

**DISCIPLESHIP – DEVELOPING HEALTHY HEART HABITS
GIVING
Bramalea Baptist Church -- Sunday September 22, 2013
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4 MODELS OF GIVING FROM JESUS

FOCUS

Preacher Martin Lloyd Jones told a story about a farmer who went into the house one day to announce to his wife and family some good news. *“The cow just gave birth to twin calves, one red and one white”.*

Then he pronounced – *“I’ve decided to give one of these calves to the Lord when he is grown and fattened up.”* His wife asked which one. The farmer replied – *“We don’t have to worry about that right now.”*

A few months passed. The farmer came into the kitchen looking unhappy and told his wife and family – *“I have some bad news. The Lord’s calf is dead.”*

Today I want to talk about giving as part of our series on – “Developing Healthy Heart Habits”. Giving is an important habit of our heart. It is a vital part of our discipleship. We don’t always like to talk about money in the church, but the Bible actually talks a lot about it.

Money appears about 138 times; wealth 250 times; rich – 80 times; riches 97 and possessions about 200 times. Gold and silver show up about 860 times.

Jesus too spoke regularly about money. One half to two thirds of Jesus’ parables have reference to and revolve around money. Why? Because money is such a good indicator of our words and our heart. We even say - *“money talks”* and *“put your money where your mouth is”*. What we do with money and giving says a lot about what is inside us.

Someone has said – *“Jesus can have our money and not our hearts, but He cannot have our hearts and not have our money.”*

This morning I want to look at some words from Jesus in the Gospels on giving and outline 4 models of giving.

Two of the models of giving that Jesus talks about are negative. Two of them are positive. They reveal how different people did different things with the resources God entrusted to them. As we read these passages and as I make some brief comments about them I want each of us to try and identify which model best fits us. Ask yourself - How faithful are you in the stewardship of the money and possessions God has given to us?

1. LITTLE WITH MUCH

Mark 10:17-23 - The Story of the Wealthy Young Urban Professional

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him.

“Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

... You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal ...

“Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

Here is a guy who did little with much. We might ask - *“But why would Jesus ask him to sell everything he had and give to the poor in the first place?”* Do we need to do that too to receive eternal life or to please the Lord?

No, we don’t need to sell all we have and give it away in order to be saved. But we do need to have our priorities and perspectives right. We need to understand, which this man did not, that all we have is not ours anyway. It belongs to God. We are simply stewards or managers of it. Jesus called upon this rich man to acknowledge this in a dramatic way.

Perhaps this was the only way Jesus could get his attention. Perhaps Jesus knew that this man would not be a fully devoted follower of Jesus until he let go of his wallet. Perhaps Jesus knew this man would have constant difficulty submitting to His Lordship. Jesus challenged this man in the area that would identify his priorities and perspectives.

George Muller once said – *“God judges what we give by what we keep.”*

The apostle Paul wrote to inspire the Christians at Corinth to give like the Macedonians. They had little, but gave much because they were first consecrated and dedicated to the Lord. Look at what he said to them in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5:

And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people. And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.

2. MUCH WITH LITTLE

Some of us may say, based on the last model - *“Well, if I had a lot I would do a lot.” “If I won the 10 million dollars from the Publisher’s Clearinghouse Sweepstakes, I would give a million dollars or maybe even more to the Lord.”* But you know what? God is not really interested in what you would do with what you don’t have. But God is vitally interested in what you do with what you do have.

The story is told of another farmer who was telling his pastor how generous he would be if only he had a lot of money.

“If you had 2 million dollars,” asked the pastor, “would you give 1 million to God?” “I would gladly give a million to God”, said the farmer.

“If you had 2 large farms, would you give one to God?”, asked the pastor. “Why certainly”, said the farmer.

“If you had 2 pigs, would you give 1 to God?” the pastor asked. “Now that’s not fair pastor”, said the farmer, “you know I have 2 pigs.”

Most of you will remember the story of the feeding of the 5,000 – the only miracle of Jesus, by the way, that is recorded in all 4 gospels.

In John 6 (5-13), we read that a huge crowd had gathered on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus asked Philip, one of the disciples, how in the world they were going to feed all these people. Philip said it would be impossible. It would take about ½ year’s salary to feed such a crowd he protested. Andrew, another disciple, then spoke up and said he found a boy with 5 small barley loaves and a couple of little fish – but that won’t go very far he suggested. We aren’t told what the boy thought of giving up his lunch.

Nevertheless Jesus had the crowd sit down and then had the disciples distribute the bread and fish - as much as everyone wanted. Everybody was amazed. Not only did everyone have enough to eat, but there were 12 baskets of bread left over. Amazing!

