

# Gratitude and Giving

Series: Growing in Gratitude  
December 3, 2017 – Brad Bailey

Gratitude is the connection between every good in life... and your personal life.

2 Corinthians 9:6-11 (TEV)

*Remember that the person who plants few seeds will have a small crop; the one who plants many seeds will have a large crop. <sup>7</sup> You should each give, then, as you have decided, not with regret or out of a sense of duty; for God loves the one who gives gladly. <sup>8</sup> And God is able to give you more than you need, so that you will always have all you need for yourselves and more than enough for every good cause. <sup>9</sup> As the scripture says, "He gives generously to the needy; his kindness lasts forever." <sup>10</sup> And God, who supplies seed for the sower and bread to eat, will also supply you with all the seed you need and will make it grow and produce a rich harvest from your generosity. <sup>11</sup> He will always make you rich enough to be generous at all times, so that many will thank God for your gifts which they receive from us.*

1. Gratitude reveals our true position: Gratitude roots me in the reality of being the recipient of another source...my true position as an entrusted manager. Generosity embraces that position.

*"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Psalms 24:1; 50:10, 11; Haggai 2:8).*

*"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." (James 1:17)*

*"Always remember that it is the Lord your God who gives you the ability to produce wealth." (Deut 8:18)*

*"Freely you have received; freely give." - Matthew 10:8*

*A true relationship with God understands that achievement is not measured by how much one makes or how much one has...but by how well our possessions have been used in a way that honors the owner... God.*

2. Gratitude reveals our true provisions: Gratitude allows me to see the reality of what brings lasting security and satisfaction ...the true provision that will last. Generosity invests ourselves into that provision.

*"Don't store up treasures here on earth where they can erode away or may be stolen. Store them in heaven where they will never lose their value and are safe from thieves. If your profits are in heaven, your heart will be there too." - Matt. 6:19-21*

3. Gratitude reveals our power: Gratitude realizes that we have the God given power to give. Generosity enjoys exercising that power.

*"...remember the words of the Lord Jesus. He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" - Acts 20:35*

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## **INTRO**

**Let me begin with a simple premise someone stated...**

**“What consumes your mind....controls your life. Practice gratitude.”**

I think most of us find that what consumes our mind most is often fear...worry...comparison...and these can control us. How different of gratitude consumed our minds. Why?

**Gratitude is about connection.**

**Gratitude is the connection between every good in life... and your personal life.**

If someone walked up to you this afternoon and handed you one million dollars... just a gift to bless you... most of us can imagine we would be filled with gratitude... wow... I can't believe how blessed I am. It is life giving...and I am not the source.

We'd like to think we would not only be grateful...but become grateful in a lasting way.

Yet the power of realizing life's blessings can become quenched by familiarity and fear and comparison. The connection can be cut off.

An amazing source of light and warmth arose above us today called the sun...I'd say it's an amazing good in life...and it revealed an amazing planet... beauty that's astonishing... food that is amazing. Most of us probably woke up without a lot of wow.

> The point is that gratitude is a switch that can connect us to the blessings.

My life is filled with goodness regardless of whether I realize it or not... I can have no sense of it's goodness... or I can realize what a blessing it is... be FILLED with gratitude.

**Gratitude is that realization...it connects what is good to being experienced as good.**

So we are in the midst of **a few weeks** focused on **growing in gratefulness**.

**Today... let's open up the relationship between gratitude and generosity.**

**NOTE: Now in case anyone is wondering... if by talking about giving...that I am speaking about giving** financial support to the ministry we share here... let me say openly... **no but yes.**

**No...it's not the focus...but yes ...I do want to note a critical need for us to grow as a community** in our **financial support.**

Gratitude and generosity... I want to acknowledge my gratefulness for the generosity of so many.

