

Do-It-Yourself Bible Study October 2020

They'll know we are Christians by our

LOVE.

GIVING FROM THE

HEART!



"If you put these instructions before the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching that you have followed. Have nothing to do with profane myths and old wives' tales. Train yourself in godliness, for, while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and struggle, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all people, especially of those who believe.

These are the things you must insist on and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers."

1 Timothy 4:6-16

At Park Ridge Community Church, we are committed to learning and growing together. One of the ways we do this is through intentional study of the scriptures. Because 2020 is a bizarre year, we are trying to find ways to offer Bible Study that can meet a variety of schedules and needs. This DIY Bible Study will bring together some commentaries and perspectives to help facilitate your deeper reading of the scripture passages. Each week will have a correlating video, filmed by our Ministers, as well as discussion questions. People are encouraged to find a conversation partner or two - set up your own Bible Study group, talk about these questions in your Kindred Connection, use them for conversation with your spouse, or simply use them for your own devotional meditation. We hope and pray that this time of study will be helpful in the growth for our entire church!



You can find the Study Guide for each month at <https://www.parkridgecommunitychurch.org/diybiblestudy>

You can find the weekly Bible Study Videos at <https://www.youtube.com/c/ParkRidgeCommunityChurchPRCC/playlists> OR <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLAkijH5hvvqpb-mHPqPfp48hxQX5OL7HV>
Click DIY Bible Study and click the video for that particular week.

Please let us know if you are finding this method of study meaningful or if you are having trouble using these resources. We will continue to tailor these materials over the course of the year to the needs and responses of our congregation.

Thank you for your faithfulness! Praise God for all the ways God's Holy Spirit is beckoning to us through the scriptures!

Blessed to be on this journey with you!

Pastor Carol

Pastor Mollie

Lesson 1: Week of October 4

Giving From the Heart!

Introduction:

The theme of this year's annual financial program is *Extravagant Generosity: The Heart of Giving*, which is a recurring theme in the Bible. When we want to express our love and affection, we often think about how we can give something to the object of our affection. Sometimes that means a tangible gift. Sometimes it is giving of our best thought, our time, our energy, and ourselves. Our financial support of our church is a reflection of our love for God as well as an expression of our maturity as disciples and our real priorities in life. During this campaign, we will share a narrative budget that explains the categories of ministry funded through the church as well as stories about how those ministries are touching lives in our church and community. Today's lesson will show that this effort is much more than presenting what the church needs. The real motivation for generosity is not the need of the church but rather our need to give so that we can grow in our faith. Extravagant generosity does not come from affluence or even agreement; extravagant generosity is caught, a matter of the heart.

Biblical Background:

1 Chronicles 29:9. Then the people rejoiced because these had given willingly, for with single mind they had offered freely to the Lord; King David also rejoiced greatly.

Matthew 6:21. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

2 Corinthians 9:7. Everyone should give whatever they have decided in their heart. They shouldn't give with hesitation or because of pressure. God loves a cheerful giver.

In these three passages we find a recurring theme also found elsewhere in the Bible—giving is a heart decision. In 1 Chronicles, King David has challenged the assembled people of Israel to support the building of the temple. After establishing that they are following God's will and purpose, he shares his personal commitment and asks who will join him (vv. 1-5). The leaders step up and make their collective offerings in support of David's leadership (vv. 6-8). In verse 9, the rest of the people respond to the challenge and make a wholehearted gift to the house of the Lord.

Matthew 6:21 is part of the "Sermon on the Mount." Jesus is addressing the issue of putting God first and suggests that a part of putting God first has to do with where we put our treasure. In verse 21, Jesus makes the obvious observation that our heart is seldom far away from our treasure. He goes on to say that we cannot serve both God and money (v. 24). He concludes this thought in verse 33: "[seek] first and foremost God's kingdom and God's righteousness . . ."

