Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man (Luke 16:19-31) and the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21). He warned us not to lay up our treasures on this earth. Jesus said, “*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*” (Matthew 6:21). This was a theme that Jesus came back to over and over again, and we have to assume there is reason for the frequency of those warnings. He had a purpose for talking so much about money. He saw in money a very dangerous and threatening obstacle to those who are called to be His followers. He said it was more difficult for a rich man to go to heaven than a camel to go through the eye of a needle (Luke 18:25). By the frequency with which Jesus talked about money we realize that we need to be careful about the effects money can have on our lives.

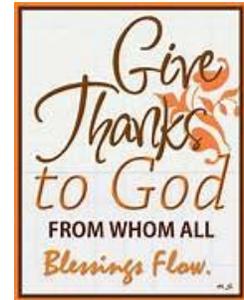
As the Apostle Paul wrote, “*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils*” (1 Timothy 6:10).

This quote from C. S. Lewis helps us put money and possessions in perspective: “He who has God and everything has no more than he who has God alone.”

Dear Lord, grant me a proper attitude toward the money You entrust to me. Amen.

### **Week 3 – Tuesday – Developing an Unselfish Character**

**Scripture:** “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20:35).



The pattern of this world is to acquire and to hold on to material acquisitions, but Scripture says, “*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind*” (Romans 12:2). This transformation is brought about in you, the believer, through your relationship with Jesus. The Holy Spirit, through Word and Sacrament, renews your mind so that, instead of following the pattern of the world, you seek to follow your Savior. Rather than acquiring and hoarding, which leads only to misery, not self-fulfillment, you will want to give freely, even sacrificially, as Christ does.

1 Timothy 6:18-19 exhorts, “[*We*] are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for [ourselves] as a good foundation for the future, so that [you] may take hold of that which is truly life.” Life that is truly life belongs to those who are unselfish givers. Giving is an indicator of your unselfishness and an outward litmus test of the inner condition of your heart.

The astonishing thing is that, in God’s economy, the more you give, the more you have left to give. Because God replenishes you, your giving can be a daily and a lifetime activity. “*You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God*” (2 Corinthians 9:11).

Dear Heavenly Father, grant me a loving and giving heart. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

### **Week 3 – Wednesday – The Joy of Giving**

**Scripture:** “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation*” (2 Corinthians 5:17).



There is a story of a woman who saw a poor barefoot child roaming the street of a large city. She took the child by the hand to the closest shoe store, and bought the little girl socks and shoes. With “happy feet” the little girl ran gleefully from the store.

Disappointed that she had not even received a word of gratitude from the child, the woman paid for the socks and shoes. As she walked out the shop door, the little girl came back to the store, eyes bright with excitement. "Are you God's wife?" she asked the woman. Smiling, the woman said, "No, but I am God's child." The little girl said, "I knew that you were some kin of His."

As God's people, nurtured by Word and Sacrament, we are transformed into His likeness. Christ's character becomes our character, and we become more like Him. Because His goodness flows through us, we are able to offer shoes and socks to those who are in need. Our eyes are opened to opportunities that need our support and our hearts willingly share what we are able. We are stewards of God's love and generosity to the whole world. As Jesus said, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" (Acts 20:35)

If you are not experiencing the joy of giving, ask God to change your heart so you can grow in your giving and become a cheerful giver.

Dear Heavenly Father, continue to mold and change my heart into Your likeness. Amen.

### **Week 3 – Thursday – Giving Cheerfully**

**Scripture:** "*Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver*" (2 Corinthians 9:7).



One day a second-grade boy came to school without his lunch. He did not think about it until his classmates started washing their hands and getting out their lunch boxes. He was a shy little kid, and he did not want to say anything because he was embarrassed, but his stomach was really growling. Against his will, his lip started to quiver and his eyes filled with tears. Soon his teacher noticed and then all the students, and he was forced to tell them his problem. No sooner were the words out of his mouth than his classmates were looking into their lunches. One student had two sandwiches and gave the hungry boy one. Another child had an apple and an orange and gave his friend his choice of fruit. Another had too many cookies (Could that ever be?!) and shared them. In short, the hungry boy had a feast, all because of the generosity of others who had more than they needed.

This kind of thing happens often. One person is in need and others give so that the need is met. This is just as God has planned it. The Bible says that "*your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness*" (2 Corinthians 8:14). Sometimes we need to get, and, at other times, we need to give. God gives us the sun and the rain, homes to keep us warm and dry, food to nourish our bodies, clothes to wear, and many other things we could name. In other words, most of us have "plenty." God uses those who have plenty to help others. Yet all of us should prayerfully consider giving part of the income we receive from work or other sources of income away. Our first gift should go to our church in the weekly offering. Certainly we can think of many ways we would like to spend that money and maybe we're not such cheerful givers. God can handle that problem, too. As we ask Him to help us give and to

make us happy about giving, God will answer our prayers and change our attitudes. Everything God asks us to do, including giving, He helps us to do and gives us the right attitude about doing it.