*This current year began with a significant loss of financial resources as some long-term contributors lost employment and others retired and moved away. This has led to a **20% to 25% loss in contributions...which many may have seen in the weekly bulletin as a growing deficit between contributions and ministry expenses.***

***Some may think** that such a deficit is not a problem because you have not seen any large changes this year. During prior years we have built up a reserve – savings – for emergencies or future needs. We have been blessed through drawing on our savings to overcome any immediate crisis. However, **without increases in financial support, we will need to begin making substantial changes in staffing in the new year.** Our Board of Governing Elders is currently preparing a plan to make changes as needed.*

*So I want to truly express how grateful I am for the commitment and contribution of so many... be a living body of Christ today... never so needed...*

*I also want to affirm a principle that **the Bible, Jesus and the Apostle Paul were very clear on ...that...***

***"The worker is worthy of his wages."** (Luke 10:7; 1 Corinthians 9:14; 1 Timothy 5:18)*

*And I know those who serve this ministry full time...and how much they give their whole lives... to serve you and this community. Each one is both **really gifted** and **really given** to what they do.*

*So I want to ask you to take that to heart.*

*I am going to **send you a letter this week**...perhaps a parallel email form. My challenge to you is to **read and consider that.***

*BUT...today I want us to hear what lies in the **heart of giving**...and particularly the **significant relationship** between **gratitude and generosity.***

*These are two qualities that we sense are life giving... lift us... we feel more alive...more like we should be. [1] But while we want to be grateful and generous... we often correlate each of those more to something we SHOULD do. As children, we may have been told how ungrateful we were,...and how we “should” be more grateful. So we feel the sense of obligation...and duty. And then we think about worship in that light...as simply something we owe to God...not something good...as much as something deserved. We want to be generous... but the call to give elicits more a sense of obligation that opportunity... duty more than desire.*

***God wants us to understand... gratitude and generosity are actually about discovering the reality of how blessed we are. Listen to how the apostle Paul speaks of giving in the Bible...***

**2 Corinthians 9:6-11 (TEV)**

***Remember that the person who plants few seeds will have a small crop; the one***

***who plants many seeds will have a large crop. <sup>7</sup> You should each give, then, as you have decided, not with regret or out of a sense of duty; for God loves the one who gives gladly. <sup>8</sup> And God is able to give you more than you need, so that you will always have all you need for yourselves and more than enough for every good cause. <sup>9</sup> As the scripture says, "He gives generously to the needy; his kindness lasts forever." <sup>10</sup> And God, who supplies seed for the sower and bread to eat, will also supply you with all the seed you need and will make it grow and produce a rich harvest from your generosity. <sup>11</sup> He will always make you rich enough to be generous at all times, so that many will thank God for your gifts which they receive from us.***

*In these words lies the heart of God for you and I regarding giving... a call to grasp that it is good... beyond mere obligation to that of opportunity ...beyond mere duty to that of desire.*

***"You should each give, then, as you have decided, not with regret or out of a sense of duty; for God loves the one who gives gladly." - 2 Cor. 9:7 (TEV)***

***Or as the Amplifies version captures this...***

***"God loves a cheerful giver and delights in the one whose heart is in his gift." - 2 Cor. 9:7 (AMP)***

**The creator of the universe... loves something...delights in it.**

He LOVES... DELIGHTS... in those who give freely...gladly...cheerfully.

You can have that effect on God... by giving freely. Your generosity can make God smile.

**God is happy because we are functioning in reality...more truly who we are. That can't be forced. [2]**

***1. Gratitude reveals our true position: Gratitude roots me in the reality of being the recipient of another source...my true position as an entrusted manager. Generosity embraces that position.***

**Gratitude by it's nature is the realization that we have received from a source beyond ourselves. If we are grateful... it means we received it...you are not the source. So the very nature of gratitude defines our position.**

***Gratefulness and Giving are a part of living in covenant with God... restoring my relationship as "manager" of all the earth (i.e., stewards and caretakers).***

***The earth and all it contains belong to God:***

***“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.”***  
(Psalms 24:1; 50:10, 11; Haggai 2:8).

***“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”***  
(James 1:17)

All our abilities, opportunities, and possessions come from Him  
***“Always remember that it is the Lord your God who gives you the ability to produce wealth.” - Deut 8:18***

This is what the understanding of “stewardship” comes from. A steward is someone who manages or administers the property or affairs of someone else as an agent. The message of the Old and New Testaments is that **human beings act as stewards of God for creation.**

When Jesus sent his followers to go and serve others with God’s working...he said...

***“Freely you have received; freely give.” - Matthew 10:8 (NIV) [3]***

What is he saying?

> He is **making the connection** between how we receive and how we give....between gratitude and giving.

He doesn’t just tell them to give freely. He tells them that they should give freely because it reflects how they received freely.

