



A Steward In Giving, Part 2
Text: Selected Scriptures
Series: The Christian As A Steward, #3
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Introduction

This morning we return to our series *The Christian As A Steward*. Christians are stewards of God. A term steward in the New Testament from a word originally meaning *house manager*. It is a position of responsibility given by the employer or owner, a position of managing, not owning, to operate under the direction of the owner for the best interests of the owner and includes be evaluated on faithfulness of management. As Christians, our stewardship is based on God's ownership of everything — all that we are and have, all that we will ever be or have, all that is.

Last time in the first of three looks at being *A Steward In Giving*, we saw that giving to God and His work is based on the truth that all the money and other resources we have belong to God. Then too that God directs us to give to provide for the ministry of the church locally and missions beyond our area.

This morning our attention moves to the motives of giving. Our *motives* are what cause us to think and act as we do. For example, a child usually only has to touch a hot stove element or iron once to avoid doing it again. The motivation not to touch is clear: to avoid pain. Then also we know that some people work long and hard, cut corners, disregard ethical and legal standards in work and business out of the motive to make money, gain position and power.

Let's clarify a few things about motives. We all know some motives are right and others are wrong, that some motives help and others hurt. Motives are important and they reveal our hearts. We see that in the penny given out of love for God by the poor widow in the New Testament being blessed by God, while the large sums given by some wealthy people trying to impress others were not.

Then too, our own motives are not always easy to determine. The true motives of others are often difficult to determine. Care and caution are important when looking at motives, ours and others.

When it comes to giving to God and His work, we cannot excuse ourselves on the basis of our feelings and motives. We may not "feel at peace," may not "have joy in giving," but we still have the responsibility, the stewardship of giving. The need and our goal should be

to correct the wrong feelings and motives and develop the right ones so we can honor God, fulfill our stewardship, feel good about it, and experience the blessing of God.

The Motives Of Giving.

The four motives of giving we are looking at today can and will be ours by an active decision and discipline on our part and the grace of God. The first motive should be our joy in Christ. We see this in the example of the Macedonian churches (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea) that the Apostle Paul used for the believers at Corinth. In 2 Corinthians 8 he told them,

“Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great deal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality” (1-2).

Those Macedonian believers were persecuted and poor, but they had an “abundance of joy” in Christ—joy from their salvation, from their ongoing relationship with Him, and that overflowed to giving to God and His work.

Jesus brings, He gives us joy, His joy. Do you remember His words in John 15? “These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full” (11). As well, Galatians 5:22 tells us that one part of the fruit of Christ’s character which the Holy Spirit produces in believers is joy.

Are you joyful in Christ this morning? Are you joyful because Jesus Christ is your Savior, because your sins are forgiven, because you are a new creation, because you have a new unending relationship with Him? Are you joyful today because you will spend eternity with God, because you have Christ with you always, because you have been blessed with every spiritual blessing? Are you joyful this morning because you are priest before God to serve Him and other, because you have an eternal, unfading inheritance, because you are freed from all the traps and dead-end streets of man’s answers to a meaningful, satisfying life, and can know life that is *truly* meaningful and satisfying.

Let me ask you again, “Are you joyful in Christ this morning?” Not in the circumstances or prospects you see, but in *Jesus*, your Savior. Don’t allow anyone, anything to steal that joy!

The Macedonian believers’ joy in Christ *motivated* them, and “overflowed” with giving to God, generous giving in spite of their difficult circumstances, deep poverty. Our joy in Christ should be one of the major motivators of all our life, including our giving. In the next chapter, 2 Corinthians 9, we are told that “God loves a cheerful giver” (7). All of us have the responsibility, the stewardship of giving. God has a special delight, love for those whose joy in Christ leads them to give cheerfully, not, as Paul drew the contrast, “grudgingly or under compulsion.” Our joy in Christ should *overflow* with giving to God.

The second motivator of our giving should be an eagerness to participate in this privilege. Take note of the description of the Macedonian churches' giving in 2 Corinthians chapter 8,

“that in a great deal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints” (2-4).

They gave willingly, even eagerly. Not because someone pleaded or begged. They knew their responsibilities and the needs, and gave willingly. The contrast, again, is to give grudgingly or under compulsion.

One pastor had a hard time not breaking out laughing one Sunday morning while the offering was being taken. He saw a struggle: a two year-old boy had a few coins in his hand. His mother wanted him to put them in the offering. He wouldn't, clenched his fist tight. Mom talked, then took his hand and the struggle began. She finally pried his fingers open and the coins fell into the offering. She (as well as the usher and those around here) was relieved. Her little boy was angry.

The Macedonian believers didn't need anyone to prod them or pry their hands open. They gave willingly. They were eager to participate in supporting God's work and people. Why? How? Verse 5 tells us “they first gave themselves to the Lord.” When we acknowledge God's ownership of all that we are and have, and then give ourselves totally to Him, no one will have to prod or pry us to give.

The third motive for our giving should be love for God and others. Listen to Paul's direction to the Corinthian believers,

“But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also. I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. 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 through His poverty might become rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:7-9).

With all the problems the believers at Corinth had (which were quite a few), Paul also recognized their strengths. This is a good lesson. There will always be problems that should be corrected, but a focus on strengths and positive direction is essential to health, growth, fellowship. Paul listed some of their strengths and zoom in on love. As Christ love and gave Himself out of His love, so our love for Christ and others should motivate our giving, should be proved in our giving.

A man who says he loves his wife and yet is demanding, controlling, critical, taking and not giving, doesn't really love his wife. Love is giving, sacrificing, centered in the well-being of the other person. A person who does not give to God and His work may not be aware of his responsibility, or may not have a truly deep love for God, His people and His work. When you think about, plan, and do your giving, be motivated by God's love for you *and* your love for God and others.

The last motive is to be committed to completing your commitments. We go back to those believers at Corinth, Paul continued,

“I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it. But no finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability. For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have” (2 Corinthians 8:10-12).

Some people are dreamers but not doers, starters but not finishers. We all have met people like this. In the church there are *visionaries* (or *dreamers*) and critics who have plenty of ideas, but either start and quickly go on to something else without finishing, or never even start. In work we see the extremes from the one who won't work to the work-alcoholic. In the family there are both procrastinators and hyperactives who talk and promise about family priorities, but nothing changes. Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians that they desired to give, planned and began, and he now encourages them to “finish doing it also.”

Completing your commitments should be a motivator in every area of life, including giving to God. It is being faithful to God and others which honors and brings glory to God. Failure to complete our commitments to God carries consequences. Ecclesiastes 5:4 tells us, “When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow!”

Giving to God. Do you have a plan or commitment you have made to God about your giving? If not, you should. We will see this next time when we look at *The Plan of Giving*. Then, our motivation should be, “I have determined to give in this way and so I will, by faith and God's grace, complete this commitment to God.”

Conclusion.

I want you to reflect on three things with God in these quiet moments. First, if you have not consciously, decisively as a Christian, given all that you are and have, all that you ever will be and have, to God, consider and do that now. Perhaps you have in the past, and have drifted from that commitment. Come back to it and renew it now. Second, ask yourself this question, “What are my *real* motivations for giving?” Then, ask God to help you know and

live by the motives for giving which honor Him and bring His blessing of joy in Christ, eagerness to participate in this privilege, love for God and others, and completing your commitments.

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