

# **Giving Together**

## **Devotional Thoughts**

*by Pastor Mike Wilde*

# Mine?

**Scripture:** I Chronicles 29:10-13; James 1: 17

**Devotion:** “Mine!” It’s one of those words that children seem to learn either right before or after the words, “Mommy and Daddy”. Two-year-olds seem to have a firm grasp not only of the concept but on anything they have determined is theirs at any particular moment. But is it true? Do we really own the things we say we do or are we merely stewards of the good gifts of God? King David’s prayer identifies God as the owner and James declares that all we have are but gifts from a gracious and good God. What we do with what we have indicates whether we are being wise stewards of the riches of God or a confused but determined two-year-old with a death grip on our stuff.

**Principle:** Everything we have belongs to the Lord.

**Prayer:** “Lord, all I have is Yours, thank You for...”

## Investing not Hiding?

**Scripture:** Luke 19:12-27; II Corinthians 5:10

**Devotion:** Real estate seems to be one of the current “hot investments” to increase your portfolio. Clark County appears to have more real estate agents than properties to sell. Yet, financial planners share that the best strategy is to diversify your investments so that when one area is not performing well, the others will, giving you a net gain. But, how do you invest what God has entrusted to you? The parable of the nobleman who entrusted his servants with some significant financial assets does not give us specific investment strategies. Instead, the admonition of the parable might best be summed up by the thought, “Do something!” Sitting on what God has given you is a recipe for disappointment and disaster. God did not bless you to sit, soak, or sour, but to empower you to do His will. Use what God has given you so that when He returns, we can show a return on His investment in us.

**Principle:** God expects us to use what He has entrusted us with.

**Prayer:** “Lord, as You have given me these good gifts help me today to ... “

## Happy Meal

**Scripture:** John 6: 1-14

**Devotion:** In the late 1800's, a young girl by the name of Hattie May Wiatt attended a small church in Pennsylvania that found themselves in need of building a larger church and Sunday school space. Shortly after hearing this news Hattie became ill and died. After the funeral, Hattie's mother brought 57 cents to the Pastor in a bag that her daughter had set aside as her contribution toward the building program. The pastor took the gift and shared this with the members of the church as the first contribution. He changed the money into 57 pennies and offered them for sale. All 57 pennies sold for about \$250. The pastor then took the \$250 and changed all of it into pennies and offered them for sale as well. From the sale of the pennies they received enough to buy the house next door. Hattie's gift energized and motivated this small Pennsylvania church so that by 1912 the congregation had grown to over 5600.

Whether it is a few pennies or a little boy's lunch, the things we give to God can be used by God in some astounding ways. It's not how much we give but rather what God can do with what we give Him.

**Principle:** Little is much when God is in it.

**Prayer:** "Dear God, Here I am today to offer ..."

## Whose Standard of Measure?

**Scripture:** Luke 6:38

**Devotion:** Isn't it frustrating to open a box of cereal only to find that the contents have settled about one-third from the top, if not more? I'm sure when the cereal was poured into the box it started out full but shipping, handling, and settling took place and we are left with a box short of being full. We feel cheated. Don't you wish they had jiggled the box to get more product in it?

It wasn't always that way. In Jesus' day when they handled grain they poured it out, shook the bag, tamped it down in order to give the customer the full measure. That's the point Jesus is making with His statement. God promises that same service today, but notice the order in which it happens; your generosity comes first before God pours out His blessings.

**Principle:** Honor the Lord and the Lord will honor you.

**Prayer:** "Dear Jesus, as You have been so generous with me help me to be generous by ..."

## **Giving With A Smile**

**Scripture:** II Corinthians 9:7

**Devotion:** Chances are you have seen it at those places where you really enjoy shopping or doing business. It's on the faces of those who are there to serve you: a smile. Funny how the lack of a smile can create tension in your transactions. Funny how a frown or a sigh will often cause us to take our business elsewhere. Customer service is a priority for successful businesses because they know how quickly their fortunes can change.

What's the look on your face as the offering plate is passed? Are you smiling or frowning in your service to the Lord? If God is your customer, is He pleased by the way you're serving Him?

**Principle:** We please God when we give pleasingly.

**Prayer:** "God and father of our lord Jesus Christ, as You have given me Your Son, ..."

## **A Question Of Trust**

**Scripture:** Matthew 25:16, 21, 22

**Devotion:** Ever wash a car with others? Who gets to use the hose? Did you regret your decision? Most of the time, despite promises to the contrary, the hose is used to soak more than just the car. I suppose that's part of the fun; everyone ends up getting wet.

God has trusted us with more than a hose. What He gives us He wants us to share with others. Just like the rich man in the parable of the talents, God entrusts us with talent, treasures, and time to invest for His kingdom purposes so that more and more people might be soaked with the Living Water of Christ Himself.

**Principle:** God honors our trustworthiness.

**Prayer:** "Lord in heaven, thank You for entrusting me with ..."

## **Building God's Way**

**Scripture:** I Chronicles 29:1-9

**Devotion:** The preacher got up and shared the news regarding the church's capital fund campaign. He said, "I've got good news and I have bad news." The good news is that we have all the money today to build our new building. Everyone clapped until someone in the back of the crowd asked, "What's the bad news." "The bad news," the preacher said, "is that all the money we need is still in your pockets."

King David realized this truth when it came to the construction of the temple. Though he was prohibited from building it himself, he knew that in order for Solomon to build the temple, it was going to require the sacrificial giving of everyone, even those who would never live to see it dedicated. Throughout history, men and women of God have given so that others might experience God at work in their lives.

