



IMAGES OF THE GIVING CHRISTIAN

Scriptural Reflections on the Blessings of Giving

Written by Rev. John Heckmann, previously published in *LWML Treasured News*



© 2015 Lutheran Women's Missionary League
www.lwml.org

A large, stylized number '5' in a light gray color with a black outline. The '5' is positioned on the left side of the page, and the text 'IMAGES OF THE GIVING CHRISTIAN' is written in black, uppercase letters to its right, partially overlapping the right side of the '5'.

IMAGES OF
THE GIVING
CHRISTIAN

by

REV. JOHN HECKMANN

LWML SENIOR PASTORAL COUNSELOR 2011 – 2015

(Previously published in the *Treasured News* – February – June 2014.)

GIVES FAITHFULLY	4
GIVES COMPASSIONATELY	5
GIVES GRACEFULLY	6
GIVES PROPORTIONATELY	7
GIVES GLOBALLY	8

GIVES FAITHFULLY

I would like to begin by reminding each of us that giving is at the heart of the Christian's life, at the heart of the Gospel, and at the heart of God. "*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son*" (John 3:16). God is the ultimate, infinite, and Perfect Giver. And because giving is a natural part of God's nature, when we give, we identify with Him and reflect His likeness in which we were made.

As you know, everything of true value is given by God. He has given us life itself - physical life that we so enjoy, and spiritual life through the sacrifice of His Son on the cross to pay for our sins and make possible our salvation and inheritance of eternal life in heaven. God has set the pattern for giving and there is no worthier goal than to give like He gives. Is that impossible? I would suggest to you it is not, as we will hopefully see.

Let us consider the first of the ways in which a Christian gives. Faithfulness is the first and most important quality of a Christian steward. St. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 4:2, *It is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful*. The "trust" that Paul speaks about includes all the riches and resources given to us by God. His plan is that we manage these resources in a way that is spiritually wise and profitable.

As we think of the Christian giver giving faithfully, there are two thoughts that come to mind. The first is that giving faithfully means that we give by faith in God, mindful that He is the Lord of all. The second is that by giving faithfully, we give in a faithful, dependable manner. In both thoughts, God provides the power and we follow through with the practice. He gives us the gift of faith: we, in turn, exercise that faith by giving for His glory and His purposes.

Giving faithfully, though, is not just about money. My 29 years as a pastor have convinced me that one who gives money faithfully is much more likely to faithfully steward his/her time, talents, treasures, tissue, touch, testimony, and trash, as discussed in "The 7 'T's' of Stewardship" series. Money is a major determining factor of much, if not all, that we do in life. Jesus said it like this in Matthew 6:19, "*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*." I have counseled with many people whose struggle and crisis can be traced directly to where their "treasure" is. As Jesus said, if our "treasure" is in the wrong place, then our heart is in the wrong place as well. Faithfulness in giving - to the right purposes in the right way - has a powerfully positive effect and keeps all our priorities in the right order.

GIVES COMPASSIONATELY

We began a little series of thoughts dealing with stewardship. We began with the thought that the giving Christian gives faithfully. Now we are going to consider the fact that the giving Christian gives **compassionately**. Then, we will consider the fact that the giving Christian gives gracefully, proportionately, and globally.

We hear Jesus promise us again in Luke 6:38, “*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*” With that promise in mind, I would like to share with you the second thought in our series dealing first with the fact that the giving Christian gives compassionately.

Our English word “compassion” comes from two Latin words which literally mean “to suffer with.” To have compassion is “to suffer with” other people - to put yourself into their shoes, to feel what they feel, to endure what they endure. This is what Jesus did constantly. So great was His love and concern that He was often “moved to compassion.” Some of the 77 Bible verses that deal with our God’s compassion would be Exodus 33:19, 2 Kings 13:23, and Matthew 9:36, 14:14, 15:23, and 20:34. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus gave help and healing to the poor, the diseased, and the needy.

God is pleased when we, through faith, do what Jesus did, giving compassionately to those who are less fortunate. James 1:27 says, *Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.* Giving to those who can give nothing back is a spiritually beautiful thing and it honors God. In Acts 10 we have the account of the Roman centurion by the name of Cornelius. The Bible tells us that He *gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly* (Acts 10:2). In a vision from God an angel said to him, “*Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God*” (Acts 10:4).

