



# Growing as Disciples and Stewards

## Introductory Comments

In the church, to “give” is a topic usually relegated to a three week or four-week period of time in the fall or spring as congregations seek to receive “estimates of giving” toward the next year’s ministry budget. But is this really what to “give” is all about in the context of discipleship? The faith/discipleship practice, “give”, is not about fundraising in the church whether it be for budget or special funding opportunities. For the disciple, one’s giving is predicated on God’s giving and generosity. The disciple’s giving is a grateful response to God’s abundant gift of grace in Jesus Christ. Paraphrasing what the Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians in response to God’s grace, the disciple first gives of them self for all that God has done and continues to do in Christ. In other words, giving of one’s whole self is how the disciple lives in and lives out God’s grace. As one lives in the midst of God’s grace each day, to “give” is both a joy and duty for the disciple. Giving in joy and duty. What does this mean for the growing disciple and steward?

**Joy and Gratitude** - The basic foundational reason for giving, whatever the gift may be, is from a heart filled with joy and gratitude for all of God’s abundant gifts but especially that of grace in Jesus Christ. For the disciple, joy and gratitude underlies all giving. A heart filled with joy creates a need to give that expresses gratitude and thanksgiving. It is not a response to a specific appeal or occasion to give a gift but rather the giving of ourselves and all of who we are in response to God’s incredible and unconditional love in Jesus Christ. It is this joy and gratitude in God’s gifts and grace that provides the basic foundation for all the disciple’s giving whether it be time, abilities, talents, spiritual gifts, or money. For the disciple, joy and gratitude also informs and undergirds gifts shared for special and specific appeals. A heart of that is filled with delight and gratitude for God’s gift of grace is the very basic “Why” of the faith/discipleship practice, “give.”

**Duty** - A heart filled with joy and gratitude for God’s grace in Christ leads to the need of proclaiming this life - giving gift. That is the duty of giving. In a disciple’s giving, God’s love in Christ is proclaimed. As we live in the joy of God’s grace, we live out the duty of proclamation. Duty flows from joy and gratitude and is the underlying support for a strong and vibrant ministry. In the context of ministry, one’s duty in giving, along with a response of joy, is a need to make certain and insure that the congregation’s mission of proclaiming God’s continues to be strong, bold, and vibrant. The disciple’s sharing of gifts builds up and strengthens the mission of the congregation and the whole church. A heart that is attentive to duty and proclamation becomes the “What” of the faith/discipleship practice, “give.”

For the disciple, giving is not a short term specific fund appeal topic. It is a way of life as one seeks to live in and live out God’s grace in Christ. To “give” is an act of joy and ministry, saying a resounding YES to God’s love and grace in Jesus Christ.

# Bible Study



## Bible Study: 2 Corinthians 9:7-9 and Luke 10:25-37

So how do you give? How do you understand the faith/discipleship practice to “give”? It is true that there are many reasons for giving but as we ponder the practice of giving, consider this definition of discipleship/stewardship.

“Stewardship/discipleship is how we live each day as God’s baptized in the midst of God rich grace in Jesus Christ.” For the disciple, giving is always

done in response to what God has done and continues to do in our lives. As a disciple, giving is done in an attitude of joy and duty. The texts from 2 Corinthians and Luke underscore the joy and duty in giving.

In the Corinthians text, Paul speaks to the joy of giving as he refers to the “cheerful giver.” The underlying question posed in this text is what creates a cheerful giver. Giving that is done in joy, delight, and cheerfulness is based at its core upon God’s abundance and grace in Christ. As Paul says, giving in joy and cheerfulness is not done in reluctance or compulsion. Rather, as we consider God’s extraordinary generosity and what it means for our lives, a sense of generosity is manifested in the heart of the disciple and gifts are given in a deep sense of joy and cheerfulness.

The story of the Good Samaritan in Luke’s text is a wonderful example of giving as “duty.” In this familiar story we have the account of a traveler who was robbed, beaten, and left suffering on the side of the road. After being ignored by people that could be expected to help, the traveler was finally tended to, unexpectedly, by a traveler who happened to be a Samaritan. The Samaritan provided first responder support to the traveler, loaded him on his donkey, and brought him to an inn. There, he charged the innkeeper to care for the traveler and when he returned, would payback all the expenses for the care. The point of the story is to understand the concept of neighbor and our duty as disciples. In giving, duty is understood as the responsibility to share the gifts of God for ministry to our neighbors, bringing the healing and lifegiving love of God to people’s lives. Duty in giving has its roots in the joy of and thanksgiving for God’s abundant and unconditional love. God’s action of giving always underlies our joy and duty in giving.

## Bible Study Discussion Questions

- How would you define giving? What characteristics do you apply to the faith/discipleship practice of giving?
- How do you describe the joy in giving and the act of “cheerful giving”?
- How do you describe the duty in giving? What, in your opinion, are characteristics of the duty of giving?
- What is your “why” in giving?
- In what ways does a heart of giving and generosity help one grow as a disciple and steward?
- In what ways have you experienced giving this week, either in yourself or that of another?

