

Part I: Jesus' Teaching on Giving

WHEN You Give, Not IF You Give

Introduction: This week we begin our study of the second chapter of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. And it is a natural continuation of chapter five. As we learned 5:21-48 focuses on the teaching of the law – in other words, what men believe. Here in 6:1-18 it focuses on the practice of the law – what men do.

As you recall the last half of chapter five, verses 21-48 emphasizes inner moral righteousness and we studied six illustrations of murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, revenge, and love. Now Jesus in 6:1-18 emphasizes outward formal righteousness and gives us three representative illustrations of typical religious activities – that being giving, praying and fasting.

Then after Jesus addresses these outward spiritual activities in verses 1-18, He then goes on in verses 19-34 to address other routine areas of life where believers normally struggle. You can see in your sermon notes the general outline of chapter six.

- I. How to succeed in the spiritual areas of life. (6:1-18).
 - A. Giving – our activities toward others (vv. 2-4)
 - B. Praying – our activities toward God (vv. 5-15);
 - C. Fasting – our activity toward ourselves (vv. 16-18).
- II. How to succeed in the routine areas of life (6:19-34)
 - A. Overcoming misplaced priorities and affections (6:19-25)
 - B. Overcoming anxiety and lack of trust in God (6:26-34)

Jesus introduces this first section with a stern warning in verse one. “Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.” Jesus is continuing His confrontation of religious hypocrisy.

There are two key words in this verse that I want to make sure we catch. The first is the Greek word that is translated “beware.” This word means “to take hold of or something to pay attention to” in the sense of being on your guard. Jesus is alerting us that we must be ever mindful of and concerned about the genuineness of our outward religious activities.

I think there are two kinds of hypocrisy that we all need to constantly beware of.

The first is when we are going through the religious motions, but our heart is not in it. Let me give you just one example. Have you ever seen people who come to church, but who never sing during the worship time? In fact, the looks on their faces might suggest they are even in pain. They just stand or sit there like they are being kept from something else they would really rather be doing. When the sermon is preached, they never open a Bible. They seldom if ever even bring one with them. They never follow along with the sermon outline, much less takes any notes. They seem entirely bored with the whole service. And as soon as the service is over, they move quickly to the exit. One can only wonder, “Why do these people even come?” This is the first kind of hypocrisy that we must beware of – going through outward motions without any inward spiritual or emotional participation.

The second kind of hypocrisy Jesus specifically mentions in this text and it is found in the Greek word *theaomai* and is translated “to be noticed.” It is related to the term from which we get our word “theater.” It has in mind a spectacle to be gazed at. In other words, Jesus is warning us about practicing

a form of righteousness whose purpose is to show off before men. Such religion is like a play; it is not real life but acting. It does not demonstrate what is in the minds and hearts of the actors, but is simply a performance designed to make a certain impression on those who are watching. In fact the Greek word that we translate “hypocrite” is the word for an actor.

Such practices amount to theatrical righteousness, performed to impress rather than serve and to magnify the actors rather than God. The purpose is to please men, not God, and the activities are not real life but an exhibition. Such false righteousness, Jesus assures us, will never qualify a person for God’s kingdom (Matt. 5:20).

I think we often see examples of this in the contemporary music industry and with televangelists, in which people practice their religion in front of great crowds who are clapping and cheering them. Yet, as we have seen on many occasions as with such religious music “stars” like Sandy Patti and Michael English, while they are on stage before throngs of “worshippers” praising and glorifying God, in their personal lives they are destroying their marriages by committing adultery with other “Christian” superstars.

Such televangelists like James Baker and Jimmy Swaggart were watched and given religious superstar status by millions of believers, yet we learn later while in public they are preaching, promoting God and His Word, in their private lives they are swindling millions of dollars or committing adultery with a prostitute. Listen carefully to me. Whenever we put believers on stage to perform in any capacity and then applaud and extol them for their “acts of righteousness,” we are putting them in harms way and setting them up for a fall. Also we are told, if we receive the praise of men for such actions, we receive no Heavenly reward from our Father. Think about that next time you applaud someone for their act of righteousness. Human praise robs people of spiritual blessing. Jesus warns us to “Beware.”

The first spiritual activity He addresses is how and why we give. So let’s look at our text for this morning. It’s pretty short.

Text: Matthew 6:2a; “When therefore you give your alms . . .”

The first thing we notice in this text is Jesus says, “When you give.” He does not say, “If you give.” So, we understand by this that giving to support the Kingdom of God is not something we can decide to do or not do, it is something that is a vital part of the redeemed life. And to be certain that we are not guilty of hypocritical giving or lack of giving, we need to look carefully at giving from three different perspectives.

Proposition: In order to avoid hypocrisy in giving, we must give (1.) looking inward, (2.) looking upward, and (3.) looking outward.

I. We Must Give Looking Inward.

A. As we look inwardly at ourselves, we must all honestly acknowledge the pull our sinful nature has on us. It seems that our sinful human nature manifests itself in two different, but similar attitudes about giving.

I. First, we must admit that we are selfish by nature.

a.) Let me explain what I mean by the word selfish. Selfishness is our unwillingness to give up what we currently have or possess.

b.) Selfishness is no more evident than when you watch a child come over to play with another child and his toys. The visiting child will pick up a toy and immediately the other child

comes up grabs it out of the child's hand and says harshly, . . . "Mine." This child is not really thinking the visiting child is going home with one of his toys, he is so selfish that he does not even want the other child to play with the toy. Sadly, there are still a whole lot of born-again, adult believers who look at what they have and say, "Mine."

- c.) The story of the rich young ruler is a classic biblical example of a man who was entirely selfish, but still wanted to be right with God. You know the story in Matthew 19:21-23, "Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieved; for he was one who owned much property.
 - (1.) This rich young ruler wasn't asked to part with his possessions permanently.
 - (2.) Jesus said he could trade in his temporary riches on earth for permanent riches in heaven.
 - (3.) The rich young ruler was unwilling to make the trade. Instead, he looked at what he had and said, "Mine." And he eventually went into a Christless eternity leaving behind all his temporary possessions.
- d.) Here is my counsel to you: "Don't take hold of your possessions too tightly for if you do you will someday find that your possessions have taken hold of you."
- e.) Our desire to give of what we have to the Lord is directly tied to the degree of selfishness that dwells within us.

