

The Gift of Giving

Background Passages: 1 Chronicles 29:1-19
Mark 12:41-44

Lesson Passages: 1 Chron. 29:1-3, 6, 14&16, 17
Mark 12:41-44

KEY BIBLE VERSE Mark
12:43

BIBLICAL TRUTH

God has already provided His people all they need to support His work.

LIFE IMPACT

Giving projects our character on the screen of life.

BACKGROUND FOR THE LESSON

In a sense, how we give away things we possess tells the tale of who we are. We've been taught "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The fact is that we have nothing to give other than that which we have received. None of us has the ability to generate (create) something from nothing.

Often, whether we have received *much* or *little* has *little* to do with how we handle giving. *Giving projects our character on the screen of life.* How we are motivated and our attitude can be pictured on a scale of spiritual values.

MOTIVE BASED GIVING DISTINCTIONS					
Spiritual Value	NEGATIVE		NEUTRAL	POSITIVE	
Motives	Pride	Guilt	Obligation	Care	Love
Why Give?	To be seen	Penance	Required	Who You Are	Whose You Are
Servant Type	Rebellious	Disobedient	Hired Help	Steward	Bond Slave
Extent of Involvement	Resisting	Detachment	Superficial	Engaged	Immersed
Outcome [Our View]	Fame	Salved Conscience	Fulfilled Duty	Expression of Gratitude	Act of Worship
Reward [God's View]	God's Resistance	God's Conviction	God's Blessing	Considered Great	Identified with Jesus
Commentary	A	B	C	D	E

A. Giving When Our Motive is Pride

An example of someone giving out of pride and "to be seen of others" could be a very *rich* person who makes national news about the great amount he or she gives to some worthy cause. However, this could also apply to a *poor* person who a little but makes sure everyone knows they gives only are giving. They may even advertise their giving with lapel Giving out of guilt can cover the spectrum of being ostentatious or *showy* (this may overlap

pins or bumper stickers. The "Servant Type" is characterized as *Rebellious* in that their motivation is to bring glory to themselves rather than to God. Such giving is in the same vein as the early builders of Babel who wished to make a "name" for themselves. However, God's response is to resist the proud.

A. Giving When Our Motive is Guilt

with giving from a motive of pride) to being *secretive*. Guilt may stem from situations that

could run the gamut of sins of omission (failing to meet obligations) to sins of commission. Some people exhibit this kind of giving by feeling compelled to put in a token gift every time an offering plate is passed. They may also feel compelled to give a token contribution to beggars on the street, give to solicitation for contributions that come in the mail, and even may be led to make large (even anonymous) contributions to “good” causes (including church programs) as an act of atonement for past and perhaps ongoing sins in their lives. God responds by continuing to bring conviction and the sense of guilt does not go away.

A. Given from a Sense of Obligation

Some of us approach our relationship to God with an attitude of “God’s word says, that’s settles it, I’m going to do it.” It may come as surprise to most of us to learn that doing simply what is required is viewed by God as neutral. In the parable on “Duty” (Luke 17:7-10), Jesus concluded with this statement. “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.’” Duty or “obligatory giving” then becomes the neutral or starting point for what we do. [The Greek term for this type service is *latreia* – it simply means serving according to the letter of the law.] The obligation is clearly stated in Malachi 3:10 as “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse . . . I will pour you out a blessing . . .” Here we see the greatness of the grace of God. Though we may be judged “unprofitable” by merely meeting our mission requirements, yet we are blessed in this obedience by being in the service of the Master and being used by Him who loves us.

A. Giving Because We Care

Many Christians sense a calling beyond just keeping the letter of the law. In essence the law is seen to tell us to “do no harm.” The spirit of the law is meant to take us from such a neutral position (i.e., do no harm) to helping others and improving conditions in our sphere of influence. Such a step takes us from “*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*” to “*Love you neighbor as yourself.*” As

Jesus illustrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan it calls us to become engaged in the lives of others. It asks that we go beyond giving the tithe to giving offerings. It urges us to care. If we were talking about serving rather than giving, the Greek word used to describe such service is *diakonos* and is translated “ministry” or “minister” twice as many times as it is translated “service” or “servant.” It implies a *pro-active* involvement in the work of the Kingdom of God rather just being *reactive*. This type of involvement must come from within us because of who we are in Christ. Giving or service from such motives is deemed by Jesus as qualifying for greatness in the community of believers (Matt 20:26).

