

LEADERS GUIDE: Sacrificial Giving

NOTE: The goal of having a Bible study woven into worship is to have the opportunity to apply the truths proclaimed in the sermon in very specific ways. These studies have been designed and tested so that they can be completed within fifteen minutes. However, that will probably mean varying from normal pedagogical practice. To fit this study within the scheduled time, it is advisable for the teacher to provide answers more quickly, rather than waiting for participants to answer, if that is needed to keep things moving along.

Throughout the Leader's Guide you will see images of PowerPoint slides, indicating when the teacher would advance the slides. It is not necessary to use the PowerPoint files to use the Bible study.

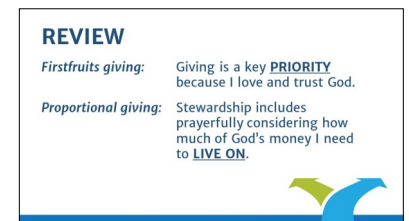


I. INTRODUCTION

A quick review of where we have been the last two weeks:

Firstfruits giving: Giving is a key **PRIORITY** because I love and trust God.

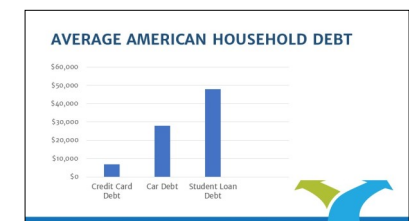
Proportional giving: Stewardship includes prayerfully considering how much of God's money I need to **LIVE ON**.



This week we turn our attention to *sacrificial* giving, which is giving in a way that, to human reason, seems to be beyond ones means. It is giving *beyond one's regular firstfruits, proportional giving*. The cynical sinner in us would love to write off the topic of sacrificial giving as an exercise in "getting blood from a turnip." Yet, when we look at Scripture, we see that sacrificial gifts were never made under compulsion, but out of cheer; never out of fear, but out of faith; never out of obligation, but because there was an opportunity provided by God's providence.

There is no Biblical definition for "sacrificial giving." The way it has often been used in our circles is as described above—the giving one might offer beyond their planned proportional giving.

Ironically, Americans are accustomed to *living* beyond their means. The average U.S. household is carrying over \$7,000 in credit card debt. Add to that an average household debt of \$28,000 for cars and another \$48,000 for student loans. So, we live beyond our income, assuming we will be able to handle that debt in the future. Yet, God has not promised us the next paycheck. Nowhere in Scripture does God promise the college graduate a high-paying job. There are exactly zero divine promises that would encourage us to be comfortable *living* beyond our means. But what about *giving* in a way that seems beyond our means?



Malachi 3:10

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it."

? What promise does the LORD give to the children of Israel there?

He promises that generous offerings will not result in a lack of provisions.

We normally think of “testing” God as requiring him to do something supernatural to provide. We trust God to provide for our well-being in natural ways: sending the rain for crops, giving us a job for income, having the police provide security. But we don’t force God to do miracles to provide for us. So, when Satan tempts Jesus to jump from the highest point of the temple, Jesus says it is not proper to put God to the test (Matthew 4:7). Thus, it is interesting that here God says it is ok to “test” him.

Let us look at how our generous God empowers his children to imitate his generosity through sacrificial giving.

II. GOD ENABLES PEOPLE TO DO AMAZING THINGS

Matthew 20:21

Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done.

Romans 10:17

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

? In Matthew 20, Jesus teaches us that if it was God’s will that a mountain would throw itself into the sea, we should have faith that mountain will obey our command. Obviously, it is *not* God’s will that mountains jump into the sea. It is his will that his children give generous offerings. Combine that with God’s promise in Romans 10:17. Together, we have heard God’s message on these important stewardship topics. Therefore, of what can we be confident?

God will give us the power to give offerings in the way he has asked us to give offerings.

John 15:5

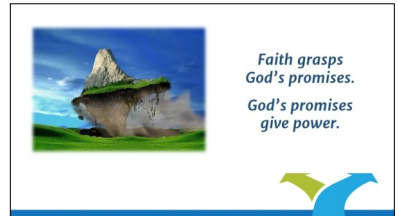
Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

? Notice Jesus doesn’t say that if we remain in him we *should* bear much fruit or we *might* bear much fruit. He says we *will*. How can he speak so confidently?

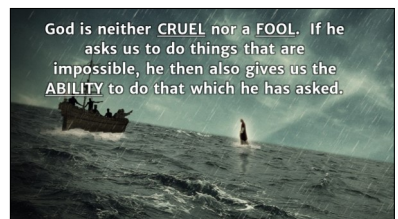
He understands that HE is the vine! The words “should” or “might” focus on us, whether we have the power within us to do what Christ asks. But the word “will” focuses on him—the vine. He has the power to enable us to do anything he has asks us to do.

The Point?

God is neither **CRUEL** nor a **FOOL**. If he asks us to do things that are impossible, he then gives us the **ABILITY** to do that which he has asked.



This slide illustrates that faith needs an object. Faith without an object is just wishful thinking. But faith in God’s certain promises is substantial, precisely because those promises cannot be broken.