2. Second, we must admit we are greedy by nature

- a.) I mean by greedy that we want more than what we currently have. Contentment in America is at an all time low. People are not content with who they are and they are not content with what they have.
- b.) A Harris Poll several years ago posed the question to Americans, "How much income do you need to be satisfied with your income. The response was 103%. Now, what does that tell us about our contentment with what we have?"
- c.) The fact of the matter is the American dream has become the American nightmare. We never have enough. We are constantly being enticed to be unsatisfied with what we have and to crave what we do not have. This lack of contentment is the core of all advertising – they want to make you unhappy with what you have and want what you do not have.
- d.) The multimillionaire, John D. Rockefeller was once asked, "Mr. Rockefeller, how much more wealth will it take before you are satisfied with what you have? His answer says it all. He responded, "Just a little bit more."
- e.) So, how does greed affect our giving? Simply by the fact that when we are always wanting more, when we are always spending all our surplus; when we just have to "get it" or even worse, we go out and borrow the money to get it now, our giving is out of necessity going to be less than it could or it should be. Listen very carefully to me, consumer debt that has been created from voluntary purchases of non essential possessions is just another manifestation of personal greed – meaning we wanted what we did not have and what we could not afford and we were willing to sell our futures to have it in the present.
- f.) You see greed is a state of mind. It is not the exclusive domain of the well to do. I have seen just as many greedy poor people as I have greedy well to do people.
- g.) So, those that are greedy say, "Look I'd like to give more, but I just can't afford to right now . . ." what they don't say is, "(because I am spending all my income and am strapped with debt trying to live a more extravagant lifestyle than my present income can afford.)"
 - (1.) James 5:5 has a comment that I think describes many of us in America, "You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure." It doesn't sound like James is happy about this lifestyle, does it?

(2.) He also describes the plight of many of us in America in 4:23, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.”

h.) Jesus warns us about greed when He says in Luke 12:15, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.” But in spite of what Jesus tells us, we keep trying to live like our life really does consist of our possessions.

i.) I once heard a man say, “Show me a Christian’s check book and his calendar and I can tell you what kind of Christian he is.” I think he is right.

B. We must learn that we are stewards, not owners. A steward is a manager who is responsible for managing another person’s property or business affairs. The steward does not own the assets, he simply is to manage them according to the wishes of the owner. In this case, we are the stewards and God is the owner. So what does this have to do with our giving? More than you might think.

1. You see for a steward, “giving” is really nothing more than him transferring God’s funds from one of God’s accounts (the one that also has our name on it) to another of one of His accounts (the one that has the church’s name on it). It’s not a gift at all. It is just an account transfer.

2. I shared with you last year about the young boy in my church named Jimmy Mitchell who when he earned his first dollar decided he wanted to give some of it to God. He asked me if I thought God would mind if he kept a dime. Now there was a young man who understood whose dollar it was in the first place.

3. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 4:2, “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” Faithful to what? Faithful to the wishes of the owner.

4. Jesus in Luke 16:10-12 tells us, “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?”

Before we give we need to look inward.

II. Secondly, We Must Give Looking Upward.

A. You cannot look upward without first looking at the greatest words that Jesus ever spoke, “For God so loved the world that He . . . gave.”

1. Loving and given go hand in hand. You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.

2. God loved, so God gave. And even more importantly He did not give what He had left over at the “end of the week,” He gave us the first and the very best He had.

3. When we fall in love, we get almost irresponsible in our giving. We spend money on dates; buy flowers, candy, gifts; we spend money on long distant calls and talk for hours; we buy gas like crazy going places together. When we are in love, spending money to please our lover is a joy and a blessing. It is never a burden, is it?

4. I think this is the point Paul is making when he says in II Corinthians 9:7, “Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.”

5. Cheerful giving comes from cheerful loving. And the more we choose to “spend” to please our lover, the happier we are, the happier our lover is with us and the more motivated we become to give even more.

B. God is not only our example of giving, but He is the One who provides for our giving.

1. Paul continues in II Corinthians 9:8-11, “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: ‘He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.’ Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.”
 2. The key here is this principle, “God will get it to you, if He can get it through you.” God wants to make us a conduit of His giving to others. But if He cannot get His giving through you, He’ll simply find another conduit that is so not clogged up with greed, selfishness or mismanagement and that person will receive the blessing of making the gift.
- C. There is one other principle that we need to consider as we are looking upward. And that is the principle of giving by faith and not by sight.
1. Let me illustrate this principle this way. Consider what you just put in the offering plate this morning. Ask yourself this question, “Could I really afford to make that gift?” If the answer is yes, “I could afford to give that,” then you are still giving by sight.
 2. It is not until we make a commitment to give more than we think is appropriate; more than we think we can afford; more than is reasonable that we are giving by faith. Our giving should have nothing to do with some arbitrary percentage of your net income or gross income or any of formula that can be run on a calculator.
 3. Let me share with you how I uncovered this principle of giving by faith. I share this illustration with you, not to blow my own horn or to make you think more highly of me than you ought. I share it only to illustrate this principle of giving by faith.
 - a.) Twenty four years ago, when I quit preaching, I got a commission sales job. One year Pam and I decided to make a commitment to give \$100 a week to the Lord. That was about triple anything we had ever given before. By the end of that year we actually ended up giving over \$6,000 - \$800 more than we had committed. Now, giving \$6,000 a year did not require any faith on our part. We had just done it.
 - b.) So the next year we decided we were going to commit to give \$1,000 a month –twice what we had given the previous year. When the year was over our giving exceeded over \$16,000, \$4,000 more than we had pledged. Well, so much for giving \$1,000 a month by faith. We had just seen God do it.
 - c.) So, now to continue giving by faith we had to go even further, so we decided to really stretch our faith and we committed to give \$1,000 a week. When that year came to a close, we had not given \$52,000 to the Lord, we had actually given Him just over \$80,000. We could not believe what God had done through us.
 - d.) Now, I understand that I was in commission sales, where I had no limit on my potential income, so I am not trying to suggest that any of these numbers have anything to do with your situation. What I am hoping, though, is that sharing this concept you will make a decision that you want to start giving by faith instead of by sight. And whatever that number is, watch God not only meet your commitment, watch Him exceed it.
 4. This is how God wants us to be giving. Trash the idea of tithing completely. Faith giving comes out of grace; tithing comes out of the law. I am under grace, not under the law. I want to give because I want to give, not because I have to give. Amen? And I want to make a gift to my lover, not pay a bill to my landlord.

Before we give we need to look upward.

III. Finally, We Must Give Looking Outward. We must always consider the recipients of our generous giving. There are three areas we always want to be looking out for in our giving.

A. The first is giving to meet people's physical needs.

1. The physical needs in this world are so massive that it is frankly impossible to even consider the extent of the desperate physical needs that hundreds of millions of God's precious creations are suffering under.
2. Let me give you a perspective, in America, a family making less than \$12,000 a year is considered to be living in poverty. By contrast, a skilled laborer like a carpenter in Tanzania will bring home only about \$650 a year. A common laborer will make \$200 a year. But sadly unemployment in Tanzania is 86%. A Tanzanian making \$12,000 a year would be considered one of the wealthiest people in the country. This is the case in most countries of the world.
3. One of the most convicting verses in the whole Bible in regards to caring for those who are in genuine need is I John 3:17. It says, "But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?"
 - a.) We have come up with so many ways to justify closing out heart to those that have need. We may reason, "If they weren't so lazy, they could get a job and make a way for themselves." Or, "They probably are in this mess because of sin in their life." Or, "I know if I help this person, he will just use what I give him to buy booze." I think you see my point here – closed hearts.
4. God tells us in Deuteronomy 15:11, "For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.'"
5. Our giving to those who have physical needs will openly flow forth when we finally look into their needy eyes and see the likeness of God looking back at us.
6. I love the passage in Acts 4:34-35 that talks about the church that had just begun. "For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, and lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need."
7. Do you want to see the heart of New Testament Christianity? Here it is. Those who have a material surplus use that surplus to meet the needs of brothers and sisters who have a material shortfall.