In Paul's second letter to the church leaders in Corinth, he encourages them to fulfill a commitment they made to support the saints in Jerusalem with a special offering. When we join a church, we make a promise to support the church and its ministry. In speaking of the

collection for Jerusalem, Paul challenges the Corinthians to provide evidence, or proof, of their love through their generosity (8:24). In 9:7, he clearly distinguishes between the obligation to give and the heartfelt decision to give. We need to make a heart decision about our giving.

These three passages are representative of this recurring theme in both the Old and New Testaments—that our giving is a matter of the heart, a decision based on our commitment as disciples and one of the ways that God’s love grows within us as followers.

Application:

1. What I like most about money is _____. What I like least about money is _____.
2. God is helping me deal with my love of money by _____.
3. When do you first remember learning about giving?
4. Who first modeled generosity for you?
5. What is the most generous act of which you were the recipient? What was your reaction and why?
6. What motivates you to give?

Lesson 2: Week of October 11

Tithing Is a Commitment of the Heart

Introduction:

When a group of friends or family or co-workers want to pitch in to get a gift for someone for a birthday or anniversary, one of the major considerations is how much everyone needs to contribute. This is a common experience in our culture. When it comes to the same kind of conversation in our church relationship, we bring a variety of backgrounds and experiences with us that condition our response to expectations about giving. If we come from a more conservative religious background like Baptist or Pentecostal, we might be familiar with the expectation and understanding of tithing. If we come from a liturgical background, like Episcopal or Catholic, we might have less of an understanding of financial expectation. If we come from a non-religious background, an understanding of giving might come from our experience in the United Way where the concept of giving a “fair share” is encouraged. Whatever point of view we bring to the table, we need to be clear about the expectations of our church and the biblical call to give as we determine our individual responses.

Our church has determined that the biblical expectation for giving by a disciple is to tithe. The *tithe* has become synonymous with *giving*, but it means literally, one-tenth. Many questions arise when we talk about tithing: Is this biblical standard still relevant in our time? Should we calculate one tenth of gross or net income? Does all of our tithe go to the church, or can it include other charitable giving. While these are questions that merit some discussion, the sad reality is that research shows that most members give far less than one-tenth in all giving. We have lots of room to grow.

Biblical Background:

Malachi 3:8-11. Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, “How are we robbing you?” In your tithes and offerings! You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me—the whole nation of you! Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. I will rebuke the locust for you, so that it will not destroy the produce of your soil; and your vine in the field shall not be barren, says the Lord of hosts.

The first biblical reference to *tithing* is Genesis 14:20, when Abram willingly offered one tenth of all he had to Melchizedek for the glory of “God Most High.” But tithing is not unique to the Old Testament or to Mosaic Law. The giving of one tenth of first fruits as tribute has been a key principle in many cultures throughout history. Today, the tithe means giving one-tenth of income.

The Old Testament describes three kinds of tithes. In Levitical law (see Leviticus 27), an annual tithe supported the local priesthood. We might equate this with the support we provide our

pastor(s) through the church budget. A second annual tithe (see Deuteronomy 12, 14) was used to underwrite major festivals. We celebrate our faith in this way when we join in fellowship together through special concerts, worship times, teaching events, banquets, and suppers at which we give thanks to God for the joy of community. Every third year (see Deuteronomy 14:28-29) the tithe was freely offered to the priests, the poor, and the marginalized. Our church provides for missions, benevolences, and outreach through our budget and through special offerings.

The New Testament refers to or mentions *tithing* four times. Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42; 18:12; and Hebrews 7:4-9 all affirm tithing as an expectation in our communities of faith.

One of the primary teachings about tithing is the above passage in Malachi. It provides clear expectations about tithing: tithing is equal to ten percent; the “full tithe” is to be brought to the storehouse, the house of God; God will reward our obedience.