A. Giving for the Love of God

God wants the very best for us and for us to be the very best we can be in Him. The paradox of our lives as children of God is that though we are “*children of the King,*” we live in relationship with each other as *bond slaves*. Though we are seated with Christ in heavenly place and will reign with Him, yet we claim no rights in this life. Though we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ Who possesses all, we recognize that all we have belongs to Him and is for use in His service. This is nothing less than the *expression of the life of Christ* in us. Living our lives as a sacrifice to God is simply giving our all to Him. It is the widow’s two mites that go into the collection box of service to God. It is the pouring out the precious ointment on the Lord as an act of worship. It is putting everything under His control. Such a life finds expression in loving one another even as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us. This new commandment is a step beyond loving our neighbors as we love ourselves. It is having an attitude of not just a servant but that of a slave. Giving and service from this motive of love for God and those He loves causes us to be *identified with Jesus*.

Plan Ahead: Make copies of the above table to hand out to class members. Ask members to share examples of the different motives for giving.

Background and Focal Passages

How many times have you said “*Every time you turn around, there is someone requesting money!*” When you answer the telephone and someone says, “Could I speak to Mr. or Mrs. Smith?” you probably cringe and wait either for an invitation to switch long-distance carriers or contribute to some “great organization that is helping so many people.” Many of the requests seem as if they are deserving and really do need help. Additionally, we may belong to a local service club and they have projects to which you are expected to contribute. Our churches are involved in *many worthwhile endeavors* that need financial or material support as well as our time. Add to all of this the rising cost of living, unexpected expenses, and the need to prepare for the future (education of children, taking care of aging parents, retirement, etc.) and before long the demands and choices become overwhelming.

In any situation, when we are faced with

increasing demands and limited resources we **will** prioritize the demands and how we respond to them. As Christians, we also know that we **will** give an accounting of all we do (how we prioritize) and how we use the blessings God has entrusted to us. Therefore, we need to better understand (from a Biblical basis) our *motives* and *goals* of giving for the variety of opportunities with which we are faced.

Both the Old and New Testaments have many examples of giving and these cover a wide range of *what* is given, the *reason* it is given, the *motive* of the giver, and the relative *value* of the gift. We will look at two examples of giving to get a perspective on this subject. The *Background Passage* of our first example is found in the Old Testament in *1 Chronicles 29:1-19*. We will focus on verses 1-3, 6, 14&16 and 17. The *New Testament Background and Focal Passage* is *Mark 12:41-44*.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE OVERVIEW

David set an example: (1 Chr. 29:1-5) Toward the end of David’s reign he worked to fulfill a desire to build a

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What was the motive for David giving so much to build the temple? (1 Chr 29:1)
2. How would you describe the way the leaders gave to the work of building the temple? (29:6)
3. Did David consider giving a *privilege* or a *duty*? (29:14&16)
4. In God’s view is the *amount* or the *motive* more important? (29:17)
5. Man measures amounts given in dollars – what kind of scale does God use? (Mk.12:41-44)

house for the Lord by giving material and money to make it possible. He also encouraged others to become involved in this endeavor to build for the glory of God.

Leadership responds: (29:6-9) The leadership of Israel followed David’s lead and gave. This caused the people and the king to greatly rejoice.

David’s Prayer: (29:10-16) David recognized that all they were doing was for God. He also recognized that it was a blessing to be able to give because all they had to give came from the hand of God.

God sees the Intent of our Heart: (29:17-19) People can have many different motives for giving. God wants to see integrity of heart and a desire to be pleasing to Him in all we do.