B. The second is giving to meet people's spiritual needs.

1. The Great Commission places this as the mission of every believer and the church – to seek and save the lost – to baptize and disciple.
2. There are massive opportunities as I speak where the doors for the Gospel are so wide open that we cannot find enough money or resources to seize these opportunities.
3. Jesus tells us that even the Gates of Hell cannot withstand the message of the cross. And just like America is spending billions of dollars to liberate Iraq from its oppressor, the church needs to be spending billions to liberate the souls of men from the Evil One.
4. It is seldom a lack of workers that keep us from meeting the spiritual needs of people worldwide, it is simply a lack of funding. I personally know of one couple who God has called to go Tanzania as missionaries. They are ready willing and able to go, but they are struggling to raise the needed funding to go.
5. You may not know this but about 25% of our weekly offerings go to support missions worldwide. I personally would like to challenge us as a church to increase our weekly giving so we can increase our missions' support to 50% of our weekly offerings. We can do it! God can do it! There is no greater good or benefit we can achieve than to use our resources to get the Gospel out locally and globally.
6. And it takes so little money to get the Gospel out. For example in Mexico, how much do you think it would take to provide a four year Bible college degree for a young man to become a preacher to his own people? All four year's tuition and the student's housing costs a mere

\$400 total. In the United States a similar education would cost about \$40,000. In other words, we can train 100 preacher in Mexico for what we can train one here in the States. Talk about getting a big bang for the buck! Talk about financial leverage!

C. The third is giving to meet people's emotional needs.

1. We live in a very messed up world. Can I hear an amen? And it messes us up in our bodies, in our souls and in our minds. Psychological counseling over the past 50 years has become a massive industry – trying to help people work out their emotional conflicts and resolve the collateral damage from it.
2. I can tell you that all the secular counseling in the world is not going to solve the emotional needs of hurting people. The Gospel is the only solution, because it simply calls us to trash the past with its pains and hurts and to be born again – “forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead.”
3. One of the most touching passages in the Bible is Palm 61:1-3. When ever I read it, I think of what God is calling my daughters Bethany and Anna to do with their lives. It says, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me, To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives, And freedom to prisoners; To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, To grant those who mourn in Zion, Giving them a garland instead of ashes, The oil of gladness instead of mourning,
4. And nothing tells us better how to heal the hurts of the lonely than Psalm 68:6 that says, “God sets the lonely in families.” We have an incredible family here and we need to go out into “the highways and the byways” and find those who are lonely and make them part of our loving family.
5. There is no time in a person's life when they are more open to the Gospel than when they are physically, spiritually and emotionally hurting. We need to find these people and adopt them into our church family.

Before we give we need to look outward.

Conclusion: If we want to be sincere and genuine “when therefore we give our alms” we need to take a good look at ourselves inwardly, we need to take good look at God upwardly, and we need to take a good look at others outwardly. Then based upon what we see, I would encourage you to give to your lover according to the leading of the Holy Spirit that dwells within you. I do not want you to increase your giving because of this sermon. I would rather you choose to increase your giving because of your Savior.

This little church is ready to explode. If you've been coming here any time at all, you can just sense it. The Lord has been preparing us for many months for this time. Our hearts I believe are ready to go to the next level. Now, it is time for God to start working on our giving so we can underwrite the great thing He is calling us to do.

Now I believe that many of you here this morning very much would like to increase your giving to the church, but for any number of reasons, you are not in a position to do so. For those of you who fall into this category, I am going to be offering a three session class starting next week on how to more successfully handle your finances. Many of you may not know it, but in my day job I financially counsel some of the wealthiest Christian families in America, and in the past three years I have only escaped personal bankruptcy by the grace of God, so I think no matter what your situation, “for better or for worse” I can help you better manage what you have. Some of the topics we will be discussing will be, “becoming entirely debt free,” “living within your means,” “how to increase your giving while

simultaneously improving your lifestyle,” “how to eventually become financially independent,” “creative ways to financially give to the church without writing a check, and “ getting the IRS to donate to our church”

If God has laid it on your heart this morning to start giving more substantially to support His work here at Heritage and you want some help in how to do it, then I want to help equip you to better handle your finances and increase your giving.

Are you in love with Jesus? Let your giving each week be a demonstration of that love.

Part 2: Jesus' Teaching on Giving

There's More to Proper Giving than Simply the Size of your Check

Introduction: Last week we considered the beginning of Jesus' statement “when therefore you give.” There is no doubt that for those of us who call ourselves Christians, we are to be a giving people just as our God is a giving God. But, as we considered last week, before our giving can be sincere and not hypocritical, we need to look inward at ourselves, we need to look upward at God and we need to look outward at those to whom we will give. Only by considering all three perspectives can we give sincerely and not hypocritically. If you missed last week's sermon, I would encourage you to request a copy of the tape.

This morning we are going to explore another “chunk” of Jesus' teaching on the act of giving which should play such a central role in the life of a believer. Let's read our text for this morning.

Text: Matthew 6:2b-4a; “When therefore you give your alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing that your alms may be in secret. . . ”

Last week, Jesus taught us that we must give. This week Jesus is teaching us that we must give properly. And it strikes me that He expresses three attitudes which we must possess if we are going to give properly, two of these attitudes are overtly stated here in the text and the third one I think is certainly implied.

Proposition: To give properly, we must give (1.) with humble hearts; we must give (2.) behind closed doors; and we must give (3.) as wise stewards.

I. We Must Give Properly with Humble Hearts (2b)

A. Let's first examine exactly what Jesus is saying here.

- I. The Greek word “hypocrite” originally was a Greek actor who wore a mask that portrayed in an exaggerated way the role that was being dramatized. For obvious reasons the term came to be used of anyone who pretended to be what he was not.
 - a.) One of Satan's most common and effective ways of undermining the power of the church is through hypocrisy. What is the number one reason people give for why they do not come to church? The church is full of . . . Hypocrites. Hypocrisy, therefore, is a great peril to the church, and it comes in two forms. The first is that of nonbelievers masquerading as

Christians. The second is that of true believers who are sinful but pretend to be spiritual. The warning Jesus gives here applies to both groups.

