

The Joy of Sharing God's Blessings

Week 3

God's People are Generous

John 3:16 proclaims, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* God showed us what it means to love and to give. The Apostle Paul tells us that we are called to imitate Jesus (1 Corinthians 4:16). Just as Christ loves and gives, we are called to be loving and giving people.

Someone said, "Whoever has a heart full of love always has something to give." The Bible identifies many people whose hearts were overflowing with God's love prompting them to give joyfully and generously. King David gave his personal fortune to the construction of God's temple (1 Chronicles 29:2-3). The Widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:9-16) and the Poor Widow (Luke 21:1-4) gave all they had. The Good Samaritan gave his time and money to help an injured person ((Luke 10:25-37). Zacchaeus gave half of his money to the poor (Luke 19:1-10). Barnabas sold a field and gave the proceeds to help support the Gospel message of the apostles (Acts 4:32-37). The Christians in Macedonia shared generously, and the result was an *"abundance of joy."* This joy in the Lord caused them to want to give. Even out of their poverty, they gave in order to share in *"the relief of the saints"* (2 Corinthians 8:2-4). These few examples of God's people, who gave joyfully and generously to their Lord, are a great encouragement to us in our giving.



The life of faith is alive, full of vitality, and all-encompassing. Giving is an essential part of that life of faith. We give our first fruits and honor the Lord with all of our resources out of joy and gratitude for what he has done and continues to do in our lives. Our giving expresses our worship and praise for who God is and what he does. In the process of giving we realize the truth in what Jesus said, *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."* (Acts 20:35).

God's Love Prompts Giving

We can be certain that God loves us because love is at the heart of who he is and what he does. *"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8). God expressed his great love for us by giving us his Son, *"Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross"* (Hebrews 12:2). The Cross stands as the greatest witness to God's love for us.



Once we are able to comprehend even dimly the depth of God's love for us, we desire to share that love with others. God's love automatically flows through us into others. The fruit of God's love in our lives is seen in both our words and deeds. God's love is seen in us as we reach out to others and as we give joyfully and

generously. Grasping the depth of God's love we give glory to him *"throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen"* (Ephesians 3:21).

The Joy of Giving

The joy of giving is illustrated in the story of the boy who gave the pastor a fish for his tithe. The pastor asked the boy, "Where are the other nine fish?" The boy responded joyfully, "I'm going back now to the river to catch them!" Basking in his joy knowing how much his loving and gracious God cared for him and in his joy of giving, the boy left for the river knowing he could trust God to help him catch more fish.



Does Your Gift Represent You?

God graciously gives to us, and he wants us to share our blessings with others out of love for him. We can love and give because he first loved us. Our giving is an outward expression of the depth of our love and faith.

There is a story of a pastor who had made an appeal in church for a great and worthy cause. A certain woman, a member of the church, came to him and handed him a check for \$50, asking at the same time if her gift was satisfactory.

The pastor immediately replied, "If it represents you." After a moment of soul-searching, she asked to have the check returned to her. She left with it, and a day or two later she returned, handing the pastor a check for \$500, again asking the same question: "Is my gift satisfactory?"

The pastor gave the same answer as before: "If it represents you."

Considering all of her spiritual and physical blessings from God, she took back the check and left. Later in the week, she came again with a check. That time it was for \$5,000. As she placed it in the pastor's hand she said, "After earnest, prayerful thought, I have come to the conclusion that this gift does represent me, and it is a joy to give generously to the Lord to help my church."

The Lord has blessed some of us with little wealth and others with much, but in either case our response needs to represent us. *"Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more"* (Luke 12:48).

In Conclusion

Through our faithful giving, we worship our Lord, express our thanks to him, and renew our commitment to him. When we give, we joyfully put our faith into action. God's grace, through faith, enables us to give as we have received. May we all find joy in sharing God's blessings with others.