**Principle:** God uses His people to build His kingdom.

**Prayer:** "Lord of all the ages, as I consider what You are doing in and through me, may I ..."



## **No PDA, Please**

**Scripture:** Matthew 6: 1-5

**Devotion:** While it might be acceptable behavior in certain countries and special occasions, most of us become uncomfortable when we see a couple locking lips and other intimate behavior in public. Public displays of affection are usually the result of poor impulse control, lack of social graces, or an attention getting device.

That's the point Jesus was making with the rich man and his PDA towards God. The Lord wasn't honored by his ostentatious behavior. Any reward he hoped to gain from God was lost. We need to be careful not only what we give, but how we give it. Henry Ward Beecher, a 19<sup>th</sup> century preacher said it this way, "Do not give, as many rich men do, like a hen that lays her eggs and then cackles."

**Principle:** Godly giving is a private, not public display of affection.

**Prayer:** "I love You, Lord, and I ..."

## Delayed Gratification

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:19-21

**Devotion:** John Stossel on 20/20 was doing a report on children and impulse control. The scientists tested each child by placing them in a room with 4 M&Ms on a plate. Each was told that if they didn't eat them but waited, when the adult came back in the room they would not only get to keep those four but be given four more. They filmed the children waiting through the mirrored glass, and it was hilarious. Some children counted the M&Ms while others arranged them on the plate. Some tried to look away and avoid even eye contact with the delicious candy. All of them were successful and were each rewarded with double the amount. We do the same with our money when we refrain from spending it as soon as we get it, and instead invest it in an interest-bearing instrument. God tells us to do the same thing with what He gives to us and He guarantees a return that cannot be taken away.

**Principle:** Wise stewards invest for the long term.

**Prayer:** "Dear Father, as I head into this day full of opportunities, help me to ..."

## **Don't Mess With God**

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:24; Acts 5:1-11

**Devotion:** I had a friend who asked me one time, “Is God a socialist or a communist?” Surprised by the question, I asked him why he would think that. He pointed to Acts 5 and the fact that God struck down Ananias and Saphira for keeping something that was theirs. He assumed that God had killed them because they didn’t give God everything they had. I explained to my friend that it wasn’t the amount they gave, but a matter of their motivation. Were they trying to honor the Lord or were they trying to honor themselves?

If we aren’t careful we can be guilty of wrong motives in our giving. Do we give to get or do we give to glorify the Lord? Do we give to be known by others or do we give that God might be more clearly known? Is God your motivation for giving or is it something else?

**Principle:** Godly stewardship has God alone at the center.

**Prayer:** “Great are You, Lord and worthy of ...”

## Law Of The Harvest

**Scripture:** II Corinthians 9:6

**Devotion:** I have to admit, that when I hear the name Jethro Tull, I think of the 70's rock band, not the agriculturist who invented the mechanized seed drill in about 1701. Yet, Jethro, the man not the band, invented a way of planting seeds in uniform rows so that the farmer could weed in between the seedlings during growth, thereby increasing productivity. Jethro helped farmers increase their yield on the well known law of the harvest. Simply stated, the more you plant, the greater your return at harvest time.

The same is true in our stewardship of God's resources. If we give a little, we'll only get meager results but the more we give the greater the return come harvest time, and we won't have to worry about any weeds.

**Principle:** Sow sparingly, reap meagerly; sow generously, reap bountifully.

**Prayer:** "God of heaven and earth and all that it contains, You are awesome in this place ..."

# The Content Of Our Contentment

**Scripture:** Philippians 4:10-14

**Devotion:** We could always tell when our beagle was content with the world because he grunted. I know it sounds funny, but, his contentment noises sound just like a pig. What makes you most content with life? What noises do you make when you're content?

The Apostle Paul shared the secret of his contentment to the Philippians but it wasn't in his circumstances. As a matter of fact much of Paul's public ministry was marked by horrendous conditions: imprisonment, shipwreck, being stoned and left for dead, beaten times without number, and cold and sleepless nights. Paul's contentment was found in the person of Christ. What noises did he make when he was content? Just one word, "Jesus." When you have Christ in you, then circumstances don't matter all that much.

**Principle:** Christ, not circumstances, is where a wise steward finds true contentment.

**Prayer:** "Lord Jesus, You are my hiding place, ..."

## Time's Up!

**Scripture:** John 9:4,5

**Devotion:** Didn't you hate those timed examinations at school? If you were like me, I found myself fretting over the time I had left instead of concentrating on the question at hand, or I would get so consumed in the problem that when I looked back at the clock I thought that surely it must have sped up. It seemed that when the teacher said, "Time's Up," it was then that I thought of the most brilliant things to write or had the answer to that particular problem. Bummer!

Jesus reminded the disciples of a timeless truth; life is short and then it's over. We have only a short period of time to do God's will here on earth. Some live longer than others, but in light of eternity, this life is but one fleeting moment. We have so little time to have the kind of impact God wants us to have in the world. What are you doing with the time God has given you?

**Principle:** Wise stewards make the most of the time God has given.

**Prayer:** "Jesus, You are the Light of the World, while I have this life let me ..."

## **Be A Blessing**

**Scripture:** Ephesians 2: 1-10

**Devotion:** We normally associate funerals with the sad times of our lives. We grieve the deaths of those people that we loved and who loved us well. Yet, when we think about it, the very grief we have comes from the fact that those loved ones were such a blessing to us. They spoke into our lives, they cared for us, they gave of their time, their talents, and their treasures so we would be blessed.

That's why God saved us, so we could serve others. That's why God has blessed us, so that we would be a blessing. One day, when they do your funeral, will there be people who grieve because you were such a blessing in their lives? Winston Churchill said it well, "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give."

**Principle:** God has blessed you to be a blessing to others.

**Prayer:** "Lord, You who are rich in mercy and great in Your love, raise me up to ..."