Dear Lord, continue show me opportunities to give to others who are in need. Amen.

### **Week 3 – Friday – Giving Infuses Life with Joy**

**Scripture:** “... *Whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully*” (2 Corinthians 9:6).



When we give to God through giving to our church and others, we experience one of the true joys of being Christians. Jesus said, “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20:35). God doesn’t need our gifts, but He asks us to give them. He accepts and uses them and gives us joy in sharing them. As we respond to God’s love for us by giving back to Him part of what He’s given to us, He reacts by giving us even more. “*Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you*” (Luke 6:38). Although we don’t give so that we will receive God’s blessings, God’s Word promises us that, when we give faithfully and willingly, we will receive an abundance of spiritual blessings and, at times, material blessings as well .

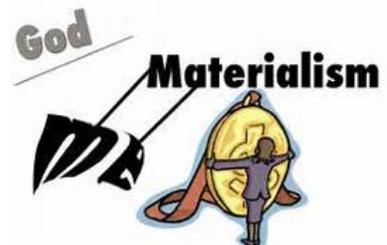
Have you ever wondered why you are left with such a joyful feeling when you are able to give a gift to your church or to help a person in need? The answer to that question may be rooted in us as Christians who are being recreated in the image of God. To be made in God’s image means we are made to be like Him whose nature is to give. Giving helps us feel fulfilled as we reflect His nature. Although the image of God was lost by sin, as those converted by faith in Jesus, we “*have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator*” (Colossians 3:10). Our Creator empowers us to give joyfully according to His will. With this attitude of joyful gratitude, we can reflect His image.

Our pursuit for fulfillment and joy culminates in the discovery that we receive those things when, by God’s grace, we respond with eagerness to God’s directive to give. Like David, we exclaim, “*But who [are we]...that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from You, and of Your own have we give You*” (1 Chronicles 29:14).

Dear Father, help me to experience the joy of giving. I pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

### **Week 3 – Saturday – Antidote for Materialism**

**Scripture:** “*Do not love the world or the things in the world*” (1 John 2:15a).



We live in a society that focuses on the acquisition of more and more things. We are daily bombarded by advertising that tells

us that our lives will not be complete unless we buy what the advertisers are trying to sell. We see our friends and neighbors with new cars and boats, and we notice an attitude of materialism creeping into our own thinking. Instead of maintaining an eternal perspective and focusing on God's abundant gifts to us, we're looking at the things of the world to bring us satisfaction.

God doesn't desire that we go without any comforts of life or that we live in ramshackle homes and drive beat-up cars. What He does desire is that we put Him first. The best way to break loose from the grip of greed and materialism is to give. "*God loves a cheerful giver,*" Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 9:7. One church bulletin added this message: "God loves a cheerful giver, but we will accept from a grouch!" Giving under duress, however, bars us from the joy God wants us to experience from giving willingly.

Paul commended the Macedonian churches because "*in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in wealth of generosity on their part*" (2 Corinthians 8:2). How was it that people in "*extreme poverty*" can give with an "*abundance of joy*"? The answer is found in verse 5 "*...they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.*"

May we, nurtured by God's Word and Sacrament, be equipped by His Spirit to ignore the world's pull on our affections so that we will be eager to give as we have been blessed and even beyond.

### **Week 3 – Sunday – Work in Progress**

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

Many of us who are married have on occasion spent more on gifts for our spouses than we can afford. Filled with love, we give generously and passionately. In Scripture, we find Jesus reaching out to people in love and compassion, and those people, after being filled with Jesus' love, responded by giving generously. In the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke, we read that Jesus met with a very wealthy tax-collector named Zacchaeus. Prior to meeting with Jesus, Zacchaeus' heart was filled with the love of money. After Jesus changed his heart, his passion for money was changed to a passion to love Jesus and others. Filled with love, he gave half of all his money to the poor. In the giving to our spouses and the giving of Zacchaeus, we can relate to the phrase, "You can give without loving, but you can't love without giving."



The greatest motivation to give as God's stewards is love for God. Through faith, we understand that our loving God is made possible only because He loves us first. "*We love [Him] because He first loved us.*" (1 John 4:19). God's love for us is seen in both creation and redemption. If we did not have God's love, we would have no ability to love Him and others. His love has changed our dead and hardened hearts. As forgiven people with transformed hearts, we are filled with a love from God and a love for God. God's love for us will one day be complete in heaven.

Until we are in heaven, our love for God is a work in progress. In our journey of faith, God continues to lead us in a life of expressing our love through our giving. As God changed Zacchaeus' heart, He changes us and our hearts from a love of money to a love for Him. When we give our money to God's causes, we are renouncing our love of money and allowing God's love to be seen in our generosity.

Dear good and gracious Heavenly Father, thank You for Your awesome love. May Your love within me overflow to others. Change my heart so I am a willing and faithful giver. Amen.