Application:

Here are some observations as we begin to apply this lesson to our lives. Tithing is neither the threshold for most giving, nor should it be the ceiling. Working toward the tithe, committing to the tithe, and giving beyond the tithe represent the journey of financial responsibility for disciples. Most people who give to the church give to other worthy causes as well.

Giving a tenth of annual income is not the maximum from which all giving should be determined. The question here is not what the minimum expectation is, but understanding the biblical expectation. The impoverished nation of Israel gave multiple yearly tithes.

In our time, discretionary income has exploded to historical levels. It is difficult to rationalize giving less than a full annual tithe to the church. The practical issue is how we express our real priorities. If we spend or commit through personal debt to our personal consumption, we start to think about giving from what is left over rather than the first fruits of our efforts. That leads to a theology of scarcity that impedes giving. While the church has often expressed its need for funding, the real motivation for giving in our belief system is our discipleship, our growth in faith.

We also need to deal with some attitudes and behaviors that are neither biblical nor helpful. First, when we designate our tithe for specific projects or ministries, we suggest a lack of trust in church leadership and in God to direct. Each year, our church nominates and elects a finance committee of lay leaders to provide oversight of our finances. In practical terms, utilities, insurance, and custodial service are rarely, if ever, the targets for designated giving. Second, people have been known to “withhold” the tithe because of a point of disagreement about something within the community of faith. There is no biblical basis for such withholding. Useful guidelines for resolving church conflict are available in Matthew 18.

1. Do you believe that tithing (giving 10% of income) is an appropriate giving goal for Christians?
2. If you tithe, what benefits have you experienced from tithing?

3. How is your life richer in the things that money cannot buy than it was a year ago?
4. What are one or two wide-reaching dreams that you can imagine coming true if people in your church worked together?
5. Why do you choose to be a part of your church?
6. How do you support and participate in the mission of your church?

Lesson 3: Week of October 18

Mission Flows from the Heart

Introduction:

Today, we will consider the question of what our church does beyond its own walls. Does our giving primarily support programs and ministries for ourselves? Many of our church members are richly blessed in many ways including material wealth. So what do we do for others? The Bible passages in today's lesson address how to consider the various dimensions of missions that we support with our generosity and our service.

Biblical Background:

Matthew 28:19-20. "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age."

Acts 1:8. "[Y]ou will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Matthew 25:35-36 "I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothes to wear. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me."

The passage from Matthew 28 is called "The Great Commission." Jesus clearly says that our primary mission is to make disciples.

As Christians, we receive the Holy Spirit when we accept God's Extravagant Generosity, at our conversion. In Acts 1:8, Jesus tells the disciples that when they receive the Holy Spirit, they will be empowered to witness to Christ "in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." As disciples of Jesus, we are called to witness in our neighborhoods and communities, our state and the rest of the country in which we live, and to the end of the earth—our worldwide mission efforts.

The Matthew 25 passage again gives us the word of Jesus identifying a broad range of ways to live in ministry and witness to the spiritual concerns of the Great Commission and also to the physical and social concerns of hunger, poverty, health care, and social justice. This interpretation is a strong part of our Christian heritage.

We are engaged in this mission work when we support local social service agencies, build homes, lead vacation Bible schools in our own or other communities, create a response of care for those affected by natural disasters, or commission workers to go on mission trips. Financial

support of our church financially enables the framework necessary to respond to mission opportunities as they arise.

Application:

1. What has been the greatest benefit of your giving?
2. How does your giving shape your relationship with God?
3. Are you willing to make changes in the way you relate to money as you listen to God's voice in your life?
4. Have you experienced a time when you felt led by God to increase your level of giving?
5. Think about the largest gift you have ever made. What motivated you to make the gift? What resulted from the gift? How did making the gift affect you?
6. If you received \$10,000 tomorrow, what would determine the way you use the money?