- b.) Augustine said, “The love of honor is the deadly bane of true piety. Other vices bring forth evil works but this vice of hypocrisy brings forth good works in an evil way.” Hypocrisy is so dangerous because it is so deceptive. It uses things that are basically good for purposes that are basically evil. “Hypocrisy,” Augustine goes on to say, “is the homage that vice pays to virtue.”
2. The Greek word translated “alms” literally refers to any act of mercy or pity, but came to be used primarily of giving money, food, or clothing to the poor.
 - a.) God has always delighted in acts of mercy and generosity. Leviticus 25:35 says, “Now in case a countryman of yours becomes poor and his means with regard to you falter, then you are to sustain him, like a stranger or a sojourner that he may live with you.” When Israelites freed a slave they were told in Deuteronomy 15:13-14, “You shall not send him away empty-handed. You shall furnish him liberally from your flock and from your threshing floor and from your wine vat; you shall give to him as the Lord your God has blessed you.” God’s people were continually reminded in the Psalms, Proverbs, and prophetic writings to be considerate of and generous to the poor, whether fellow Israelites or Gentile strangers.
 - b.) Even Jesus who it says didn’t even have “a place to lay his head” gave to the poor as we read in John 13:29. It is obvious therefore that it is only giving alms in the wrong spirit that is evil. The scribes and Pharisees gave them primarily to bring honor to themselves, not to serve others or to honor God.
 - c.) In the time of Jesus the giving of alms had been carried to absurd extremes by rabbinic tradition. In the Jewish apocryphal books we read such things as, “It is better to give to charity than to lay up gold. For charity will save a man from death; it will expiate any sin” (Tobit 12:8) and, “As water will quench a flaming fire, so charity will atone for sin” (The Wisdom of Sirach 3:30). Consequently, many Jews believed that salvation was much easier for the rich, because they could buy their way into heaven by giving to the poor. The same mechanistic and unbiblical principle is seen in traditional Roman Catholic dogma. Pope Leo the Great declared, “By prayer we seek to appease God, by fasting we extinguish the lust of the flesh, and by alms we redeem our sins.”
 3. There seems to be no evidence from history or archaeology that a literal trumpet or other instrument was used by Jews to announce their giving. Jesus seems to be using a figure to describe the attention in the synagogues and in the streets that many wealthy hypocrites, not just scribes and Pharisees, purposely attracted to themselves when they presented their gifts.
 4. The reward they wanted was recognition and praise, to be honored by men, and that became their reward in full. They “have their reward” was a form of a technical expression used at the completion of a commercial transaction, and carried the idea of something being paid for in full and receipted. Nothing more was owed or would be paid. Those who give for the purpose of impressing others with their generosity and spirituality will receive no other reward, especially from God. The Lord owes them nothing. When we give of what we have to please men, our only reward will be that which men can give. Receiving men’s blessings forfeits God’s.
- B. Now, let’s draw some personal applications from these verses.
- I. First, we must never forget the ultimate source of all that we give.
 - a.) King David tells us in Psalm 24:1, “The earth is the LORD’S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.”
 - b.) Since this is unquestionably true, what can we give that actually comes from us? We have nothing to give, because nothing we have is ours. Is it? Amen?

- c.) I love Proverbs 22:2 that says, “The rich and the poor have a common bond, The LORD is the maker of them all.” The rich and the poor also have something else in common – a personal net worth of \$0.
2. Second, we must never see ourselves as more than simple delivery people.
- a.) Let me ask you, should we give credit to the pen that was used to write a check that was used to help someone in need? Should the mailman take credit for a love letter he delivers to a love-struck young women? Should the paper bag company take credit for the food that a church takes by to a needy family? Of course not, the pen, the mailman and the paper bag are only tools that were used to deliver what the giver wanted to give to another.
- b.) Do any of you remember the old TV show that was on when I was a kid called the Millionaire? You remember this wealthy old man, named J. Tipton Farnsworth, whose face you never saw – only the back of his head, would randomly give one million dollars tax free to total strangers. The program showed what happened to these people after they got the money. But that is a different sermon for another day. But do you remember, the checks were always delivered to the recipient by J. Tipton’s personal assistant. Now, let me ask you, “Who gave these people the one million dollars tax free, the assistant or the multimillionaire?” Well, they both did, the millionaire gave it and the assistant delivered it. The same is true of our giving. God gives it and we deliver it.
- c.) There is nothing about our giving that should make us proud of ourselves, when what we are giving isn’t even ours. It hopefully is fun to give it, but it should never give rise to personal pride within us.
3. Third, we must never use our giving in such a way as to humiliate or embarrass the recipient.
- a.) It is very humbling to have to ask others for help. If you have ever been in a situation where you needed to ask other people for help, you are truly fortunate. Not only is it more blessed to give than to receive it is easier to give than to receive. There is nothing that can emasculate a person’s sense of self-worth and personal value more thoroughly than being forced to admit he/she needs help. This is the very reason why so few come to Christ. They just cannot bring themselves to admit they need someone else’s help and then ask for it.
- b.) When we find ourselves in the fortunate situation where we can help someone in need, we must be exceedingly sensitive to never do anything to judge, condemn, shame or embarrass them as we give to meet their needs.
- c.) If we could all live Philippians 2:3-4 this world would be a virtually utopia, “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,”
- d.) Giving is intended to build people up and show them love, not to tear them down and make them feel worthless.
4. Fourth, we must never seek to motivate others to give by offering to honor them for their giving.
- a.) Unfortunately, many Christian organizations and churches use un-Christian methods to raise support for their ministries. When gold embossed certificates of appreciation are presented, when names of generous supporters are published and when all other such recognitions that are designed to stimulate giving, hypocrisy is being promoted in the name of Christ.
- b.) I couldn’t help but think about this very building as I was considering this point. It may have happened before Heritage was here, but have you ever really looked at our windows.

What do you see? – donate enough money and get a window in the church with your name on it. I also preached many years ago at a church that had a brass plate on each pew with the donors name on it. These are examples of motivating people to give so they can be publicly recognized by others for their giving.

- c.) Remember, it is just as wrong to appeal to wrong motives in giving as to have wrong motives in giving. “It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come,” Jesus said in Matthew 18:7; “but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!”

So, we must give properly with Humble Hearts.

II. We Must Give Properly behind Closed Doors (3-4a)

A. Let’s look at what Jesus says here.

1. To not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing was possibly a proverbial expression that simply referred to doing something spontaneously, with no special effort or fanfare. The right hand was considered the primary hand of action, and in a normal day’s work the right hand would do many things as a matter of course that would not involve the left hand. Giving to help those in need should be a normal activity of the Christian, and he should do it as simply, directly, and discreetly as possible.
2. The most satisfying giving, and the giving that God blesses, is that which is done and forgotten. It is done in love, out of response to a need and when the need is met the giver goes on about his business, not waiting for or wanting any kind of recognition. What has been done should even be a secret to our left hand, not to mention to other people. Whether the person we help is grateful or ungrateful should not matter as far as our own purpose is concerned. If he is ungrateful, we are sorry for his sake, not our own.
3. Matthew 6:3 has often been interpreted to mean that all good works are to be done in absolute secrecy. But true righteousness cannot be kept entirely secret, and should not be. Psalm 106:3 says, “How blessed are those who keep justice, who practice righteousness at all times!”
4. As you recall earlier in the Sermon on the Mount in 5:16 Jesus had specifically commanded, “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” The question is not whether or not our good works should be seen by others, but whether they are being done for that specific end. When they are done “in such a way” that attention and glory are focused on our “Father who is in heaven” rather than on ourselves, God is pleased. But if they are done to be noticed by men as it says in 6:1, they are done self-righteously and hypocritically and are rejected by God. The difference is in purpose and motivation. When what we do is done in the right spirit and for the right purpose, it will almost inevitably be done in the right way.
5. So the teachings of Matthew 5:16 and 6:3 are not in conflict with each other because they relate to different sins. In the 5:16 Jesus is dealing with cowardice, whereas here in 6:3 He is dealing with hypocrisy. The well known Bible commentator A. B. Bruce gives the helpful explanation, “We are to show when tempted to hide and hide when tempted to show.”

