

Bible Study

“Empowered by Grace to Give”

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for your generosity toward us, demonstrated especially by the gift of your Son, Jesus. Grant us loving and thankful hearts so we might give freely to you through our church. Bless this study as we learn what it means to be empowered by grace to give faithfully and generously. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Introduction

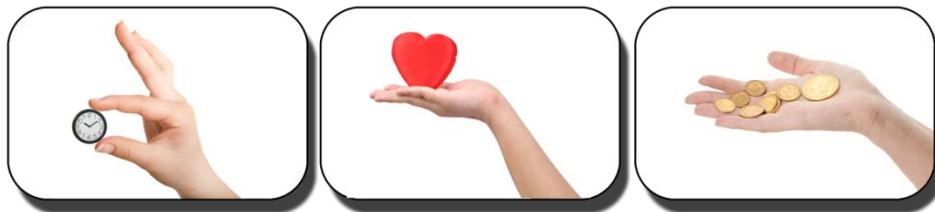
In the beginning God gave, and he continues to give. God's character is to give. Out of his love, God gives humanity a beautiful and majestic place to dwell. Our heavenly Father loves us so much that he holds nothing back from us. God gives and keeps on giving. “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). To give and to keep on giving is the essential nature of God, who is love. All that we are, have, and hope to be are gifts from God.



We give because God first gave to us. The natural response of love is to give. Love is never close-lipped or tight-fisted. Love never asks how little I must give, but how much can I give. When we are filled with God's love, we give.

Acknowledging God's ownership is a basic principle for Christian giving. King David said, “The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1). When we give our gifts to God as grateful and faithful stewards, we are merely returning to him what he has already given to us. Paul asks in 1 Corinthians 4:7, “What do you have that you did not receive?”

Wholehearted and unconditional giving has its source in God who himself gave unreservedly. Because of the awesome love shown to us at the cross, we give. God, abiding in us, enables us to give, for, through Christ, we have his very nature, a giving nature. We become more Christ-like as his love for us and within us opens our clenched fists and breaks down our natural desire to put ourselves first. Then we can experience the joy of giving and grow in the grace of giving.



Questions for Discussion

1. How has God demonstrated his loving and giving nature? How has Jesus? How has the Holy Spirit?
2. What giving points are made in 1 Corinthians 16:2?
3. How does today's consumerism impede your giving?
4. Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-7. Why were the Macedonians able to give so much?
5. Share a time when you experienced the joy of giving. What were the circumstances?
6. In what ways does giving indicate the spiritual condition of your heart?
7. What consequences for not giving are spelled out in Proverbs 11:24; 21:13; 28:27?
8. Was the tithe in the Old Testament a voluntary contribution (Leviticus 27:30)? What about today (Matthew 23:23)?
9. Read Genesis 4:1-7. Why was God not pleased with Cain's offering? Why was he pleased with Abel's?
10. Read about the Widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17:9-16? What does giving sacrificially mean? What did the widow receive because of her willingness to sacrifice? The widow's gift to Elijah was an act of faith. Discuss how outrageous giving is an act of faith on the part of the giver. Where does faith come from (Romans 10:17)?
11. How does God test the sincerity of your love (2 Corinthians 8:1-8)?
12. Read Proverbs 3:9. What are you directed to do?
13. Read 2 Corinthians 8:7. What does it mean to excel in the grace of giving?
14. Read Luke 19:1-10. What was necessary for Zacchaeus before he was ready to give? What was Zacchaeus' attitude toward money before and after his conversion?

***Prayer:** Lord, thank you for this study and the encouragement we receive through it to give faithfully and generously. You have given so freely and generously to us. Help us to show our gratitude to you by faithfully using and giving our money as you direct us. Open our eyes and hearts to the opportunities to help those in need and to ways that we can further your kingdom. Thank you for Jesus who suffered and died on the Cross so we can live as forgiven and redeemed people here on earth and forever with you in heaven. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.*