When Jesus told Peter “Come!” he was asking Peter to do that which is impossible—walking on water. But the word of Christ gave Peter the ability to do the impossible. While Peter’s faith fixed itself upon the promise, he was able to do the unthinkable. “*Apart from me you can do nothing.*” It is only when Peter took his eyes off Jesus and looked at

his situation that he sank. We are *the family of the Father* who are filled with *faith*. When our God asks us to do something, we can trust he will give us the ability to do what he has asked. That is true when it comes to giving. Some examples...

The Widow Who Didn't Have Two Dimes to Rub Together

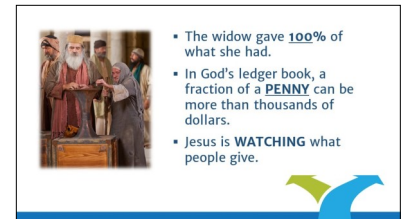
Mark 12:41-44

⁴¹ Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. ⁴² But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

⁴³ Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. ⁴⁴ They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

Amazing things we see:

- The widow gave **100%** of what she had.
- In God's ledger book, a fraction of a **PENNY** can be more than thousands of dollars.
- Jesus is **WATCHING** what people give.



The presenter might ask, "How do you feel about that?" It is similar to Psalm 139, where the psalmist says, "If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there." How you view that statement depends on whether you understand grace. Jesus is watching our giving, not so that he might find a reason to condemn us. He is interested in the health of our faith, which is what binds us to him. He is interested in seeing fruits of that faith. The fact that Jesus is obviously pleased with this widow's "few cents" is proof that what he is looking for is faith. The amount wasn't substantial, but God can get his work done without substantial offerings. But that amount, because it was all she had, demonstrated great faith. And so as Jesus is looking at our offerings, it is not about him. "Are they supporting my mission?" "Do they understand my sovereignty and obey my commands?" He looks at our offerings for OUR sake! "Do they trust me?" "Is their faith tying them tightly to me?"

Poor As Dirt, Yet Serving the Saints

2 Corinthians 8:2-4

² In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³ For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴ they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people.

? Circle the best answer. For the Macedonian churches, giving was:

- a. like pulling teeth.
- b. something that they might find some use for.
- c. a privilege they pleaded for.

It is probably enough for the leader to point out how abnormal this behavior is. Even though they were living in "extreme poverty" they were begging to participate in this offering!

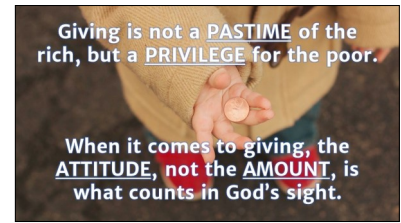
Circle the best answer. When it came to the amount of their gifts:

- a. It was just enough to keep Pastor Paul from sending a member of the Stewardship Committee to their homes.
- b. It was pretty respectable considering they didn't have much.
- c. It was shocking because God blessed them "to give even beyond their ability."

παρὰ δύναμιν – One commentator says this has the force of "more amply than was accordant with their resources." In other words, when you looked at what they had, you would NEVER have thought they were capable of giving as generously as they did.

The Point?

Giving is not a **PASTTIME** of the rich, but a **PRIVILEGE** for the poor.
When it comes to giving, the **ATTITUDE**, not the **AMOUNT**, is what counts in God's sight.



III. PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

- **FIRSTFRUITS** giving teaches that giving to God comes first, because we are to *fear, love, and trust in him above all things*.
- **PROPORTIONATE** giving teaches that we give to God a pre-determined percentage of our wealth. Tithing, or giving ten percent, has served as a biblical benchmark for proportionate giving.
- **SACRIFICIAL** giving teaches that we may, in joy, give over and above our regular, proportional gifts.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

- **FIRSTFRUITS** giving teaches that giving to God comes first.
- **PROPORTIONATE** giving teaches that we give to God a pre-determined percentage of our wealth.
- **SACRIFICIAL** giving teaches that we may, in joy, give over and above our normal, proportional gifts.



Questions to Prayerfully Consider This Week

- As I produce our ten-week giving plan, how will I demonstrate that God comes first? What is the Spirit empowering me to produce in the way of firstfruits giving?
- What is the proportion of my income the Spirit will enable me to return to God over the next ten weeks? How much of God's blessings do I need to keep for myself to live and have a satisfying life? How much does he allow me to give back?
- How will Christ's sacrifice and his promises enable me to be sacrificial in my giving?

These application questions are meant for individuals/couples to think about as they produce their ten-week giving plan, something they will do before next Sunday. There is no need for the leader to take time having people consider them during the in-worship Bible study.

IV. NEWS AND NOTES

- Next weekend your commitment cards will be gathered during the offering.
- One last reminder: Your commitment cards will not be opened. They will be placed near the altar for ten weeks and then returned to you unopened for your prayerful reflection.
- Please do not place offerings in your *10 for 10* commitment envelopes. The only thing that goes in that envelope is your giving plan.
- Additional devotional material has been/will be shared. Read. Ponder. Pray.
- Throughout the ten weeks of *10 for 10*, we will receive additional encouragements from God's Word. Why? *"If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit."*