B. Let’s ask some questions to draw some practical applications to this concept of giving behind closed doors.

- I. What is the only thing that we lose if we choose to give behind close doors?
 - a.) Will the size of the gift be the same regardless of whether the giver is known or anonymous? Yes.
 - b.) Will the recipient be blessed equally either way by the gift? Yes.

- c.) You see the only thing that we lose by anonymous giving is the chance to be recognized and thought more highly of because of our generosity. In other words the only thing that is lost in behind closed doors giving is having our pride stroked.
2. Now I want you to think with me, Can we actually use this concept of “giving behind close doors” to cover up our lack of giving?
- a.) Let me ask you this? What if the church posted people’s giving on the bulletin board like the leader board of a golf tournament, the biggest givers at the top and going down from there?
- b.) How would you feel as you looked to see how much you had given and where you were on the list?
- c.) Of course, the church would never do this kind of thing because if they would, the big givers would become proud in how high up they were on the leader board and the small givers would be embarrassed by being so low on the list. Nothing good would come from it.
- d.) I also find it rather sad how the only time many believers feel compelled to give to their church is when they actually attend services. When they miss a Sunday, they have a mindset that reasons, “I didn’t use anything from the church this week, therefore I owe them nothing.” Their giving is like paying for an admission ticket. I have even had people tell me over the years this is the main reason why they do not want to join the church. Because as soon as they join, they will be expected to start giving each week even when they do not come.
- e.) Let me say, the only one who our giving really matters to is the only One who already knows every detail of our giving or lack of it. The only one who we need to fool about our giving is the only one we cannot fool.
- f.) Now, I want to say something to you this morning as lovingly as I can, but I feel the need to be completely honest with all of you as well. And I really want this comment to instructive and challenging to you while also being convicting if it applies to you. Are you ready? Okay here it is, “If you come to church without bringing a check to put into the offering plate, you are either not taking your giving seriously or you are bringing large amounts of cash with you to church for giving.” And by the looks of the amount of cash that finds its way into the offering plates on any given week, I think it is safe to say no one in this church is bringing large amounts of cash with them each week to make their offerings.
- g.) Please don’t misunderstand my intent here. I am not trying to shame or embarrass you into giving significantly if you are not already doing so. If the love of Christ doesn’t compel you to support the kingdom and our church over which He reigns in a significant way, who am I to try to compel you to increase your giving?
- h.) What I am hoping to do, however, is to at least force you to be honest with yourself and with God as to the current condition of your heart and the current condition of your giving. If you can stand before your Lord and Savior and hear Him say to you concerning your giving, “Well, done thou good and faithful steward,” that’s all that matters. If not, then I plead with you to take heed.
3. Where does the gratefulness for the gift end up going when the delivery person is not known?
- a.) We know that on occasion Jesus even gave and asked for it to be kept a secret.
- (1.) When Jesus healed the man with leprosy, He told him in Matthew 8:4, “See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and present the offering that Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.”
- (2.) When He gave the blind man his sight, He warned him in Matthew 9:30, “See here, let no one know about this!”

(3.) When these men were healed, who got the glory for the healing? The Father did! Not the Son.

b.) Let me give you a good illustration of this point from right here at Heritage. For our VBS the leaders of the program set as a goal to raise \$700 to help Bethany buy two tires and a radio for the car she needs when she leaves for Africa now in just 2½ short months. I personally thought that was a rather ambitious goal since we were only likely going to have about 35 kids for the VBS. “How could we ever get \$700 out of 35 kids,” I thought? Well, on the final night of the VBS program it was announced that exactly \$700 had been raised. My mouth dropped open. The night before we only had about \$320. What happened with that last offering? Well, I came to find out that someone in our church anonymously offered to make up any difference in what was actually raised in the VBS offerings and its goal of \$700. I have no idea who it was who did that and I do not want to know. But since Bethany has no idea who that delivery person was of that gracious gift, she can only thank God for the gift He provided through that faithful steward to help her get to Africa. God gets all the glory and all the thanks for the gift.

So, we must give properly behind closed doors.

III. We Must Give Properly as Wise Stewards. This point is not stated in this text but I think it is clearly implied. So, I want to give you some guidance on what I’ll call “good steward giving.”

A. First, we must recognize we have limited resources.

1. I think we would all agree that the needs of the world are so all encompassing, it is mind boggling. Even the richest man alive cannot even scratch the surface of meeting all the world’s many needs.
2. Even within the kingdom of God, the financial needs and opportunities are absolutely massive. I don’t know about you, but I am constantly being bombarded with appeals for financial support for worthy Christian organizations on the radio and in the mail.
3. Personally my greatest frustration is that I do not have enough financial resources to support everything I see as a worthy Christian cause. And if I did support everything that asked me directly or indirectly for financial support, I might end up giving each of them maybe a dollar a month. And so in trying to help many ministries, I really would end up helping none of them.
4. I recently met with a very wealthy Christian lady who is a prospective client who shared with me that without exaggeration she receives no less than 100 personal appeal letters each month, year around. All the needs can be rather overwhelming, can’t it?
5. Before we give, we need to narrow our focus enough that it will make a difference wherever it is that God directs us to give. I for one like to give larger amounts to fewer organizations, so I know my giving is really making a serious difference in their work.

B. Second, we must evaluate the worthiness of the recipient. I would suggest that you ask three key questions as you consider where you will give.

1. Ask, “Do they have a biblical mission?” I personally believe that since all I have belongs to God and Jesus and given our mission in Matthew 28:19-20, the Great Commission, we ought to be putting 100% of our available resources into ministries that are endeavoring to carry out this eternal mission.
2. Ask, “Are they financially responsible?” Not all ministries are good stewards of the financial resources they have been entrusted with. One Christian man I met said he would never make another major gift to his church because the last time he did, they used the money for something other than what they asked him to give it for. I think some in this church in the past may have questioned the wisdom of some of the expenditures that were made here. I will say as a professional financial planner and one who is regularly reviewing the church’s

finances, I believe our Elders are being exceptionally wise and responsible in how they are currently handling their financial stewardship of our church's money.

3. Ask, "Are they producing good fruit?" One of the great statements I have heard in recent years was by the preacher Henry Blackaby. He said, "Find where God is working and join Him there." That's what we need to do with out giving, we need to find where God is working and then join Him there – in body, soul, spirit and check book. If you want to be sure your giving will have a harvest, give it where God is already bringing forth a harvest. Did you know that our little church has now had eleven transfers and baptisms over the past five consecutive weeks? It seems like the harvest has already begun here at Heritage.

