

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

MOTIVATIONAL LESSONS **“The Importance of Giving”**

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Kevin Pendergrass.

Welcome to the Gospel of Christ. In this lesson we will be looking at the importance of giving. In Acts 20:35 the Bible says, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Growing up, I remember I used to jokingly tell people that it was better to give than to receive, so they needed to give to me, especially when it was time for presents! But the reality is that it is so much better than it is to receive. Looking back in life, I’m sure that you can testify to this as well. You feel so much better after you have given to someone. Today we will be looking at different ways that we must give if we want to be faithful to the Lord.

The first way that we are commanded to give is that we must give of our time. As Christians, we are obligated not to be “all about us,” but instead to look out for the interests of others (Phil. 2:4). In doing that, we will be required to invest time in other individuals besides ourselves. In James 1:27 the Bible says, “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” This is the definition of pure and undefiled religion—helping those who are helpless, the fatherless, and those who are widows by spending time with them. When we do this, and help other people with their problems, we have less time to worry about our own problems. If we are always talking about our own problems, and if we are constantly focusing only on ourselves, then we will worry more about our problems. But when we give our time to others and are willing to help them with their problems, it will take our minds off of our own issues. In Matthew 25 we read of the great judgment scene. In Matthew 25:31-33 we are told,

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.”

Here we see the great judgment scene, with the sheep on one side and the goats on the other side. Verses 34-36 go on to say,

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’”

This represents what Jesus will tell those who are faithful and righteous. He will remind them of why they are able to enter Heaven—because of what they did for Him. Verses 37-40 then record,

“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’”

But when it comes to the unfaithful, look at what Jesus will have to say to them. Verses 41-46 state,

"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

How important is it for us to make sure that we are giving of our time? It is very important. If it was the Lord who was sick, we would go visit Him. But are we willing to do the same for others? On the Day of Judgment Jesus will say, "If you have not done it to them, then you have not done it to Me." We must give of our time. A good Old Testament example concerning this principle is Job. He was a man who went through a lot of trials and tribulations. He lost his family when his children died. His wife told him to curse God and die. He lost his health, his money, and his livestock. He lost it all. In Job 2:11-13 notice what his friends took time to do.

"Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him. And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven. So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great."

Sometimes the best thing we can do for a person is to just let him know that we are there for him. We can just take time to be with him. Perhaps a person who has lost a loved one does not want to talk about it. If we do not know what to say, perhaps the best thing to say is nothing at all—just like Job's friends. We can simply take the time to be with him and show him that we care. If we want to be faithful Christians, we must give of our time and help those who are in need. Romans 12:15 says that we are to "rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." When people are happy, we need to take the time to be happy with them. We must never be jealous. If someone in the church has achieved something great, we should be happy for him. Or, if something bad happens to a person, we need to weep with him. Often those who complain because no one has called them when they were sick or sent them cards when they were in the hospital, are the same people who are unwilling to do the same for others. We must follow Matthew 7:12—"Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them." This often is known as the Golden Rule. We are to do unto others as we want them to do to us. If we want someone to visit us when we are sick, then we need to visit others when they are sick. We shouldn't complain and say, "Well, the church doesn't care about me because no one is doing anything for me." We need to ask ourselves what we have done for others when they were sick. Let's make sure that we are taking time out of our lives to help others.

Another way that we are commanded to give is to give of our money. We are not under the Old Testament. It was nailed to the cross (Col. 2). We now live under the New Law—the law of Christ (Heb. 7:12). However, we find a valid principle in Malachi 3:8-10 about robbing God.

"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' 'In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food

in My house, and try Me now in this,' says the Lord of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.'

How can we rob God? God already has everything, so we are not talking about our taking money out of God's pocket. Rather, the idea is that everything we have belongs to God anyway. If we hold back when we should be helping others, then we are not giving to God as we should. While we are not to tithe today as people did under the Old Testament, we still are commanded to give financially. The difference is that we are to give as we have purposed in our hearts. In 2 Corinthians 9:7 the Bible says, "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." Each person is to give "as he purposes in his heart." This is speaking about a desire—something we should want to do. We are not to give out of a grudge or of necessity. We must not say, "I don't really want to give to God. I'm not going to like it. I'll be miserable when I do it, but I guess I'll go ahead and write Him a check anyway." Or perhaps a person sees the collection plate coming around, and he thinks, "People are going to be looking at me, so let me see what kind of change I have in my pocket and I'll just throw that in there." This is not the type of person who has purposed in his heart to give back to God, or to give to help people who are in need. We are give cheerfully. We are give because we want to. In 1 John 5:3 we are taught that the love of God is not just keeping His commandments, but also doing it in a way that it is not a burden to us. We should enjoy keeping God's commandments, knowing that we are doing the right thing. We are to be a cheerful giver when we do so.