Giving freely begins with realizing you have **received freely... not from what you deserved.**  
**In giving back we pierce the wall of self-entitled thinking in which we are a source unto ourselves**

This is the reality that we have **lost in our modern culture.**

**We believe** that we inherently are **owed something**...that we are **entitled.**

Those living **just 100 years ago** actually embraced their call to **“count your blessings.”**

We are the one’s who created **Black Friday.**

We are **struggling to maintain gratitude**...and **therefore giving**...because we are disconnected from living in relationship to the source of all we have.

In a secular world... the **sense of “ours”** become **more defining** and absolute.

I have come to believe that there is **one core issue beneath all others** when it comes to money...and that is **knowing whose it is.**

**How did Jesus describe faithfulness to God?** Most often **with a story** that told of an **owner entrusting** their vineyard or the goods to someone who would be held accountable when they returned.

**From my experience...** we **either live as those who are ultimately managers...** and consider how we manage what we have in light of being faithful to God's purposes... **or we consider ourselves to be the absolute owners...** and will always be a bit **begrudging** about any responsibility to give to God's purposes.

*"A true relationship with God understands that achievement is not measured by how much one makes or how much one has...but by how well our possessions have been used in a way that honors their owner... God."*

*How tightly are we holding what we have? Some of us... may need to hold a loose grip on what we have.*

*We might recall when a young man of wealth came to Jesus... recognizing he represented God like no other...and asking what mattered most ...and that led to discussing loving God and loving one's neighbor...and finally Jesus encouraging him to go sell his stuff and give to others... at which point we hear of Jesus' sadness as the man slowly walked away. Jesus saw a child of God who was not free. They may have thought that they were more secure because of their wealth...but they were bound by that very grip it had on them.*

**Giving is liberating... an antidote to being bound by need and greed...fear and anxiety.**

**Many people are anxious** about their financial futures because they haven't learned that people who hold tightly to their money will be in bondage to financial concerns. People who open their hands freely in giving will experience emotional liberty in financial matters. Jesus was not a wealthy man, yet He was a man who had tremendous financial security and peace.

**2. Gratitude reveals our true provisions: Gratitude allows me to see the reality of what brings lasting security and satisfaction ...the true provision that will last. Generosity invests ourselves into that provision.**

*Jesus tells us...*

*“Don’t store up treasures here on earth where they can erode away or may be stolen. Store them in heaven where they will never lose their value and are safe from thieves. If your profits are in heaven, your heart will be there too.” - Matt. 6:19-21*

*He calls us to realize the **foolishness of collecting more stuff that won’t last...** in contrast to providing for what will last forever. [4]*

*When we focus on giving to what bears eternal value...our hearts will also be drawn deeper into our eternal existence.*

*So we do well to ask ourselves...*

***Who is freer... the one trying to hold onto what is diminishing... or the one who knows what is lasting?***

***Who is most deeply secure...the one who treasures what has no lasting value...or the one whose heart is already at home in eternal reality?***

***There have been a growing number of ad for investing in retirement... crazy if you don’t include preparing for what lies ahead.***

*Stand back from an eternal perspective...and we will see what makes real sense...which is investing in what is eternal...what is actually going to last.*

*For those who have ever explored managing financial investments... there is one principle that is emphasized at the core...diversity... the need to have investments in different spheres so that they are protected from a downfall in any one of them. Jesus simply expands that... noting that we have far too small a perspective.*

***3. Gratitude reveals our power: Gratitude realizes that we have the God given power to give. Generosity enjoys exercising that power.***

***Those who become more grateful become more generous...and the generosity allows them to sense greater purpose in life. [4] [5]***

***“Giving is the highest expression of potency. In the very act of giving I experience my strength, my wealth, my power. The experience of heightened vitality fills me with joy I experience myself as overflowing, spending, alive, hence as joyous. Giving is more joyous than receiving, not because it is a deprivation, but because in the act of giving lies the expression of my aliveness.” – E. Fromm***

***Greed does not make you bigger...but smaller...***

***When do you feel most fulfilled...when you get or when you give?***

God is a giver. Anytime we imitate God and do the works that He does, e.g., share our faith, forgive another person who has sinned against us, pray for a sick person, or give financially, we are tapping into the very life and being of God.

***“...remember the words of the Lord Jesus. He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ” - Acts 20:35***

I have regretted plenty of things in my life...including some purchases... even a couple investment...BUT never giving. Never.

And the older I get....I the more I realize that what satisfies most is what I give to that will outlive me.