C. Third, we must seek the leading of the Holy Spirit

1. We must pray for supernatural guidance.

- a.) We need to be asking God to lead us or bring us the opportunities for ministry that He wants us to support. If He will open the doors we will go through them.
- b.) God does not want us to just be sitting around inside the walls of our church building waiting for some opportunity to come to us. He wants us on the lookout – out looking for needs and opportunities. We need to pray that God will lead us to find what He wants us to support.

2. We must pray for godly wisdom.

- a.) Praying for guidance is asking God for directions. Praying for wisdom is asking God for discernment – praying that when He leads us to an opportunity He has for us, we will have the wisdom and discernment to recognize it for what it is and seize the day.
- b.) How do you sort out the millions of ministries around the world to know which one or ones He wants us to support? We need wisdom, lots of wisdom.
- c.) The question we individually and corporately as a church need to be asking is, "God, is this what You want me/us to do with the resources You have entrusted to us?"

3. We must pray for extraordinary faith.

- a.) Do you really believe that God wants to do something extraordinary with what he has put in you and entrusted to you?
- b.) Do you believe that God has not even begun to tap into all the potential that He has put within you?
- c.) Do you believe you can actually make a serious difference in at least one small place in this world with who you are and what you have?
- d.) If you remember when Satan was tempting Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus responded to Satan with the quote, "Thou shalt not test the Lord you God." And this is true in every area of our lives except for one . . . in the area of our giving. In our giving God says, "Put me to the test." Listen to Malachi 3:10, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows."
- e.) In our giving He wants us to test Him. We will never be able to test God until we are willing to pray for greater faith to do greater giving. Can you believe God's promise here? Prove it to yourself. Put God to the test. Increase your faith by increasing your giving.

D. Fourth, we must trust God for the outcome.

1. Once we make the gift, we accept we are no longer stewards of that gift. When we give, we cannot and should not attach strings to our giving. Once we give, we turn over the stewardship of that money to the one or the organizations that received it and we should not longer linger over it trying to manage those gifts.
2. Once we make the gift, we cannot look back. We cannot look back and second guess ourselves. Should we have made that gift? Should we have given that much, etc.?" We must

trust God that we made the right gift at the right time for the right purpose and then let it go. We may occasionally make mistakes in our giving. We obviously should want to learn from our mistakes, but we should not continue to beat ourselves up because of it.

3. Once we make the gift, we must trust God for the results. Once the gift is made, we must trust God that he will use it, multiply it, and bring about a good result. I can assure you of one thing, God never wastes what you give Him. He will take your faith gift and bring about results which you may never see or know this side of Heaven.

So, we must give properly as wise stewards.

Conclusion: Jesus teaches us we must give (1.) with humble hearts; we must give (2.) behind closed doors; and we must give (3.) as wise stewards. This is not something that you will be able to consider for a half hour and get. Maybe you should get the sermon tape, stay for Sunday School to discuss these matters with other believers. And if you really want to get a handle on the financial part of your life and become a responsible stewards of the materials resources God has entrusted to you, I hope you will come back for the next three Sunday evenings at 7:00 PM where I hope to train and equip you to get out and stay out of debt, pay off your mortgage in fifteen years or less and how to set up and operate a budget that will set you free financially.

These three classes are totally optional, but as a professional financial planner, I can assure you, that people pay me very good money to show them how to do what I am going to teach you to do for free tonight.

Part 3: Jesus' Teaching on Giving

What's in it for Me?

Introduction: This morning I am concluding my three part series on Jesus' teaching on giving. Frankly, this is the one sermon that I have been most anxious to preach because this morning we finally get to "what's in it for me." We have considered over the past two weeks why we need to give and how to give un-hypocritically and now this week we will learn what we get out of all this giving to others.

Let me say by way of introduction here that there is a common and I think prevailing attitude among Christians that there is something almost greedy or selfish about having a desire to be rewarded for our giving. I have heard many times over the years from Christians that we must not give looking for any kind of reward because if we do, that desire will keep us from getting any reward. I can say unequivocally that the Bible does not teach this kind of a selfless piety as a prerequisite to being rewarded by God for our giving.

In this sermon we'll look at several passages that confirm God's promises to reward us for our giving including our text this morning. Remember, this idea of being rewarded for our giving was not man's idea, it was God's idea. And if He wants to reward us for our faith-giving, I for one will be pleased to receive with a great gladness and anticipation whatever rewards He has for me. I have always loved to be rewarded for being a good boy!

There are other Christians who believe we should almost be ashamed to even talk about much less desire to be rewarded for our faith-giving. These people think that if there is some reward coming back

to us that it somehow cheapens our gift and might even call into question the sincerity of our giving motives. Those that hold this position would often say that if God does reward us for our giving it may or may not be a financial reward. They would suggest that His reward for giving would be some other kind of reward, but is not going to be material or financial in nature. I suppose this view is noble. The only problem is that it is entirely foreign to Scripture. The Bible is very clear that the reward for our material and financial giving will be material and financial, plus more as we will see. The Bible is full of passages that tell us that God wants to reward us materially and financially for our obedient giving. We will consider some of these passages this morning.

If you think about it almost everything we do in the Christian life is built upon this “giving by us produces rewards from God” principle.” If we come to church to worship God, do we get anything out of it? If we devote time to reading His Word, do we get anything out of that? If we carve out time for prayer to Him, do we not get anything out of that? Whenever we give to God, He rewards us back. Why then should the area of giving be any different? God says if we give of our materials possessions to help others, we will be rewarded by Him for doing so and let me tell you, the rewards from God you can literally take to the bank. Have you not read Jeremiah 29:11? “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” For those of you attending our Sunday evening Financial Stewardship Training Class, last week we saw many verses that told us that God wants to reward his people with financial prosperity, but for Him to do so, we must be what God wants us to be and do what He wants us to do. And if we obey, He promises again and again, He will financially prosper us – making us even more able to give and help others more.

Now with all this said, let’s look at our text this morning.

Text: Matthew 6:4b, “Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Notice the only prerequisite in this passage for being rewarded for our giving is that it be done in secret. It says nothing about a person’s giving motives; it says nothing about a need for humility in giving; and it says nothing about our interest or lack of interest in being rewarded for our giving. Jesus cannot be more clear that proper giving will be rewarded by God. So, the question we need to answer this morning is exactly how will God reward us when we give?

Proposition: If we give properly we will be rewarded by God (1.) Financially, (2.) Emotionally, and (3.) Spiritually.

So, let’s look at the first point.

I. We Need to Give Properly to be Rewarded by God Financially

A. The Bible leaves no room for misunderstanding here. There are indeed temporal financial rewards for giving. Let’s consider just a few of these passages.

I. Jesus tells us in Luke 6:38, “Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”

a.) It seems to me here that Jesus is assuring us that the reward for our giving will always substantially exceed what we give.

b.) And He expresses the principle that the more generous we are in our giving the more generous God will be in His rewarding.

