The Life You’ve Always Wanted

(But Need Spiritual Disciplines to Obtain)

#7 Giving

**Introduction: Now is the time to give!**

TRANSFORMATION is the goal and we are TRAINING ourselves with a series of PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITIES (spiritual disciplines) in order to live out a transformed life (See Rom. 12:2). Giving is one of those spiritual disciplines.

**Nobody wants to talk about GIVING**

There has been such an abuse of asking for money in the modern church that Christians have shied away from discussing this very important God honoring topic God’s people are meant to be givers. Giving is one of the “silent” expressions that every Christian ought to be pursuing with great zeal. Giving may be the single biggest indicator of the condition of a believer’s heart. Because, to give is a rejection of the very selfish mindset we all learned very early on. That mindset is reflected in two words: “MINE!” and “MORE!”

**Giving Reflects our Heart**

Our spiritual growth is often revealed in our attitudes and actions associated with giving. Consider the truth found in Matt. 6:19-21. “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

When we give, it is a signal that we want to be right with the Lord, we want to show that He is our master, we are expressing our desire to grow and to be used by God.

Giving is an act of worship. The early church associated giving with their weekly gathering together (see I Cor. 16:2).

**Remember, God Expects Us to Give**

OT: Lev. 27:30 “A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord, it is holy to the Lord.”

NT: Rom. 12:13 “Share with God’s people who are in need.”

Directly from Jesus: Matt. 6:2 “So, when you give to the needy do not announce it with trumpets…”

When we are giving, we are living an obedient life style. See Heb. 13:16, Deut. 15:11 and I Cor. 16:1-2

**The Basis of Our Giving: A Contented Heart**

We serve a God who is enough (El Shaddai). The Lord is our personal Shepherd and we shall not want (Ps. 23:1). As we grow in grace, we learn to be content (Phil 4:12). “But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that” (I Tim. 6:8).

The mature believer learns that he/she has ENOUGH. G. K. Chesterton once remarked, “There are two ways to get enough, one is to continue to accumulate more and more. The other is to desire less.”

When we have a contented heart, we development two rules for life:

1. God comes first and possessions come second
2. Possessions are to be used, not loved

(from *Margins* by Swenson)

A contented heart is grateful and has much to share. Consider the actions of the “Good Samaritan” in Luke 10:33-35.

**We Give Because People Have Needs**

 We ought to give to:

The Poor: Prov. 28:27 “Those who give to the poor will lack nothing, but those who close their eyes to them receive many curses.”

People who ask: Matt. 5:42 “Give to the one who asks you…”

Believers in need: Rom. 12:13 “Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”

Our Church: Mal. 3:10 “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house.”

Other Ministries: See II Cor. 9:6-13

**Remember, There are Blessings Set Aside for the Cheerful, Generous Giver**

Prov. 11:26 “People curse the one who hoards grain, but they pray God’s blessing on the one who is willing to sell.”

Ps. 41:1 “Blessed are those who have regard for the weak, the Lord delivers them in times of trouble.”

II Cor. 9:7-8 “Each of you should give…and God is able to bless you abundantly so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”

**So What?**

Since we realize that the life of fullness and joy has to include a generous heart, how do we accomplish that?

1. We just start giving: our time, sharing our “things,” giving away “extras” and showing a willing heart to freely give financial assistance. See II Cor. 9:7
2. We give in secret. Giving is an inward submission of the heart. It is not intended to be done for show. See Matt. 6:3-4
3. We give generously. Prov. 11:25 reminds us that “a generous person will prosper, whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.”
4. We give in a planned and regular way. The early church gave on “the first day of the week…” They stored up their blessings from the week and shared them when they got together. It took some planning and some organization. It was intentional.
5. Sometimes, we give sacrificially. We learn to give Him the best, the first fruits, the “cream of the crop,” not what’s left over.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think the church tends to avoid the topic of giving? What could change that?
2. Do you agree that giving is an indicator of the condition of our hearts? Why or why not?
3. Is it easy for you to be generous? If not, what hinders you in this area?
4. Are you a cheerful giver? How does a “cheerful giver” behave? What do they “look like?”
5. What are some practical ways we could train ourselves to be more generous givers?

Which one will you start this week?

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