

# 10 for 10

## TEN WEEKS OF ENHANCED GIVING: WEEK 6

No one can exercise for us.

### An Opportunity to Exercise Our Faith

The last several weeks we have been discussing the Bible's teaching on giving in general and tithing in particular. We have seen how very strict the Old Testament laws were that governed tithing. The Prophet Malachi wrote that failure to tithe was robbing God of what was his by right. Tithing wasn't an option. It was a legal requirement for the Old Testament Israelite. Tithing was the starting point of giving. Offerings—offered freely, without legal requirement—were gifts *over and above* the tithe.

In the New Testament, the giving picture changes in a very important way. Tithing was no longer commanded. The law of tithing was fulfilled by Christ. Therefore if a Christian tithes, he tithes as a matter of Christ-accomplished freedom. Tithing can serve as a spiritual discipline—a handy guide for proportionate giving. Our tithes are no longer connected to the letters of God's law. Our tithes, instead, are connected to the Spirit's gift of faith in our hearts.

A story of stewardship comes to us from a small Midwestern town. A church received notice that their treasurer was moving out of town. The nominating committee recommended the name of a man who was the owner of the local grain elevator and a highly respected figure in the community. He agreed to serve—but with two strings attached: 1) No financial questions were to be asked for a year and 2) No financial reports would be given until the end of the year.

People were amazed when at the end of his first year in office, the mortgage was paid, the bills were current, the synod

received its offerings, the local high school received its subscription, and there was a five-figure surplus in the church checking account.

"How did you do it?" the people asked.

"It was easy," came the reply. "Most you do business with my grain elevator. I simply kept ten percent of your shares and gave them to the church in your name. You never even missed it!"

The story, obviously, never happened. The fictitious owner of the grain elevator would have been arrested for embezzlement!

Perhaps the biggest wrong, however, was that someone else had decided what to give for the rest of the congregation. The members had no opportunity to *grow* in the grace and in the joy of giving.

Giving is a matter of the heart. The Lord would have us grow in our trust in his promises. He wants us to *learn how to give*—generously and joyfully. He even invited his Old Testament believers to *test him* as they gave. Will God fail to bless his children today when they are filled with joyful generosity? He has already blessed us in a thousand ways!

Seek to stretch yourself. Make it a devotional goal to dig deeply into God's promises that relate to his generosity and your response to his goodness. Seek to grow in the grace of giving. If we are currently giving 5%, could the Lord possibly bless us to the point where we could regularly give 6%? If you are currently giving 2% of your income, is the Lord powerful enough to enable you to double your giving to 4%? God already knows the answer. Faith trusts that God's answers are for our good!

### Questions to Ask God about Giving

**Q:** Because I have no choice but to leave all my money behind when I die, is it really "giving" to designate money to ministries in my will? (Although these may be the wisest places to leave my assets, it involves no sacrifice or need for faith.) Will I potentially rob myself of the joy of giving and an exercise in faith by holding on to significant assets until death that I could have given while I was still alive?

**Q:** One day when I stand before your throne, would you ever say to me, "You blew it! You sold those shares and fed the hungry and evangelized the lost, and then two years later the market peaked?" Or would you say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant?"

(Adapted from Alcorn, p. 218  
-219)

## QUOTABLE QUOTES

“The Jews were constrained to a regular payment of tithes; Christians, who have liberty, assign all their possessions to the Lord, bestowing freely not the lesser portions of their property, since they have the hope of greater things.” - Irenaeus

“My pocketbook was baptized too.” - General Sam Houston

## Home Missions

Home Missions exists to plant new churches and assist mission-minded congregations in the United States, Canada, and English-speaking West Indies.

Because of God’s gift of salvation for us, we’re motivated to support home missions as they reach out to our neighbors, college students, and people of various cultures and languages with the ultimate gift: freedom from the burden of sin, death, and the devil and the promise of eternal life in heaven.

Your gifts for our synod’s work are a blessing to all those who would be lost without our Savior, God’s greatest gift to us all.



Giving is, simply put, an act of trust that expresses our love and gratitude to God for all that he is and does for us. We can be assured of God’s blessing as we honor him with our first and our best. He knows all about giving the first and the best. He did precisely that when he gave us his Son!

**Every one of us is giving at one level or another**

### Below - At - Beyond

Have you considered the fact that we are capable of giving at three different levels? We can give *below our ability*, *according to our ability*, or even *beyond our ability*. What does our checkbook or credit card statement reveal about ability to give? Where do our personal priorities lie? Are we inclined to give with a joy-filled heart of faith? Or are we more inclined to store up a doubt-inspired stockpile of treasures on earth?

God encourages our trust and stills our fears in 2 Corinthians 9:10-11. He reassures us that he knows our needs. Out of pure grace, he gives us even more than we need. He is generous beyond our ability to comprehend. Do you ever doubt that? If so, begin listing your blessings one-by-one. How long will it take before you reach the end of the list? Odds are you will tire of making the list long before you ever reach the end of the list!

Where are we at with our giving? Below, at, or even beyond ability? In Christ, God forgives the former. In Christ, God blesses you with the latter. May you find great joy in giving to Jesus this week!

**2 Corinthians 8:10-15**

### God’s Turn to Teach

<sup>10</sup> And here is my judgment 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. <sup>11</sup> Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. <sup>12</sup> For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.

<sup>13</sup> Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. <sup>14</sup> At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, <sup>15</sup> as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.” (NIV)

**Learning from the mistakes of others**

### How Not To Give

#### The Situation

“There’s a lot more to stewardship than money,” says Gina. “We can’t all give—but we can teach Sunday school, clean the building, and open our homes to guests. Some people are blessed with money to give. Some people have been blessed with time to volunteer. Others have been blessed with talents and abilities that the church needs.”

#### The Problem

Gina rightly believes that stewardship involves more than money—but she wrongly believes that stewardship ever fails to include money. Her argument is just as faulty as saying, “I can’t give the church any of my time or my gifts and talents, so I’ll just give my money instead.” God expects all of these, not just some of them. Gina is attempting to justify robbing God by “making up for it” by doing things that God has gifted her to do anyway.

God has given each of us 24 hours in a day. He has blessed each of us with gifts, talents, and abilities as members of the body of Christ. He has blessed each of us with material goods. He has entrusted each of us with his saving truth. God would have us use *all* of these blessings to his glory and our neighbor’s good. We never use some of his gifts to the exclusion of other gifts.

(Freely adapted from Alcorn, p. 192)