Sacrificial Giving: (Mk 12:41-44) From Jesus’ comments about the Widow’s mite, we gain insight into God’s evaluation of our giving.

GREAT TASKS REQUIRE GREAT GIFTS (1 Chronicles 29:1-3) NIV

1 ¶ Then King David said to the whole assembly: "My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is young and inexperienced. The task is great, because this palatial structure is not for man but for the LORD God.

2 With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God—gold for the gold work, silver for the silver, bronze for the bronze, iron for the iron and wood for the wood, as well as onyx for the settings, turquoise, stones of various colors, and all kinds of fine stone and marble—all of these in large quantities.

3 Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver for the temple of my God, over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple:

There are many ways to categorize the variety of needs and the way we respond to such needs. Some giving might be simply because we have a **heart** for a particular cause. At other times, it is simply a response to an **overwhelming need**. Our giving might be seen as a way to **glorify God** as in the case of the great temple Solomon would build. Perhaps the highest need is just to **worship God** in what is done or given.

Verse 1 The assembly David was addressing were the leaders or elders of Israel. The project was going to be a big job and their help, experience and example were going to be important. David recognized that the structure that was going to be built was not for man but for God. It was a great work because it was for God.

God has chosen each of us to be involved in a particular aspect of the work of His Kingdom. Just as He had chosen Solomon to build the temple, He had also chosen the elders of Israel to provide their leadership ability, skill and material help to get the job done. So often, we fail to have a proper sense of “why we are in a particular place at a particular time.”

The palatial structure was not a descriptive exaggeration of the temple. It truly was a magnificent building and was deliberately so to provide an expression of the greatness of God. Too often we want to give God the second best or just whatever is left over after we taken care of the “really important” needs.

Verse 2 Because David was the king and Israel was a theocracy, he was able to draw upon the wealth of the nation to provide materials for the temple.

With all my resources speaks to the extent to which David would go to bring glory to God. To David, nothing was more important and no cost was too great to honor God. The way we deal with giving speaks volumes about our priorities in life. As the leader of the nation of Israel, David could honor God by giving and he knew this would be the best for the nation as reflected in Ps 33:12 “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.”

Verse 3 In addition to the “royal” treasure, David provided from his personal treasure. The motivation was because he was devoted to building a dwelling place for God.

Devotion reminds us that David was “man after God’s own heart.” “Setting his affections” (KJV) on providing a house for God indicates a deliberate choice David made regarding priorities in his life. In Paul’s writings to the church at Galatia, he encourage them to “set their affections on things above.” Where we set our affections is a measure of the desires of our hearts and when *we delight ourselves in the Lord, He will give us the desires of our heart* (Ps 37:4).

GIVING WILLINGLY (1 Chronicles 29:6) NIV

6 Then the leaders of families, the officers of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of the king's work gave willingly.

When we hear or read something about leadership (especially the responsibilities of leadership) we have a tendency to think that the message is directed at someone else. The truth is that very few are exempt from concerns about our own leadership role. Whether you are president, teacher, a grandmother or someone’s older brother or sister, you will influence others. We should not take such responsibility lightly.

Verse 6: When real leaders are confronted with worthwhile opportunities to give, they will move to meet the challenges they face. Real leaders are, first of all, able to follow their leader. David followed God’s leadership and the other leaders of Israel followed the example set by David.

Then the leaders .. gave willingly: No where do we see any compulsion to give. Their motivation came from a willing heart. This is the kind of attitude toward giving and service that causes both God and our fellow man to “rejoice” in what we do.

PRIVILEGE OR DUTY (1 Chronicles 29:14&16) NIV

14 "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

16 O LORD our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you.

Motives for giving are many and varied: *pride, guilt, obligation, care, and love* are but a few ways to characterize these. While *pride* is likely the least spiritual motive for giving, *humility* would lead us to an act of worship motivated by our love for God Who demonstrated His love for us in such *extravagant* ways.

