

10 for 10

TEN WEEKS OF ENHANCED GIVING: WEEK 4

Enriched by the generosity of God

With what shall I come before the Lord?

Last week, we reviewed the biblical concept of firstfruits giving. Firstfruits giving simply puts into practice what the Scripture teaches: God is to come first in our hearts and lives. Practically speaking, this means that giving to God is to be a key priority in our lives. Faith sets aside the first portion of our income week after week. Why? Because it takes no faith whatsoever to “pay” God after the cell phone bill! Firstfruits giving disciplines us to put God where he belongs: First in our lives—not in theory, but tangibly.

This week we are encouraged to plan our giving carefully so that we might give in proportion to how God has blessed us. Giving proportionately means giving a fixed percentage of our incomes. Most often our level of giving is determined by the depth of our faith rather than the amount of money we may have. True, what we earn and how we manage God’s blessings are factors determining what we give, but our relationship with God is the decisive factor. Giving reveals the condition of our hearts.

By nature, we are into ourselves. Our default tendency is to hoard our money and possessions rather than to give them away. If we intend to give generously, then we need to dig greed and self-centeredness out of our hearts through honest confession and then fill up our hearts with Christ’s free forgiveness. As gratitude to Christ grows, greed withers. As faith matures, giving blossoms. As grace increases, thanksgiving thrives. Through Christ, gratitude—not greed—is the mark of a Christian’s life!

Giving takes on an entirely new meaning when we recognize that we are only returning to God what he has already given to us. “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it,” we read in Psalm 24:1. The truth is, we are only caretakers of God’s property. We are always and only managers of God’s blessings, never owners. The next time we consider our level of giving, we may find it helpful to ask questions like these: “How much of God’s money am I going to keep to live on this month?” “How much of God’s money am I going to free up to carry out God’s work in his world?”

The Lord has blessed the individual members of our church family in many ways and at various levels. As we continue through the tens weeks of enhanced giving, some may find that giving a tithe (10% of income to the Lord’s work) is a significant stretch of faith. Others may soon discover that tithing is serving as an excellent starting point for giving. May the Lord bless us as we continue to ask significant questions over the next several weeks: What has God entrusted to my care? What is standing in the way of my generosity? How can I be even more wise with the blessings that God entrusts to my care? May the Lord of the Church richly bless your prayerful, proportional gifts in the weeks ahead!

Inspired by the Generosity of Others

Profiles in Giving

As we search the Scriptures, we will soon discover that there is no shortage of saints who excelled at selfless giving:

The Widow

“Jesus also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. ‘Truly I tell

Questions to Ask God about Giving

Q: If you chose to return to judge the living and the dead within my lifetime, what opportunities will I lose to put your blessings to work for your glory and for the good of others?

Q: Once my children have finished college or are working on their own, would inheriting wealth (beyond things of sentimental or heritage value) help—or possibly hurt—my children’s relationship with you and with others?

Q: If my children would resent my giving money to your kingdom instead of leaving it for them, does that indicate they’re not spiritually mature enough to receive it?

(Adapted from Alcorn, p. 218)

QUOTABLE QUOTES

“It ought to be the business of every day to prepare for our last day.” – Matthew Henry

“He who provides for this life but takes not care for eternity is wise for a moment but a fool forever.”
– John Tillotson

Special Ministries

Outreach

A child with disabilities, wrestling to maintain recovery from addiction...

The Lord uses these to make us aware of others in the world with the same needs and struggles. Ministry to church members with hearing loss or in a memory care facility helps us see that we have something to offer the world.

Compassion ministry is not only for church members. It can be a bridge to people in our neighborhood, a way to bring the gospel to families with the same barriers.

Special Ministries provides resources for members of your church with a disability or a barrier in their spiritual life.

You support this work with your prayers and Congregation Mission Offerings. Thank you!



you,’ he said, ‘this poor widow has put in more than all the others . . . she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on’” (Luke 21:2-4).

Faith that God would provide for her needs prompted the widow to give her amazing gift.

The Macedonians

“And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches.... For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people” (2 Corinthians 8:1,3-4).

It was love and gratitude for the priceless blessings they received in and through Christ that moved the Macedonian churches to give so generously.

Jesus

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9 NIV).

Out of love for us, Christ gave up his home in glory to give us eternal life.

From Luther’s Large Catechism

I Believe in God the Father, Creator...

For this reason we ought daily to practice this article, impress it upon our minds, and remember it in everything we see and in every blessing that comes our way. Whenever we escape distress or danger, we should recognize how God gives and does all of this so that we may sense and see in them his fatherly heart and his boundless love toward us. Thus our hearts will be warmed and kindled with gratitude to God and a desire to use all these blessings to his glory and praise.

Such, very briefly, is the meaning of this article. It is all that ordinary people need to learn at first, both about what we have and receive from God and about what we owe him in return. This is knowledge of great significance, but an even greater treasure. For here we see how the Father has given to us himself with all creation and has abundantly provided for us in this life, apart from the fact that he has also showered us with inexpressible eternal blessings through his Son and the Holy Spirit, as we shall hear.

Learning from the mistakes of others

How Not To Give

The Situation

Phil and Pam enjoy giving. With the help of their credit card, they just gave each other a large screen TV and purchased an iPad for each of the kids. They got tired of their three-year-old Chevy and just leased a new Cadillac. “I’ve got a big promotion coming next year,” said Phil. “We’ll start giving to God in the new year when we’ve got more coming in. Our budget is pretty tight right now, but we do give! When we were at the Magic Kingdom in Florida last month, we put \$20 into the offering plate.”

The Problem

Phil and Pam are blind to their materialism. They say there is no money left to give—and they are making sure of it. No matter what they say, their lifestyle—cars, technology, travel—is more important to them than God and others. They say they will give more, but they have been unfaithful with little. They will find ways to be unfaithful with much. Their expenditures will always rise to meet their income. They give leftovers, not firstfruits.

(Freely adapted from Alcorn, p. 190)