

FOLLOW CURRICULUM

LESSON TWO

Offering my Time and Treasure Generously

INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES)

Each person to read a paragraph

Today we're going to discuss the 2nd mark of a follower of Jesus. A follower of Jesus offers his or her time and treasure generously. Generosity means giving liberally, lavishly, or in abundance. The reason for giving ourselves in this way is because we have received from God in this way. Look at what the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 8:9: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, *yet for your sake* he became poor, so that *you* by his poverty might become rich." Giving ourselves to God is a fitting response to all he has given for us.

Unfortunately, there have been many books, bible studies and sermons written that attempt to motivate generous giving only by guilt. The temptation in response to such teaching is to avoid talking about giving all together. However, we cannot afford to do so, since nearly 15% of everything Jesus said was about giving. Jesus said more about how we handle our time and possessions, than about the topics of heaven and hell combined.

One of Jesus' most well-known statements on giving is found in Acts 20:35: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The word blessed literally means "happy". Jesus is motivating our giving by what would bring us the most happiness or joy. He's essentially saying, "Receiving is great. Everyone wants to receive a gift, but the joy that comes from giving far exceeds that of receiving". Jesus tells us that giving is more about delight than duty. Do you see giving this way?

The first step to becoming a joyful, generous giver is to realize that God doesn't need us to give him anything. God owns everything - including us! King David says in Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein..." We possess many things, but we own absolutely nothing. God is the owner and we are only His asset managers. It's our job to figure out what the owner wants to do with his assets and carry out His wishes accordingly.

The picture of God wringing his hands with concern for how he's going to provide for his kingdom is grossly misguided. If the gates of Hell will not prevail against his Church, certainly my disobedience to his command to give won't either. Why then ask us to give if he doesn't need us? *Because God wants your heart.* As Randy Alcorn says in his book *The Treasure Principle*, "God isn't looking for 'donors' for His kingdom, those who stand outside the cause and dispassionately consider acts of 'philanthropy'. He's looking for followers so filled with a vision for eternity that they wouldn't dream of not investing their money, time, and prayers where they matter most."

One of the great deterrents to giving is the thought that this world is our home. Hebrews 11:6 says, "We are citizens of a better country...a heavenly one". Where you spend your treasure is influenced by where you think your home is. Friends, heaven is our home - not earth. We are only pilgrims and travelers in a distant country. Consider how this fact should influence our giving by reading this illustration:

Suppose your home is in France and you're visiting America for three months, living in a hotel. You're told that you can't bring anything back to France on your flight home, but you can earn money and mail deposits to your bank in France. Would you fill your hotel with expensive furniture and wall hangings? Of course not. You'd send your money where your home is. You would spend only what you needed on the temporary residence, sending your treasures ahead so they'd be waiting for you when you got home.¹

Much more could be said, but let's study this passage together.

BIBLE CONVERSATION (40 minutes)

Read Matthew 6:19-24

- 1) Why do you think Jesus spends so much time teaching about possessions and giving?
- 2) What does this passage say about storing up earthly possessions? Does Jesus tell us it's wrong to have things that we enjoy?
- 3) Is the motivation in this passage God-centered or self-centered? Is it wrong to be motivated by reward? Read Matthew 10:42 and Philippians 4:17
- 4) What does this phrase mean: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"? Does our heart follow our treasure or does our treasure follow our heart?
- 5) Can you give examples of places in your life where your heart has followed your investment of time or treasure?
- 6) What's the connection between being a generous church and a church on mission?

PRAYER (10 minutes)

- 1) Exalt God for His generosity in your life.
- 2) Ask God to give our church an eternal perspective.
- 3) Pray for someone who needs to hear and believe the good news of Jesus.

¹ Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle* (Multnomah books: 2001), Pg. 47.