That story illustrates what God can do with a little bit generously given. Imagine if you were that young boy. Would you have given up your lunch, with the threat of going hungry yourself? Why didn’t all those other people plan ahead too and bring a lunch. Besides you may have thought like Andrew did - v9 - *“but how far will (it) go among so many?”* But the boy gave what little he had, and God blessed it and used it to give a banquet to more than 5,000 people.

We may think of another story - the story of the poor widow who put a couple pennies into the offering. It wasn’t much, but it was all she had to give. Jesus said she gave more than anybody. Why? Because she gave generously, sacrificially and faithfully out of her little.

Try to imagine this amount of money - 48 sextillion dollars. This is 48 followed by 21 zeros. That’s a lot of money. The 649 will never get that high. Someone has worked

out that this is the amount of money the widow's 2 copper coins would be worth today if she had taken that money and deposited it in the Bank of Jerusalem earning 4% compounded semi-annually. 48 sextillion dollars.

Now if the world can compound money like that, how much more can God. If we become good stewards of what He has given to us, God can take it, invest it, and compound it for His spiritual kingdom. Imagine getting to heaven and God maybe showing us a video (a DVD - Divine Video Display) of all the good things that have resulted and compounded from our little bit of money or time or ministry when faithfully given. We might be surprised.

3. LITTLE WITH LITTLE

Matthew 25:14-30 illustrates this model and the 4th. The one talent man introduced in this passage illustrates someone who does little with little. A talent in this context is not an ability, but is a unit of money. The master gave different amounts of talents to his stewards. This is a parable of how we should behave as stewards with regards to money, but also with our spiritual gifts, our time, and our faithful ministry to the Lord.

¹⁴ "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them.¹⁵ To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag,^[a] each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

¹⁹ "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.'

²¹ "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

²² "The man with two bags of gold also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.'

²³ "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

²⁴ "Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and

gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

²⁶ "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

²⁸ "So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹ For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

I note 3 observations that relate to the 1 talent man:

- i. We are accountable to the Lord regardless of how much money we have or don't have. The same question was asked of all 3 individuals.*
- ii. The sin of doing nothing was a great sin to God. The 1 talent man was judged. It has been said - "When it comes to giving, some people stop at nothing." That was the case here.*
- iii. God wants us to risk and trust Him with what He has entrusted to us as stewards. Not on the stock market necessarily, but by giving, or by taking time out of our day for the Lord, by trying to teach a Sunday School class or whatever it may be, it often takes a risk on our part. We often have to go beyond our comfort zone.*

When it comes to money, it definitely takes more risk to give when we have little than to give when we have much. If I make \$100,000 it is really not much risk to give a tithe, to give \$10,000. I still have \$90,000 to live on - minus taxes too of course. But if I make \$15,000 it is quite a risk to give up \$1,500.

A mother wanted to teach her daughter a moral lesson. She gave the little girl a quarter and a dollar for church. *"Put whichever one you want in the collection plate and keep the other for yourself,"* she told the girl. When they were coming out of church, the mother asked her daughter which amount she had given. *"Well,"* said the little girl, *"I was going to give the dollar, but just before the collection the man at the front said that we should all be cheerful givers. I knew I'd be a lot more cheerful if I only gave the quarter."*

Someone put it this way –

*"It's not what you'd do with a million, if riches should e'er be your lot,
But what you are doing with the dollar and a quarter you got."*

When we perceive that we have little to offer God then the temptation is to hoard what you have and get cheap with God, to not trust Him, to not step out in faith, to not risk for the Kingdom. In Jesus' parable it is the 1 talent man only who was condemned because he did little with little.

4. MUCH WITH MUCH

Matthew 25:20,21. The five talent man was a faithful steward and he was commended and blessed. He had much and did much with what was entrusted to him.

To this model we should also add the 2 talent person. Most of us can most readily identify with this person. Not too rich, but not too poor. The middle class person. The average person in terms of money, gifts, abilities.

The key thing to notice in this story is the fact that the 2 talent person was just as faithful as the 5 talent person and both were commended equally. The same commendation and blessing was given to both from the master. Jesus said in v21 and again at v23 the same thing – *“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!”*

God's concern again is what we do with what we have been entrusted with. God can take any amount, any person, any talent, any gift that is given back to Him and use it for His good and glory. He just calls us to be faithful and obedient.

The apostle Paul gave these words of instruction to Timothy (1 Timothy 6:17-18 NLT): *“Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others.”*

CONCLUSION

Which of the 4 models do you most identify with? Which model should you identify with?

Giving is a choice. It has nothing to do with our economic level. It has everything to do with recognizing God as the rightful owner of us and all we have and then acting in obedience to His commands.