

# A Devotional Prayer Guide on the Subject of Financial Stewardship

## Prayer Time #9 The Giver God Loves

Focal Passage: 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

<sup>6</sup>Now this *I say*, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. <sup>7</sup>Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup>And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;

The Lord Jesus taught on the subject of money more than He did about Heaven and hell. According to Crown Financial Group, Jesus mentioned money in 2300 verses (more than He spoke on Heaven and hell combined). Why such a strong emphasis upon material things? Jesus answered that in the Sermon on the Mount: “for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21) The Puritan Francis Bacon wrote: “Money is a great servant but a bad master.” When material things become the most important part of our lives, we fall into a trap.

I read an illustration years ago that has stuck with me. In a certain portion of South America, there is a monkey that natives trap. They catch this monkey with a clever plan, because they’ve learned what makes the monkey do what it does. The monkey is greedy, and they take advantage of that greed. They take a morsel of food and place it in a jar. The jar has a narrow opening at the top, just barely large enough for the monkey to reach through to grab the food. When the monkey grabs the food, he clenches his fist. Because his clenched fist is bigger, he can’t bring his hand back through the jar’s entrance. Try as he may, he cannot escape. He could escape, but that would require him to drop the food clinched in his fist. He’s not about to do that! He is easy prey for the hunters when they come for him. He tries to run, but he’s lugging this awkward, heavy jar. The hunters easily catch him and throw a net over him. He paid a heavy price for his greed.

When Paul encouraged the Church in Corinth to be generous givers, he pointed out a wonderful response to expect when we give selflessly. God loves the cheerful giver. Being a slave to material things is a dreadful thing to happen to a person, but a tragedy of even greater proportions is to miss out on the opportunity to please the Lord. Looking at this passage in 2 Corinthians, the call to give liberally is followed by the challenge to not give grudgingly or under compulsion. Compulsion is not always a bad thing, but in this case, it is. Giving because we feel under compulsion robs the Christian of the joy of the Lord. It makes giving a duty, a demanding obligation, and a miserable experience. The Lord would not have us experience those things.

Giving grudgingly carries the idea of having money taken away against our will. It conveys a picture of reluctance and hesitation. It is giving, but with strings attached. It’s not really giving, because we hold out the “right” to take it back or believe we deserve to have it back. It also conveys the idea of having a bit of ill will toward the One we are giving it to. That thought should break our hearts. Can you imagine having angst against God, feeling as though He is taking something away from us? God owns all, and stewardship is a privilege. And it is an opportunity for tremendous joy because God loves the cheerful giver.

Why does the Lord love a cheerful giver? We know it cannot be because the giver has done something to provide something for the Lord He was lacking. We know it’s also not because the Lord enjoys making a miserable person do something against their will. Why does the Lord love a cheerful giver? Because that person ultimately finds their joy in walking by faith in full submission to Him. The giver God loves is a person who finds fulfillment in obedience. They view grace giving as an opportunity, not an obligation.

We know, because Jesus gave priority to teaching about material things, and because we understand the temptation to love money, that grace giving is a serious challenge. The greatest challenges also bring the greatest opportunity for spiritual fruit. Grace giving may well be the hardest challenge a Christian will face. When the person gives cheerfully, the Lord loves them. Their hearts are free from the strong temptations

toward materialism. They are ready to enjoy all the Lord has in store for them.

We need to think on this subject of grace giving as the avenue toward the best spiritual blessings God has for us. When our priority is to be pleasing to Him in our giving, He rewards us with a fresh sense of being loved by Him. We are free to serve willingly under the best Master. We are filled with joy that exceeds any temporal pleasure we might gain from clinging to our worldly goods.

To be fair, not every Christian who struggles to be a cheerful giver does so because they are in love with material things. People often lack financial means and deal with stressful times. We incur unexpected debt on occasion. We have “many things that happen at once.” Vehicles break down; tuition rises, medical expenses keep coming. There are times when we have more expenses than we do income. In those times, grace giving is a challenge. We may want to give cheerfully, but it’s hard to do when we feel financial pressure. What do we do in these instances? Won’t the Lord understand our predicament? Are we still to obey the teaching of the Word of God? Should we continue to be a cheerful giver when we don’t have it to give?

Well, yes, in fact, we should be most cheerful during times when our financial challenges are the greatest. God’s loves the cheerful giver, and that certainly includes the one who gives when the situation is less than ideal. In the Letter to the Corinthians, Paul presented the joy of the Philippians in this area of grace giving. We’ve considered this in a previous devotional, but it bears repeating here. In challenging the Corinthians in their grace giving this is what the Lord inspired him to say:

Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: <sup>2</sup>that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. <sup>3</sup>For I bear witness that according to *their* ability, yes, and beyond *their* ability, *they were* freely willing, <sup>4</sup>imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. <sup>5</sup>And not *only* as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and *then* to us by the will of God. (2 Corinthians 8:1-5)

God’s love for the cheerful grace giver is the amazing grace of His love. When we give cheerfully in times of want, God loves us more than a plenty. The challenge we face is all the more reason to give cheerfully, because this response of faith brings the greatest potential for spiritual joy. We don’t want to miss that! There will be an abundance of joy, Paul wrote to the Corinthians, and that comes only to cheerful givers. More on that in the final devotional piece. Thanks for reading.

### **Suggestions for your prayer time:**

- Reflect on your attitude about giving and ask the Lord to give you the discernment to know if you are giving cheerfully.
- Praise the Lord for being gracious to us during times of financial struggle.
- Ask the Lord to forgive you for being less than obedient in grace giving.
- Confess with real honesty your struggles to trust Him regarding finances.
- Ask the Lord to reveal any area where material things have become a potential “master” to you?
- Meditate on the focal passage and ask the Lord to free you from giving under compulsion.