

The ABCs of Stewardship

Blessings: The Resources of a Successful Steward

1 Chronicles 29:10-16

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Scripture

Let me tell you a story that will put today's message into a picture to which you can relate.

Many years ago when my son Jon was very young, I took him to McDonald's and bought him some French fries. While sitting together enjoying each other's company, I idly reached over to take some of Jon's French fries. Much to my surprise, Jon pulled the fries back and said, "No! These are mine!"

I was startled! And then I began to reflect on what just took place. I thought three things, which I want to share with you.

"First," I thought, "Jon doesn't have any idea that I am the source for those French fries. I went up to the counter, I pulled out the money, and I paid for the fries. The reason he has those fries is because of me!"

"Second, not only am I the source, but Jon doesn't realize that I have the power—being his Dad—that if I want to, I can reach over and take those fries from him. Or, I could go to the counter and buy \$50.00 worth of French fries and tell them to bury Jon in French fries! Jon doesn't realize that I can either take away what he has or I can bury him under a mountain of fries.

"And third, Jon doesn't understand that I really don't need his French fries. If I want to, I can buy some fries for myself."

As I reflected on that little incident with Jon, I realized that I really didn't want Jon's French fries as much as I wanted Jon's *willingness* to share them with me.

Now don't you relate to that story? God takes us to McDonald's, as it were. He's blessed us. He's given us "French fries." They come in different forms, and some have more than others, but he's given all of us "French fries." And God sits down, as it were, to fellowship with us, and as he reaches over for some "French fries," we pull back and say, "No! These are mine!"

And God says to himself, “Don’t they understand that I’m the source of everything they’ve got? Don’t they understand that I have the power to take away what they have—or give them more? Don’t they understand that I really don’t need what they have?”

You see, God wants you to give and to share, not because he is hurting and needy, but because he has modeled giving in himself and he wants it passed on by his children.

The first verse you most likely ever memorized is John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he *gave*. . . .” He gave! Throughout the Bible we find that God is always giving.

God is very interested in your response today. God wants to see how you respond when he reaches over for some fries, or tells you to pass some over to your neighbor.

I am in the middle of a series of messages on Stewardship, which I am calling *The ABCs of Stewardship*. The material for this series of sermons comes from Dr. John Maxwell. Here are the four messages in *The ABCs of Stewardship*:

1. Attitude: The Response of a Successful Steward
2. Blessings: The Resources of a Successful Steward
3. Consecration: The Requirement of a Successful Steward
4. Donation: The Reward of a Successful Steward

Last week we looked at the first message on “Attitude: The Response of a Successful Steward.” Today I want to talk about “Blessings: The Resources of a Successful Steward.”

1 Chronicles 29:10-16 is a tremendous passage of Scripture that I want us to study today. The first 9 verses of chapter 29 describe an incredible offering taken for the building of the Temple. It is to be built under the leadership of Solomon. Verses 10-16 are perhaps the most powerful verses in all Scripture teaching us that God is the source of everything that we have. King David offers up a wonderful prayer of praise to God in thanks for the offering.

Please pay attention as I read 1 Chronicles 29:10-16:

¹⁰ David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying,

“Praise be to you, O LORD,
God of our father Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.

¹¹ Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power
and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,
for everything in heaven and earth is yours.

Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom;
you are exalted as head over all.

¹² Wealth and honor come from you;
you are the ruler of all things.
In your hands are strength and power
to exalt and give strength to all.

¹³ Now, our God, we give you thanks,
and praise your glorious name.

¹⁴ “But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

¹⁵ We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. ¹⁶ O LORD our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you.” (1 Chronicles 29:10-16)

Introduction

If you mark your Bible, I want you to circle in verse 11 the word **“everything.”** Also mark in verse 14 the phrase, **“Everything comes from you.”** And in verse 16 mark, **“and all of it belongs to you.”**

King David understood that **everything comes from God.** Everything.

In the last phrase of verse 12 he said, **“In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.”** David had a clear understanding that God is in sovereign control of all things.

And basically, because God is sovereign, he can give us “French fries” or take them away from us.

Note the phrase in verse 14, **“Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.”** Isn’t that an interesting phrase?