Verse 14 We’ve heard it said “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” It is rather humbling to realize that we have *nothing to give* other than that *which we have received*. Often, whether we have received *much* or *little* has **little** to do with how we handle giving. Giving projects our character on the screen of life. The question of whether we see the ability to give and giving itself as a *privilege* or as a *duty* tells the tale of who we are.

But who am I . . . With these words of David we find the opposite of pride. This thought provoking question reminds us of his similar question in Psalms 8, “Who is man that You are mindful of him?”

Verse 16 Just recently someone said that God has already provided the money for us to build a new facility for the expanding ministry of our church: It is in the *bank accounts* and the *pocketbooks* of the members of the church. What remains is for the members to put these resources that God has provided to work in His kingdom.

All of it belongs to You [God]. . . This statement is the right confession regarding everything we have and loosely refer to as “belonging to us.” God had provided abundantly for the nation of Israel and for the people. Because of this they could give abundantly to a great work to honor and worship God. As blessed as was the nation of Israel with material wealth, it pales in comparison with the wealth God has provided to our nation. Will we be as wise as David in recognizing Who the true owner is?

ULTIMATELY, ACCOUNTABILITY IS TO GOD (1 Chronicles 29:17) NIV

17 I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you.

Many Christian wrestle with the question of *giving*. In the minds of most of us it is complicated and convoluted. Sometimes it is difficult even for us to know “the-deep-down-inside-our-own-heart” reasons why we give. Our gifts may be *generous* and even *sacrificial* and yet be given for the *wrong intent*. Our thought may be, “this gift will help others” but the real (maybe even subconscious) intent is to “be seen of others” or to “receive the praise of men.” For help we must turn to the word of God. It is sharper than any two-edged sword and can us separate even the *thoughts and intents of the heart* so we can know and deal with our own true motives.

Verse 17 David had examined his motives and was giving willingly and with the proper intent. He had walked with God long enough to know that God looks at a person’s heart rather than outward appearances. Because David’s heart was right with respect to giving to the work of building a house for God, the people were inspired to join with him in the same kind of willingness.

The thought **You . . . are pleased with integrity** should be upper most in our minds for every choice we make in life. Whether it is giving or serving or just going to work at the factory or office, God is continually testing our hearts. When He finds “uprightness” or “integrity” He is pleased.

THE GREATER THE SACRIFICE THE GREATER THE GIFT (Mk 12:41-44) NIV

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 fraction of a penny.

43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, 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.”

The widow who cast a fraction of penny into the temple treasury provides a stark contrast to the abundant and extravagant gifts of King David and the leaders of Israel as they amassed materials to build a temple to the glory of God. However, despite the evident contrast, both gifts were pleasing to God. We see in the story of the Widow’s Mite another stark contrast in giving: Those whom Mark characterized as “rich” gave large gifts; however, their giving received no commendation since there was no element of sacrifice.

Verse 41 The Lord was interested in how people gave money to the temple treasury to support the formal elements of the Jewish system of worship. Giving of this sort was not practiced in secret as is so much of our giving today. Because the practice was “in public” there were possibilities of many motives coming into play by the people who gave. Many of the rich (the scribes and Pharisees) were important participants in the religious practices of that day. They had a sense of ownership and gave generously to keep the “establishment” going.

Jesus . . . watched the crowd as they gave. Today many are careful to not make show of what they give so that our friends and fellow church members do not know if we give *little* or *much*. However, the One Who matters still watches as we give.

Verse 42 The rich and the poor practiced giving to support the activities of the temple and in doing so, each had an interest in the religious life of the nation represented by the temple. In the eyes of most people, the contribution of the poor widow was totally inconsequential compared to the what the scribes gave.

A poor widow had little influence and no voice in what happened in the Jewish communities. Most had a sense of powerlessness because, so often, the “golden rule” was interpreted to mean, “Those with the gold, rule.” It would be easy for such a person to hold on to the little she had and not be concerned with giving “alms” or a sin

GETTING MEMBERS INVOLVED

(To be done several days before the Lesson is taught.)