2. The well known challenge in Malachi 3:10 expresses the same idea. "Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."
 - a.) As I said last week this is the only place in Scripture where God says we are to test Him.
 - b.) This test is to determine if His rewards back to us will not vastly exceed what we have parted with.
 - c.) The question is not whether God is able to do it, the question is, "Are we willing to give Him the opportunity to prove it?" That is what He is challenging us to do. It's like He's saying, "I dare you."
3. Proverbs 19:17, "He who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord, And He (God) will repay him (the giver) for his good deed." Deuteronomy 15:10, "'You shall generously give to him (the poor), 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.'"
 - a.) What a great arrangement. We give to the poor and God pays us back. I personally could not trust or depend on the poor to ever pay me back anything I give them. In fact, it has been my experience that they have never paid me back. But God's says here that He will pay us back whatever we give to those in need. So, why should we not be giving to the poor all the time?
 - b.) For one reason and one reason alone. We do not believe God will do what He says.
 - c.) Does this mean that we if we give to the poor we are going to get an unexpected check in the mail in the exact amount we gave? I have actually heard of this kind of thing happening, but not very often. But let me ask you, "Do you think God is keeping track of our giving? He is. Don't worry; if God tells us we will be paid back, we will be paid back and probably with a lot more than just the going rate of interest.
 - d.) God tells us here in Deuteronomy 15 that we are not to be grieved or troubled over giving to those who have need, God will reward us financially in our work and our financial undertakings when we do.
4. Proverbs 3:9-10, "Honor the Lord from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine."
 - a.) Here Solomon is telling us that if we give of our material possessions, God will increase our harvest until not only do we have enough, we will have a more than enough – a surplus.
 - b.) And what will a good steward do with a surplus?
 - c.) Remember, "God will get it to you, if He can get it through you."
5. Paul teaches us about temporal rewards for our giving in I Corinthians 9:6, "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully."
 - a.) Let me ask you, what is this statement talking about? Planting crops, praying, evangelizing, or giving? He is talking about our giving.
 - b.) If this is true then let me ask, if we sow corn, what should we expect to reap? Corn or soybeans?
 - c.) And when we sow, do we expect to receive more than, the same as or less than the amount of corn we sowed? Obviously more than.
 - d.) And do you think that the person who sows 1000 pounds of corn will reap a larger harvest than someone who sows 100 pounds of corn? Duh!
 - e.) So, Paul is telling us here plainly that if we give materially we can expect to be rewarded back materially and the more we give materially the more we will be rewarded back materially. Make no mistake about it, in this verse, Paul is telling us that there are financial rewards for financial giving.

- f.) Now, just in case some of you think I am promoting some kind of “health and wealth gospel” promoted by many televangelists, I am not. But I also do not intend to allow them hijack the clear promises of financial rewards for giving just because they have taken this promises too far and abused them for their own selfish purposes.
6. Let’s look at one last example, when King Hezekiah took over the throne of Judah, his first acts as king was to restore the temple, reinstitute the Passover feast, tear down all the false idols and reinstitute the sacrificial giving practices of Israel. The nation was in a shambles economical, spiritually, morally and psychologically. Yet, as they began again their giving to the Lord some amazing things began to happen. II Chronicles 31:6-10 tells us, “And the sons of Israel and Judah who lived in the cities of Judah, also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of sacred gifts which were consecrated to the Lord their God, and placed *them* in heaps. In the third month they began to make the heaps, and finished *them* by the seventh month. And when Hezekiah and the rulers came and saw the heaps, they blessed the Lord and His people Israel. Then Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps. And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok said to him, “Since the contributions began to be brought into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat with plenty left over, for the Lord has blessed His people, and this great quantity is left over.”
- a.) The fact is “faithful giving by God’s people always produces a surplus.” It is just a mathematical fact.
- b.) Let me give you a practical example. Let’s assume that everyone who is a member or a regular attender of our church were to start giving, oh, let’s be legalists for a minute and say 10% of their income.
- c.) Do you think our weekly church offerings would go up or go down? And if we are meeting our expenses with our current level of giving, what would happen if everyone began giving say 10%. Alakazam poof – the church would have a surplus just like Israel did in Hezekiah’s day. In fact based upon my calculations, our weekly offerings should more than double.
7. So, how might God reward us financially for our faith giving? Here are some ways in which He not only can, but for many of you He already is rewarding you for your giving. Let me give them to you in the form of a question.
- a.) Can the Lord supernaturally make your car run longer and need fewer repairs?
- b.) Can the Lord supernaturally keep your kids healthier so they need fewer doctor’s visits and prescription drugs? God tells us that He does this in Exodus 15:26, “And He said, “If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer.”
- c.) Can God supernaturally keep your home water heater, furnace and air conditioner running longer than it should?
- d.) Can God supernaturally keep your clothes from wearing out as quickly? Deuteronomy 8:4 tells us, “Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years.”
- e.) Can God supernaturally bring you in unexpected sources of additional income?
- f.) Can God supernaturally provide you with a better paying job?
- g.) Can God supernaturally allow you to invest in something that He blesses beyond your wildest dreams?
- h.) Can God supernaturally make your food supply last longer? Do you know the story of the widow at Zaraphath in I Kings 17? It was a time of horrendous famine. Let’s read starting in verse 12, “Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah, saying, “Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you.” So he arose and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, “Please

get me a little water in a jar, that I may drink.” And as she was going to get *it*, he called to her and said, “Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand.” But she said, “As the Lord your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.” Then Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go, do as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it first, and bring *it* out to me, and afterward you may make *one* for yourself and for your son. “For thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the Lord sends rain on the face of the earth.’” So she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and she and he and her household ate for *many* days. The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke through Elijah.”

8. So, there is absolutely no doubt that God has plans to financially prosper us and bless you in this life, but we must make the first move in giving what He has already entrusted to us.

B. But what about rewards in the next life? I have good news for you. There are eternal financial rewards in the next life as well.

1. Everyone knows the story of the rich young ruler. But most people miss what Jesus actually instructed him to do with this possessions. Look at exactly what He said in Matthew 19:21, “If you wish to be complete, go *and* sell your possessions and give to *the* poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” Jesus simply asked him to send them on ahead for safe keeping and then he would get them all back (and lots more) in Heaven and he would be able to enjoy them forever.

2. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:20, “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;” This is the giving from which rewards come. And what is most amazing is that we can actually end up with both treasures in Heaven and treasures on earth if we focus first on treasures in Heaven.

3. The business tycoon, J.T. Letourneau, the man who created all the giant earth moving equipment was a Christian and had committed to give God 90% of all that he made to the Lord. Near the end of his life he was worth over \$50 million dollars and a man asked him, “Mr. Letourneau, how can you be worth so much if you have been giving 90% of all you make away to God each year?” His answer was classic, “My boy, you just can out give God!” To which I say, “Amen.”

4. Paul advises Timothy in his first letter, 6:17-19 to, “Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. *Instruct them* to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.” Life indeed comes not from what we keep. Life indeed comes from what we give. Are we building our foundation for the present or for the future?

II. “But wait,” as the game show host says, “there’s more!!!” We Need to Give Properly to be Rewarded by God Emotionally

A. Undoubtedly there are many temporal emotional rewards we will receive when we give.

I. First, we will discover the double joy of giving as opposed to the single joy of keeping.

a.) When we keep for ourselves what we make, it no doubt gives us joy to have it, to save it and/or to spend it. No matter what we do with it, it is enjoyable to have it. Would you not agree?