Now look at verse 16, **“O LORD our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you.”** Do you know what David is saying? David is saying that God is the source of all that they have. David is saying that all the gold and silver is from the hand of God, and they have given it back to God. They have received gold and silver from God’s hand into their hands, and then returned it back into God’s hand.

Let’s stop for a moment. A few years ago I took Lauren and Jon Christmas shopping for Eileen. I gave them each some money to buy Eileen a gift. You should have seen the gifts they bought! Now when we walked in to the store they had no money. When we came out of the store they had no money but they had bought their mother a gift. Where did the money come from? It came from me. *I* was the source of their gift to their mother. On Christmas morning they gave their gifts to Eileen and told her how they had bought the gifts. It sounded as if they were the source but, in reality, I was the source of those gifts to Eileen. Do you understand?

Everything we have in life is from God. He is the source of all things. You say, “I have a house, a car, clothes, furniture, or whatever. I have worked pretty hard to get what I have. Are you telling me that God is the source of all that?”

That’s *exactly* what I am saying! Who gave you the energy and the ability and the job but God? *Everything* you have is a gift from God. He is the source of all things.

When we understand that God is the source of everything we have, and that God gives to us and then delights when we give back to him and to others, doesn’t it amaze you that we act like little boys at McDonald’s with French fries? God has given us so much and when he wants something, we say, “No! These are

mine!” We have such an immature understanding that everything we have comes from God, don’t we?

Conversely, is there any greater delight for a parent when their children are filled with gratitude for the things they have? And when they are joyfully willing to share what they have?

Lesson

As we turn to our lesson today, there are three truths that we need to know about our giving God.

I. God’s Power: His Ability to Give (29:12)

The first truth that we need to know about our giving God has to do with his power: He has the ability to give.

The first thing we have to ask ourselves is this: “Does God have the power to give to us what we need?” The answer throughout the Scriptures is a resounding “YES!”

In verse 12, David said: **“Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.”** God has the power, the ability to give to you and to me.

You know, our hymns so often talk about God’s power. Listen to some of the following lines:

- O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home.
- O worship the king, all glorious above, and gratefully sing his power and his love.
- A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing; our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.

Read the words of the hymns. God is an all-powerful, all-sufficient God. Listen, God has the power to give to you today everything you need for today!

John Huffman in his book, *Who's In Charge Here?*, tells a story about the elderly Dr. Robert Dick Wilson, a great professor at Princeton Theological Seminary when it was in its glory days.

One of Dr. Wilson's students had been invited back to preach in Miller Chapel twelve years after his graduation.

Dr. Wilson came in and sat down near the front. At the close of the service the professor came up to his former student, cocked his head to one side in his characteristic way, extended his hand, and said, "If you come back again, I will not come to hear you preach. I only come once. I am glad that you are a big-godder. When my boys come back, I come to see if they are big-godders or little-godders, and then I know what their ministry will be like."

His former student asked him to explain, and Dr. Wilson replied: "Well, some men have a little god, and they are always in trouble with him. He can't do any miracles. He can't take care of the inspiration and transmission of the Scripture to us. He doesn't intervene on behalf of his people. They have a little god and I call them little-godders. Then there are those who have a great God. He speaks and it is done. He commands and it stands fast. He knows how to show himself strong on behalf of them that fear him. You have a great God; and he will bless your ministry."

He paused a moment, smiled, and said, "God bless you!" Then he turned and walked out.

Let me ask you: Are you a big-godder or a little-godder?

God is sovereign. He is supreme. He is all-powerful. He is all-sufficient. He is able to give. You have a big God! I have a big God. The Apostle Paul wrote to the people of God in Philippi: "And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Believe that, will you?

II. God's Provision: His Willingness to Give (29:14)

The second truth that we need to know about our giving God has to do with his provision: He has a willingness to give.

David said in verse 14, **“Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.”**

God is willing to give to you today what you need. You say, “Freddy, what does that mean?” That means that God has already given you the resources for anything he asks of you right now.

Would you ask your child to go in to the grocery store to buy a loaf of bread without giving her the money to buy the bread? Of course not!

Would God ask you to go through a trial or difficulty or dark period in your life without giving you the resources to go through it? Of course not!

