

10 for 10

TEN WEEKS OF ENHANCED GIVING: WEEK 1

Some thoughts on the discipline of giving.

Discipline Isn't a Dirty Word

Our *Ten for Ten* emphasis has, on a regular basis, called the practice of firstfruits, proportionate, and sacrificial giving a spiritual *discipline*. Discipline has been defined as “training that develops self-control, efficiency.” Discipline is often viewed as a dirty word in our day—conjuring up pictures of people who don’t have a life outside of their workouts and training.

Actually, discipline isn’t a dirty word at all. It’s a biblical word that we would do well to put into practice. God’s Word puts a high value on discipline. Proverbs 23:23 encourages us to “get wisdom, discipline and understanding.” Discipline is something that parents want for their children. God wants us to be a people who practice personal discipline. May the opposite never be true of us, “. . . fools despise wisdom and discipline” (Proverbs 1:7).

The practice of discipline touches almost every area of life. Think of it:

- If your goal is to lose or control your weight, you need discipline to eat properly.
- If your goal is to exercise, you need discipline to regularly dedicate the time to working out.
- If your goal is to save money for traveling, a child’s education, or retirement, you need discipline to set aside the money.

- If your goal is to get a degree, you need discipline to study, write, and test your way though decades of schooling.

We benefit by bringing discipline to bear in the tasks of daily life. As Christians, we benefit by bringing discipline to bear in the area of Christian giving.

St. Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians to give much-needed direction to their practice of regular giving. Haphazard or laissez-faire aren’t words that would describe his approach: “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made” (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Did you notice the discipline involved in what Paul wrote? First... Every... Each one... Set aside... In keeping with... Saving it up...

Christian giving sometimes happens spontaneously when we become aware of an immediate need. Christian giving usually happens as a result of thoughtful planning, prayerful consideration of God’s blessings, deliberation upon different options, regularity, and the discipline of follow through. Discipline is a desperately-needed ingredient for God-pleasing stewardship.

May the Lord richly bless our church family with the gift of discipline when it comes to giving God our first and our best. In so doing, we are simply reflecting the giving nature of our God—a God who gave us his first, his best, his one and only Son!

Questions to Ask God about Giving

Q: With the assets and opportunities you have entrusted to me, have you raised me up “for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14) Have you called me to join the great team of your children in freeing up money and possessions to reach the needy with the Gospel of Christ?

Q: Is the fact that you’ve entrusted me with so many resources an indication that you have given me the gift of giving and want me to learn to exercise it more frequently and skillfully?

Q: What am I holding on to that is robbing me of present joy and future reward? What am I keeping that’s preventing me from having to depend on you? What am I clinging to that makes me feel like I don’t have to depend on you to provide? (Alcorn, p. 218)

(Adapted from Alcorn, p. 218)

QUOTABLE QUOTES

“He who has God and everything has no more than he who has God alone.” – C. S. Lewis

“Sometimes more can be learned from the passages of Scripture we ignore than those we underline.”
– R. Alcorn

Youth Ministry

Growing in God’s Word and encouraging children in service of Jesus Christ is not only a healthy investment for the future, but for this very moment when our youth—more than ever—are tempted to drift from their Lord.

Your offerings support youth through Kids Connection, Sunday School materials, and the International Youth Rally, along with encouraging Christian homes through Parent's Crosslink Newsletter.

Our goal is to equip the next generation of the church to place the Lord first in their hearts and lives and to be strongly rooted in faith as they travel the road of life.

May God bless our congregations and our efforts to reach and retain the generations to come!



From Luther’s Large Catechism

I Believe in God the Father, Creator...

What do you mean when you say, “I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator,” etc.? Answer: I hold and believe that I am God’s creature, that is, that he has given me and constantly sustains my body, soul, and life, my members great and small, all my senses, my reason and understanding, and the like; my food and drink, clothing, nourishment, spouse and children, servants, house and farm, etc. Besides, he makes all creation help provide the benefits and necessities of life—sun, moon, and stars in the heavens; day and night; air, fire, water, the earth and all that it yields and brings forth; birds, fish, animals, grain, and all sorts of produce. Moreover, he gives all physical and temporal blessings—good government, peace, security. Thus we learn from this article that none of us has life—or anything else that has been mentioned here or can be mentioned—from ourselves, nor can we by ourselves preserve any of them, however small and unimportant. All this is comprehended in the word “Creator.”

(Kolb-Wengert, p. 423-433)

Learning from the mistakes of others

How Not To Give

The Situation

There is a couple in their mid-30’s. Bill has a good job, but there is still too much month left at the end of their money. They sincerely intend to put whatever is left into the offering envelope at the end of the month. Between house payments, utility bills, tuition payments, retirement savings, and the new car payment, there is rarely anything left to give. They feel bad about it, but what can they do when they are out of money?

The Problem

This couple doesn’t understand firstfruits giving. Scripture teaches that we are to give to God off the top instead of from whatever is left over. Pastor John Jeske tells it like it is in his excellent essay, *Christian Stewardship Is Taking God at His Word*: “But to bring my leftovers, the scrapings of my plate after I have eaten, says something quite different to God. It dishonors and demeans him as ‘Eater of my Leftovers.’ Think about that, and shudder.”

(Freely adapted from Alcorn, p. 190)

A Smart Giving Option

Consider Using Your IRA as a Vehicle for Giving

Most IRA owners know that they have to start receiving required minimum distributions from the IRA when they turn 70½. What many IRA owners don’t know is that the IRS permits them to make contributions to qualified charitable organizations (e.g. church, synod, etc.) from their IRA accounts in amounts up to \$100,000 per year. While no tax deduction is available for this type of contribution, it does count towards the fully taxable annual required minimum distribution, resulting in a reduction of taxable income. If you are interested in making an IRA charitable distribution, please contact your IRA custodian. For further information, call WELS Ministry of Christian Giving (800-827-5482) or visit wels.net/qcd.