When a Christian gives compassionately to and for others, it is the same as giving directly to God. The King will reply, “*I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me*” (Matthew 25:40).

GIVES GRACEFULLY

We consider the fact that the giving Christian gives **gracefully**. The apostle Paul asks in Romans 8:32, *He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all - how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?*

Everything we have – everything – is a gift from God. I can't think of anything that I have in my life, big or small, no matter what it is, and tell you truthfully that I earned it or deserve it. The house my family lives in, the cars we drive, the clothes we wear, the food we eat, or the money in our bank account — whatever it is, without exception, I have because God graciously gave it to me. He does the same for you as He gives graciously.

So, when it comes down to how I am going to give, I look first to how my heavenly Father constantly deals with me. I see that He gives graciously, and I know that He would have me give graciously too. Graceful giving draws no attention to itself, but directs attention to God. Graceful giving seeks to glorify God, not to better one's bottom line.

That, my friends, is how the giving Christian gives gracefully. Next we will consider how the giving Christian gives proportionately.

GIVES PROPORTIONATELY

Now we will consider the fact that the giving Christian gives proportionately.

We hear Jesus promise us again in Luke 6:38, “*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*” With that promise in mind, I would like to share with you the fourth thought in our series dealing with the fact that the giving Christian gives **proportionately**.

St. Paul wrote, *And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most 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 saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God’s will* (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

The young churches of Macedonia were persecuted severely and were materially poor, yet spiritually they lived above the extreme conditions and excelled in giving it their all. Specifically, they gave to a ministry project that the apostle Paul had begun and they gave in a most remarkable way: sacrificially, beyond their ability, willingly, and eagerly. They gave of themselves to God and of their resources to God’s work.

A powerful principle of stewardship is this: **God’s provision dictates the believer’s proportion**. In other words, what He provides determines what we give. If He gives a little, from that little we are to give; if He gives abundantly (and that is how He has blessed each of us), from that abundance we are to give. Whatever He provides, regardless of how small or great we or the world may think it is, determines the measure of our giving. As Jesus reminded the disciples, “*To whom much is given, much is required*” (Luke 12:48).

Don’t worry about what you have or don’t have to give. Instead, give in proportion to everything you have received. My personal conviction is that giving begins with the tithe (10% of all my time, talents, treasures, tissue, testimony, touch, and trash) and extends beyond that to a higher percentage returned to God from all that He has given to me, and even beyond that to other offerings for the work outside of the church. As we give, relying upon the Lord and depending upon Him as our Source, we grow in the grace of giving. In the process, giving becomes a beneficial experience as we die to self and grow in faith. My dear friends, we can be sure that God will provide as the proportion of His provision defines the proportion of our giving.

GIVES GLOBALLY

In this final installment of this round of stewardship thoughts, we will consider the fact that the giving Christian gives **globally**.

The promise of Jesus is sure as He says in Luke 6:38, “*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*” With those thoughts, I would like to share with you the fifth and final thought in our series dealing with the fact that the giving Christian gives **globally**.

The work of Christ on our behalf on the cross of Calvary is an all-encompassing deed carried out to touch everyone, everywhere.

We read in John 3:16, “*For God so loved the **world** that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*”

“*For God so loved the world ...*” The world of people - that is every person of every period of time throughout history.

“*For God so loved the world that He gave ...*” God’s love for us motivated Him to give, and not just to give leftovers or a little, but to give His best as He offered His own Son, His only Son as our substitute on the cross to pay for our sins and be our Savior.

God loves and God gives **globally**, and this is our inspiration for giving. The giving Christian gives **globally**, eagerly supporting the worldwide work of Christ. The most spiritually alive Christians I know are those who have a passion for world missions and who back up that passion with generous gifts to the Lord’s work.

When Jesus sent out His disciples to declare the Good News of the Kingdom, He told them in Matthew 10:8, “*Freely you have received, freely give.*” And that is exactly what they did, freely giving all that they could in His name. Today, 20 centuries later, that is still the priority as followers of Christ sow the seeds of His truth in order to reap an eternal harvest.