Listen! Today, I am going to tell you something that will change your life! Do you want to know what our problem is in this area? *We want resources that we don't need.* You see, God gives us today what we need for today.

Somebody says, “Freddy, do you have the grace to die a martyr's death for Jesus right now?” And quite honestly I would have to say, “No, I don't.” But the good news is that I don't need it right now! You see, that grace will be supplied to me at that time when I need it, if I need it. God only gives me what I need for today. He will not give me today what I don't need until tomorrow.

It really boils down to *trusting God*. It's really a matter of trusting him to supply you all that you need for this hour.

We're so much like the Israelites in the wilderness. Do you remember what they did? When God gave them manna they weren't satisfied just to take enough for one day. No. They collected as much as they could for more than one day. But they blatantly ignored God's command to take only enough for one day. Then they discovered the next morning that the manna was bad to eat. On Fridays God commanded that they collect enough manna for two days because he did not want them working on Saturday, the Sabbath. And that manna did stay fresh for two days. But, when the people disobeyed God, and collected more than he commanded because they did not trust him to provide, he let the extra manna go bad overnight.

The lesson is this: God gives willingly, but he gives you only what you need for today. He doesn't give you tomorrow's grace today.

III. God's Partnership: His Reason to Give (29:14, 16)

The third truth that we need to know about our giving God has to do with his partnership: He has a reason to give.

Why does God give to us? If I was God, and I had all resources at my disposal, I am not sure that I would be very generous. But why does God give?

David understood why. He said in verse 14: **“Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.”** And in verse 16 he said, **“O LORD our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you.”**

God gives to us so that we can give back to him and to others because in our partnership with him God wants us to be like him. And he is a giving God.

Think of it this way. God gives things to others that he doesn't give to me. Your journey is different than mine, and so God gives you things that you need and that I do not need. But *God gives also to me*. He gives me things that you don't have in your life. That is why the Body of Christ is needed. I have things to share with you that you need, and you have things to share with me that I need. We really do need each other.

But we need to remember that God is the initial giver. He models it for us, but then he expects us to do something with it. He gives me things so that I can give them back to him. It is the same for others. God gives you and others things that he expects you to give back to him.

But the partnership is not complete. Because in giving to God we sometimes give to him directly and sometimes indirectly. We give to God indirectly by giving to others. And so sometimes I

demonstrate my giving to God by giving to others. And they sometimes give to me. This is the kind of partnership—or stewardship—that God calls us to. It is like a complete cycle.

Now turn in your Bible to Matthew 25:31-46. Our Lord Jesus, in this discourse, pictures for us this partnership that I have tried to illustrate. Here is what Jesus said in Matthew 25:31-46:

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

⁴⁰ “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

⁴⁴ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

⁴⁵ “He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

⁴⁶ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Let me make four observations:

First, we are accountable to God for what we do with his blessings. You and I are accountable to God for what we have and do. When he gives us “French fries,” we are going to be accountable to him for those things he has given to us. As Jesus illustrated in the parable, every single one of us will one day stand before God and give an account of our lives to him.

Second, giving to others is giving to God. When you and I see another person who is needy and hurting and we give to help that person, we are giving to God. That’s how this partnership works. God gives to us, and he gives to us so that we can give to others. And that is beautifully illustrated by Jesus in this parable.

Third, not giving to others who are needy is not giving to God. Jesus said that when you withhold from others, you are in fact withholding from him.

And finally, we are incomplete without each other. I am amazed that God has given me certain gifts that he has not given to others and that they are incomplete until I give to them. And similarly God gives other people gifts that I don’t have so that they can minister to me. You see, God has created us to be givers in life.

Conclusion

Now, how do you apply what I have said today in a practical way? First, ask yourself, “What has God given to me?” God has given you spiritual gifts, abilities, talents, skills, and financial resources. Identify the gifts that God has given to you.

Second, ask yourself, “How can I use the gifts God has given to me?” You can serve in a ministry in the church, sing in the choir, greet visitors, teach children, or give extra money. There are lots and lots of things you can do to minister and serve others.

And finally, go out today and just do it! And may God bless you as you do so. Amen.

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