- b.) But when we choose to give the money we have to someone else as a gift or to meet a need, we double the amount of joy that that money produces because it now gives us joy to give it and the recipient joy to receive it.
- c.) Acts 20:35, “. . . and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” Notice Jesus says it is MORE blessed to give than to receive. What He is saying is there are two blessings – the blessing of being the giver and the blessing of being the receiver. The giving, He says, is more of a blessing than the receiving.

2. Second, we will get to see God multiply our gifts.

- a.) The story of the feeding of the 5,000 has so much more to teach us than just God can do miracles. Have you ever considered the young boy whose lunch fed that crowd of likely over 20,000 hungry people? What must this young man have felt to see his little gift used in such a mighty way?
- b.) Let me ask you, do you think when that little boy gave Jesus His lunch that he expected to get any of it back?
- c.) But not only did he get it back, but it tells us that they all ate until they were full. And having been a little boy once myself, I am reasonably certain that he ended up eating more than he gave away. That’s just the way young boys are.
- d.) And not only did he get more than he started with, but 20,000 other people also ate until they were full and there was still twelve baskets of food left over. You see, God doesn’t waste anything we give to Him. He even kept the leftovers.
- e.) I am reasonably certain that there was nothing that ever happened over the rest of that young boy’s life that impacted him more than what Jesus did with his little gift that day.

B. I think also there will be eternal emotional rewards as a result of our giving as well.

- 1. One of the ways in which we will be eternally rewarded emotionally, I believe, is meeting people in Heaven and learning that we in some way or another were indirectly responsible for them being there. I mean can you imagine, meeting some black man in Heaven for example and as you talk to him learn that when he was just a young boy Bethany Link led him to the Lord. And she was able to be in Africa to share the gospel with him because of our financial support.
- 2. Some years ago a friend of mine, Jesse Yangmi, from Thailand returned to the States raising money for printing Bibles in the Lisu language. We donated a significant amount to that project and he got the Bibles got printed and they are now in the hands of the Lisu people. Someday in Heaven I am looking forward to meeting some Thai man or woman and discovering that he or she became a Christian by reading a Bible that Jesse Yangmi had given him or her. A Bible that we had helped to print. What an emotional reward would that be?
- 3. I don’t know about you, but I would be happy to enjoy this kind of eternal emotional reward for my giving all through eternity.

III. “But wait, there’s still more!!” We Need to Give Properly to be Rewarded by God Spiritually

- A. On top of all of what we are being rewarded with so far there are still temporal spiritual rewards we will enjoy from our giving. Let me point them out to you.
 - 1. Do you realize that the more giving we become in our lives, the more like Jesus we become? And the more like Jesus we become the more blessed we will be. One of the greatest rewards in giving is our being conformed into the image of Christ.
 - 2. Whenever we are able to stretch our faith, God is able to reveal Himself and His powers more fully to us in a host of everyday ways that we would otherwise miss entirely.
 - 3. C. S. Lewis, the great Christian thinker once wrote, “I don’t know how much we should be giving, but I know it ought to be more than we can afford.” Because it is when we get to this

“more than we can afford” level of giving, we must depend on God to provide. And this is when the spiritual rewards begin to really flow our way.

- B. As with the other two areas of financial and emotional rewards there are also eternal spiritual rewards for those of us who give.
1. I am reminded of what Paul wrote in I Corinthians 3:12-15, “Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.”
 2. As one man said, God will build your eternal dwelling place from the materials you send ahead before you arrive.
 3. Jesus says in Revelation 22:20, “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.”
 4. For those who have invested in eternal things, who have devoted themselves to kingdom matters, who have sacrificed personal ease and pleasure for the greater cause, they will be rewarded a more noble place in Heaven than those who never devoted themselves to spiritual things.
 5. Let me ask you, “Do you think the Apostle Paul will receive greater spiritual rewards for what he gave while he was on earth than you or I will receive? What about Job? Moses? Daniel? Abraham? David?” No doubt they will hold greater places of esteem and honor because they were able to recognize that the life to come was the life to focus on and in so giving of themselves to that life, God will reward them with greater spiritual honor for eternity.
 6. It is my singular desire when I stand before God to be given my reward for what I gave that He will look at me and say with a smile, “Well done thou good and faithful servant . . . enter into the joy of your master.” If I can but here those words on that day, I will be spiritually rewarded beyond what I deserve.

Conclusion: Remember, giving is not for God’s benefit. Giving is for our benefit. We don’t give because God needs our gifts. We give because we need to give.

I don’t know how much you are giving right now. I don’t care if you are the biggest giver in this church or the smallest giver to this church, you can still give more than you are right now. And I might add you need to give more than you are right now. I do not believe there is one person in this church who could stand up this morning and say, “Not me, I am giving enough.”

I must ask you, “How will any of us know that God is working in our lives if all we are doing is what we know we can do without Him?” You see, it is not until we are ready to be stretched beyond our current level of faith that we will see God again begin working. It is at this point and only at this point that we will again see the face and the hand of God working afresh in our lives and to see the His rewards flowing upon us.

If we choose to not live this way, we will live small, unimpressive lives, doing little that would give us anything supernatural in our lives to talk to others about. We will just eventually die leaving the beautiful music that God placed in us never fully played for us or the world to hear. How sad. How very sad.

God is pleading with each of us, “Just give me something to work with. Make some kind of sacrificial effort than I can multiply and show you My power. Show Me some act of faith that I can reward, financially, emotionally or spiritually. The key to My rewards is in your hand. Please unlock the door, so I can show Myself to you. Test me now in this. And see if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.”

What are we waiting for? God has a storehouse of rewards He wants to bestow upon us. He has given us the key to unlock the door and receive them. Do you plan to keep that key in your check book or investment account or will you trust God that if you give it to Him He will unlock that door of rewards and return blessings back to you so much that you will not be able to hold it all. There’s only one way to find out.

Here is my challenge to you. First make a commitment to start give the same amount to the church each week. Set it aside and come prepared each week to give it. If you miss a Sunday bring the previous week’s offering with you along with the current week’s offering when you come the next Sunday. Second, make a commitment that you will increase your regular giving by some amount – a dollar a week, five dollars, fifty dollars, I don’t care. As someone said, “Give until it starts feeling good!”

Just do something this morning. Make a commitment that you will do something more than you are right now. Then in six months, look at it again and take another step of faith to do more. Then again next year, take another step. Keep moving forward. Keep doing more and watch the financial rewards, the emotional rewards and the spiritual rewards start pouring in until you cannot hold them any longer.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER — E. G. “JAY” LINK

Jay Link, Director of Stewardship Planning at Taylor University, spent 35 years counseling Christian families to build customized Master Stewardship Plans. He is an author, a mentor to hundreds of financial advisors and attorneys, and started his career as a pastor. His passion is helping Christian families use all the Lord has entrusted to them for Kingdom-building purposes.