Select several class members and ask them to prepare to share from various examples of giving in the Bible. Depending on the amount of time you have available to teach the lesson, assign as many of the follow topics as possible.

Topic 1: Giving for Building the Tabernacle (Exodus 35:4,5,10, 20-22)

Motive for Giving: (See Table)
Extent of Giving (Sacrificial or out of Abundance):
Voluntary or Compulsory:
Practical Outcome:
Benefit to Giver:
Other Observations:

Topic 2: Giving for Building the Temple (1 Chronicles :1-19)

Motive for Giving: (See Table)
Extent of Giving (Sacrificial or out of Abundance):
Voluntary or Compulsory:
Practical Outcome:
Benefit to Giver:
Other Observations:

Topic 3: The Widow's Mite (Mark 12: 41-44 and Luke 21:2-3)

Motive for Giving: (See Table)
Extent of Giving (Sacrificial or out of Abundance):
Voluntary or Compulsory:
Practical Outcome:
Benefit to Giver:
Other Observations:

Topic 4: The Precious Ointment (John 12:1-7)

Motive for Giving: (See Table)
Extent of Giving (Sacrificial or out of Abundance):
Voluntary or Compulsory:
Practical Outcome:
Benefit to Giver:
Other Observations:

Topic 5: Collection for the Christians at Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:1-15, 9:6-15)

Motive for Giving: (See Table)
Extent of Giving (Sacrificial or out of Abundance):
Voluntary or Compulsory:
Practical Outcome:
Benefit to Giver:
Other Observations:

DURING CLASS TIME

Ask members with assignments to briefly share the background of their story and characterize the various items they were to look for.

Prior to class time, prepare the table of "Giving Examples." This can be drawn on flip chart paper or on a "dry-erase" board. Leave the shaded areas blank, initially.

As members share information, fill in the information – typical responses are shown in the example below.

Engage others to share their ideas regarding the responses. For example, the suggestion that the Motive for the widow giving her two coins might be "Any" of the possibilities (Pride, Guilt, Obligation, Care, Love) should evoke responses (perhaps disagreement) from class members. Similarly, people's motives in giving to build the temple could range over the entire spectrum of possibilities. The point to make is that "we cannot tell, by external observations, what a person's motive is. Only God, Who know the heart, can really discern motives.

GIVING EXAMPLES FROM OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT					
Event	Building Tabernacle	Building Temple	Widow's Mite	Precious Ointment	Collection for Saints
Motive	Any	Any	Any	Love	Care
Extent (S / A) Sacrificial/ Abundance	Either	Either	Sacrificial	Sacrificial	Sacrificial
Voluntary or Compulsory	Voluntary	Voluntary	Voluntary	Voluntary	Voluntary
Outcome	Place of Worship	Glory of God	Do not know	Worship	Help those in need
Benefit	Being Part of Community	Presence of God	Commended	Commended	Investment
Observations	A	B	C	D	E

Make Notes of other meaningful observations as the discussions develop. Some ideas that may come out are as follows:

A. Giving for the Tabernacle

1. God *commanded* Moses to take the offering; but, the offerings were *voluntary*.
2. There are many different ways to give: money, materials, talents.
3. The results produced a practical outcome that was obviously beneficial.

A. Giving for the Temple

1. Giving started with the leadership and their example was used to inspire others.
2. The gifts were extravagant and the building was palatial.
3. The outcomes and benefits are more spiritual than practical.

A. Widow's Mite

1. Little gift with big-time results in the eyes of God.
2. The practical good the two coins did are not an issue. (Sometime we get too practical.)

A. Precious Ointment

1. Considered to be a waste.
2. Benefits beyond the obvious – anointed the Lord for burial.
3. When the motive is Love and the outcome is Worship, then we don't count the cost.

A. Collection for Saints

1. Helping those (especially fellow Christians) in need should be a priority in the church.
2. True (agape) love is sacrificial.
3. Giving is like sowing seeds, the benefits far outweigh the costs.