Lesson 4: Week of October 25

Practicing Extravagant Generosity

Introduction:

In his book, *Five Practices of Fruitful Living*, Bishop Robert Schnase introduces the subject of practicing Extravagant Generosity this way:

The practice of Extravagant Generosity stretches us to offer our utmost and highest to God rather than to give in a manner that is haphazard, unplanned, reactive, minimalist, mediocre, or mechanical. People who practice Extravagant Generosity give with unexpected liberality; they make giving a first priority; and they plan their giving with great energy and passion. They go the second mile. They do not give from a “what remains” mentality, but from a “what comes first” priority. Giving seriously becomes a personal spiritual discipline, a way of serving God, and a means of helping the church fulfill its God-appointed mission. Focused conviction and intention causes them to give in a more pronounced way, without fear and with greater trust. Giving changes their lives.

Extravagant does not correspond with giving that is merely dutiful, required, burdensome, mandated, or simply doing one’s part. Extravagant denotes a style and attitude of giving that is unexpectedly joyous, without predetermined limits, from the heart, extraordinary, over-the-top, and propelled by great passion. Extravagant is the generosity we see in those who appreciate the beauty of giving, the awe and joy of making a difference for the purposes of Christ. Extravagant Generosity is giving to God as God has given to us. (p. 133)

Biblical Background:

2 Corinthians 8:1-5, 7, 12. Brothers and sisters, we want to let you know about the grace of God that was given to the churches of Macedonia. While they were being tested by many problems, their extra amount of happiness and their extreme poverty resulted in a surplus of rich generosity. I assure you that they gave what they could afford and even more than they could afford, and they did it voluntarily. They urgently begged us for the privilege of sharing in this service for the saints. They even exceeded our expectations, because they gave themselves to the Lord first and to us, consistent with God’s will. . . .

. . . Be the best in this work of grace in the same way that you are the best in everything, such as faith, speech, knowledge, total commitment, and the love we inspired in you. . . .

. . . A gift is appreciated because of what a person can afford, not because of what that person can’t afford, if it’s apparent that it’s done willingly.

2 Corinthians 9:6-11. [T]he one who sows a small number of seeds will also reap a small crop, and the one who sows a generous amount of seeds will also reap a generous crop.

Everyone should give whatever they have decided in their heart. They shouldn't give with hesitation or because of pressure. God loves a cheerful giver. God has the power to provide you with more than enough of every kind of grace. That way, you will have everything you need always and in everything to provide more than enough for every kind of good work. As it is written, He scattered everywhere; he gave to the needy; his righteousness remains forever.

The one who supplies seed for planting and bread for eating will supply and multiply your seed and will increase your crop, which is righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous in every way. Such generosity produces thanksgiving to God through us.

In the first passage, Paul encourages the leaders in Corinth to fulfill a promise they made to support the saints in Jerusalem. He places this discussion in a context of considering the grace of God evidenced by the church in Macedonia. They express both joy and generosity despite hard times and limited resources. Paul says that their response is possible because they first gave themselves to God. Their generosity is a spiritual matter. Then Paul suggests that giving should be included among the good habits of discipleship. He explains that generosity is not a matter of affluence or giving from what you do not have; we give from what we have in a willing, response to God's extravagant generosity to us.

The passage from 2 Corinthians 9 lifts up the common sense law of the harvest: sow generously and you will reap generously. Giving from the heart, not from obligation (that is, Extravagant Generosity), has both material and spiritual benefits.

Application:

1. Do you believe that "all things belong to God"?
2. Why do you think Jesus spoke so often about our relationship with money and possessions?
3. How does your personal devotional life relate to your budgeting habits?
4. What is the greatest obstacle to your generosity?
5. How have you taught your children about giving?
6. What is the best, most joyful experience you have had in giving?

7. How has giving changed you?
8. Based on your experience, list three or four things that you know are important in generosity.
9. What major purchase have you decided to do without for the sake of extravagant generosity?
10. How would you define *greed*?
11. How does your church show generosity in the community?
12. How can you demonstrate generosity outside the church walls?