I now want us to look at examples in the New Testament of giving financially. In Acts 2 we find the great Gospel sermon that was preached by Peter. We see that the Jews were pricked in their hearts (vs. 37), and asked, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" In verse 38 the answer was that they had to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. Thus, we see the church being established and the New Law going out. But as we continue reading, we see in Acts 2:45 a pattern being set forth as the Christians "sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need." The pattern was simply the pattern of giving—being willing to help those in need. In Acts 2 we had many people coming to Jerusalem from different regions. There were some who stayed longer, and who thus needed places to stay. Some needed money, food, or help to get back home. The Christians were willing to sell their possessions and use the money to assist those who needed help.

A couple of chapters later in Acts 4:34 we read, "Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold." When people were in need, the Christians gave as people had a need.

A negative example (from which we can learn so that we do not repeat it) is found in Acts 5:1-11 where we read of Ananias and Sapphira.

"A certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.' Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her, 'Tell me whether you sold the

land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much.' Then Peter said to her, 'How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.' Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things."

This is talking about an attitude of the heart. Peter asked them why they said they had given all of the proceeds from the sale of the land, when they actually had held back part of the proceeds. They were trying to make themselves look better. And they lied to do so. We should not do such things to be seen of men. When we give, we are not to give because we want people to look at us and say, "Look how wonderful they are" or "Look at all the money they are giving." We are not to "let our left hand know what our right hand is doing." We are not to be like the scribes and Pharisees who wanted to sound a trumpet and say, "Look at all the wonderful works we are doing!" If we do wonderful works, people will find out without us having to tell them. Let's make sure that we are acting from a correct heart and out of a correct motivation. We must not lie or try to be seen of men just so that we can receive glory.

When it comes to giving, some say that we can help only Christians. But the Bible teaches that we are not to help only Christians, but all people. Galatians 1:1-2 teaches that Paul was writing to the churches of Galatia. He told those churches in Galatians 6:10, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." Did Paul tell the Christians in Galatia that they were to do good only to other Christians or needy saints? No; they were to do good to "all," and especially those "of the household of faith." Yes, we must help other Christians. But we also are to help non-Christians as well. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 the Bible says,

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me."

Paul was asking congregations to give to needy saints. The funds they gave were sent to needy saints (Romans 15 talks about this being a "certain contribution"), but the funds also helped non-Christians. In 2 Corinthians 9:13 we read that "through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men." As Christians, we are to help not just other Christians, but also non-Christians. Of course, we can give only that which we have. In 2 Corinthians 8:12-15 the Bible shows us that if we do not have something, we cannot give it. I cannot use a talent that I do not possess. Nor can I give a dollar that I do not have.

"If there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality. As it is written, 'He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.'"

Here Paul was teaching that the Christians in Corinth needed to help others, who then one day might be able to help them in return. We need to always help one another by giving of our finances.

However, I want to emphasize something here. You will notice that on this program we never ask for money. We are interested in your listening to the truth. We are interested in

your soul. We are interested in getting the Word of God out to you. This is what is most important. Before the Lord wants our money, and before the Lord wants you helping others financially, he first wants us—which brings me to my final point.

We must give ourselves completely. Yes, we must give of our time. And yes, we must give of our finances. But we must give ourselves completely to God. Someone might say, "I don't mind every so often giving a little bit of my time. And I don't mind every so often writing a check for \$50 or \$100. But you're telling me that I have to give myself completely?!" Absolutely! One example of this is found in Matthew 8:18-22.

"When Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side. Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, 'Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.' Then another of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' But Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.'"

Notice the dedication that the Lord requires of anyone who will follow Him. We have to be willing to give up everything to follow Christ. In the above passage, one man wanted to go bury his father so he then could follow Jesus. But Jesus said, "No, let the [spiritually] dead bury the [physically] dead." Jesus was teaching that we must give ourselves to Him completely. In Matthew 6:33 the Bible says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." We must put Christ before anything or anyone else. Someone might say, "Well, at least I'm seeking God. A lot of people I know don't even care about God." We cannot compare ourselves to others in such a manner. We have to compare ourselves to the standard that God has set forth in His Word, and then live out in our lives what He has told us to do. We must give ourselves to Him completely.