***"We should certainly count our blessings, but we should also make our blessings count." Neal A. Maxwell***

**Closing...**

**We all want to be grateful...and generous.** We each have **different levels of natural dispositions** depending on some of the influences in our formative years. Generally we want gratitude and generosity life-giving... BUT... we **underestimate the forces which are at work to quench them.** Fear...insecurity... comparison...greed... consumerism. I want to suggest that it may start with breaking free of correlating gratitude and generosity with with simply being a duty that we “should” be...and realizing that these qualities actually reflect reality...and awakening to our true position and provisions...and power.

So let's pray for freedom from mere duty...and seek the reality that brings desire.

**Notes:**

1. Today we stand between the two major holidays of Thanksgiving and Christmas. They can become tragically reduced to Turkey and the cultural adornments of Christmas ...but they really offer the soul an invitation into gratitude and giving.

These two qualities... relate to one another.

*In [one study](#), people who kept a gratitude journal offered more help and emotional support to others than people who wrote about hassles or neutral events.*

*According to the John Templeton Foundation, people who feel grateful give, on average, [20 percent more time and money to charity](#).*

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/cindy-jonesnyland/how-gratitude-leads-to-ge\\_b\\_8690052.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/cindy-jonesnyland/how-gratitude-leads-to-ge_b_8690052.html)

The Templeton Giving Survey is an online survey of 2,014 Americans ages 18+ commissioned by John Templeton Foundation and produced by a global insights and analytics firm Edelman



Berland. The margin of error is  $\pm 2.18\%$ . Data was collected between November 7-10, 2015 by Edelman Berland.

In addition to charitable habits, the survey asked respondents about the habit of gratitude. Those who said they think about what they are grateful for daily (vs. less than daily) on average donate more money (\$468 vs. \$319). One key finding was that people who think about gratitude daily are more likely to see themselves as grateful and generous, as well as happy and content. Sadly, among those celebrating Thanksgiving, only 36% go around the Thanksgiving table saying what they are thankful for, but half watch or play football and watch parades on TV.

Study found just 18% are familiar with Giving Tuesday while almost all (93%) are familiar with Black Friday.

Another article from 2015 research noted: Most Believe Stores Should be Closed on Thanksgiving, But Shop Anyway

West Conshohocken, PA/November 23, 2015 – A new study has revealed that more than two-thirds of Americans participate in Thanksgiving consumerism, despite the fact that a majority of consumers (72%) believe stores should be closed for the holiday. What will it take to get consumers to practice what they preach and bring back the “thanks” and “giving” this holiday season?

2. The heart in giving has always been a focus. Consider:

Exodus 25:2

"Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My contribution.

Deuteronomy 15:10

"You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings.

1 Chronicles 29:9

Then the people rejoiced because they had offered so willingly, for they made their offering to the LORD with a whole heart, and King David also rejoiced greatly.

1 Chronicles 29:17

"Since I know, O my God, that You try the heart and delight in uprightness, I, in the integrity of my heart, have willingly offered all these things; so now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here, make their offerings willingly to You.

3. Other translations of Matthew 10:8

Give as freely as you have received! (NLT)  
You received without paying; give without pay. (ESV)

Give as freely as you have received! (NLT)  
You received without paying; give without pay. (ESV)

4. "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to be generous and willing to share." - 1 Tim. 6:17-19

5. Regarding getting to give, we read...  
"God has given gifts to each of you from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Manage them well so that God's generosity can flow through you." 1 Peter 4:10 (NLT)

God doesn't just bless us to get... but also to give...to become those who bless others.  
God told Abraham that he would bless Abraham and "all peoples on the earth will be blessed through you (Genesis 12:2-3)."

As he was taking up an offering from the church in Corinth, Paul reminded them,  
"You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God (2 Corinthians 9:11)."

When Paul advised those in Ephesus to work, he reminded them that they weren't working only to fulfill their own needs, but so that "they may have something to share with those in need (Ephesians 4:28)."

6. The link is evident as early as childhood. Early adolescents who are more grateful become more socially integrated, or connected to their communities and motivated to help them. Gratitude and generosity go hand in hand in young people with a strong sense of purpose, reports William Damon, who surveyed over 1,200 people ages 12-26. In his book *The Path to Purpose*, he writes:  
"The sense of gratitude for being able to partake in what the world has to offer, and to have a chance to make one's own contribution, was common among all [the] highly purposeful. From gratitude springs not only an enhanced appreciation for our own blessings but also a desire to pass such blessings along to others—the heart and soul of purpose."