In Matthew 10:38 the Bible says, "He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me." Are you worthy of Christ? How would you know? You can know that you are worthy of Christ if you are willing to take up your cross, spiritually speaking, and follow after the Lord. But if you are not willing to do that, then you are not worthy of Him. In Luke 6:46 Jesus asked, "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" That verse has just as much truth and application to it as when Jesus first said it. So many people want Jesus as their Savior, but they do not want Jesus as their Lord. They say, "Jesus, save me. Take away my sin. But do not ask me to do anything. Do not ask me to give of my time. Do not ask me to give of my money. And certainly do not ask me to give myself." Jesus' response is, "If you are not willing to give yourself completely, then do not call me 'Lord.' If you are not willing to submit to Me as your Master, then do not say that I am your Master or that you are My servant." We must give up absolutely everything in order to follow Christ completely. In Matthew 16:24-27 Jesus said,

"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works."

Jesus asked what it would profit an individual if he gained the whole world, but lost his soul. It is a sacrifice for us to follow the Lord. But it is a sacrifice that, in the end, will be worth it. We can own everything, but what does it mean if we lose our souls in the process? Paul understood that nothing could come between him and the Lord. In Philippians 3:8 Paul wrote, "I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus

my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ." Paul had certain things, materialistically speaking. But he counted them as rubbish, compared to what he had in Christ Jesus.

Some people think that the Christian life is always an easy life. But they are wrong. Matthew 7:13-14 says,

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."

Few people will find eternal life. Few will be willing to do the right thing by completely giving themselves to the Lord. Are you one of those people? We must not forsake the Lord, even during times of suffering. In 1 Peter 4:12 the Bible says, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you." When you give yourself to the Lord, it may be tough. But in the end, it will be worth it. This is why the Bible teaches us that we must become a "living sacrifice" to the Lord in everything we do. Romans 12:1-2 says,

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

We must be living sacrifices for the Lord, and we must give ourselves completely to God. This means that He must come before our families, our friends, our work, our activities, our hobbies, and our entertainment. Jesus must come first in everything that we do.

I now want to ask you if you are a giver. The Bible commands us to give of our time. We must be willing to help those in need. We are to give financially—to the Lord and to others. And we must give ourselves completely to the Lord. Have you obeyed the Gospel? Have you become a Christian? The Bible teaches in Romans 10:17 that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." We must go to God's Word to find out what we need to do to be saved. The Bible teaches that we must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. In John 8:24 Jesus said, "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." We must believe that Jesus is God's Son. We must believe in His death, burial, and resurrection. We also have to repent of our sins. We cannot continue living the way we once lived. We must change. In Acts 17:30 we are told, "These times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent." We must confess that Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10:10). And we have to be baptized in water for the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). If you have yet to obey the truth, we pray today that you will obey the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE IMPORTANCE OF GIVING”

1. What important spiritual principle is found in Acts 20:35?
2. What important spiritual principle is found in Philippians 2:4?
3. According to James 1:27, what is “pure and undefiled religion”?
4. In the Judgment Day scene in Matthew 25:34-36, what had certain individuals done that caused Jesus to acknowledge them as His, and to allow them into Heaven?
5. In the Judgment Day scene in Matthew 25:41-46, what had certain individuals done that caused Jesus **not** to acknowledge them as His, and **not** allow them into Heaven?
6. According to the material contained in this lesson, what did Job’s friends do that appeared to be commendable on their part?
7. What does Romans 12:15 admonish Christians to do?
8. By what name is the teaching found in Matthew 7:12 known today, and how does it apply to giving?
9. What important principle about giving is found in Malachi 3:8-1 that still applies to Christians today?
10. What does 2 Corinthians 9:7 admonish all Christians to do when it comes to giving?
11. According to Acts 2:45, what did first-century Christians do (in regard to giving) that was so commendable?
12. According to Acts 4:34, what was the end result of the generous giving habits of first-century Christians?
13. In Acts 5:1-11 we read about Ananias and Sapphira. What did they do that was sinful; what was their motive; and what was their punishment?
14. What does Galatians 6:10 admonish Christians to do when it comes to giving?
15. What principle (discussed in this lesson) is found in 2 Corinthians 8:12-15 in regard to what people are expected to give?
16. What command is found in 1 Corinthians 16:1- that applies to Christians today regarding giving of their financial means?
17. According to 2 Corinthians 9:13, God received glory when certain Christians in Corinth took specific actions. For what actions did Paul commend those Christians?
18. What important principle is found in Romans 12:1-2 regarding “how much” Christians are expected to offer God in every area of life?