



Build One Another Up

*“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”
-1 Thessalonians 5:11*

Class II: BUILD a Life of Biblical Stewardship

1. The Tension of Biblical Stewardship: *I want to be a good steward, but I have needs and desires that must first be met before I will give generously.*

- My Doubts: Can God really provide if I give sacrificially?
- My Desires: Can I really be fulfilled if I give up the things I love in the world in order to sacrificially give to God?

2. The First Stewards and the First Tension

- Genesis 1:26-28: The First Stewards
- Genesis 3: The First Tension

3. How the Gospel Answers the Tension:

A. In the Gospel, we become convinced that God can provide for our every need. If He would answer our need of salvation, can't we be convinced that He will meet our daily needs as well?

- a. Romans 8:32, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”
- b. 2 Corinthians 8:15, As it is written, “Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.”

B. In the Gospel, we learn that nothing in this world can truly fulfill our deepest and greatest desires, so we must look to something beyond this world:

- a. Jeremiah 2:13, “for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”
- b. Blaise Pascal: "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ."
- c. Lewis: “If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world.”

C. In the Gospel, we are called to follow the One who is the perfect example of generosity.

- a. What is grace but overwhelming, infinite generosity? Our God is immensely generous, and our salvation is the evidence.
 - i. Ephesians 2:8-9, For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
- b. Wrong verse on your handout:
 - i. Should be 2 Corinthians 8:8-9, “I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”

D. In the Gospel, we find that giving is counterintuitive: it gives greater joy to the giver than to the receiver.

- a. Acts 20:35, “It is more blessed to give than receive.”

E. In the Gospel, we taste and see how good the Lord is. Then we want to share it with others.

- a. Romans 1:14–15, “I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.”

F. In the Gospel, we find that we are going to live forever, so we ought to invest in forever.

- a. Matthew 6:19-20, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Questions for Reflection: please use the following question together with your family to consider your own heart’s position on stewardship:

1. What does your own stewardship indicate about your trust in God’s provision? Does fear prevent you from being a good steward of what God has entrusted to you?

2. Have you experienced the kind of joy that the Gospel provides in which “the things of earth will grow strangely dim” or does your joy come from gaining more of this world’s trinkets?
3. If you have experienced true Gospel joy, how are you actively seeking for others to be able to “taste and see that the Lord is good”?

10 REASONS WHY IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE

DAVID MURRAY

The most unbelievably beatitude in the Bible is: “It is more blessed to give than receive” (Acts 20:35). The giver happier than the getter? Surely some mistake? That goes against all our intuitions and instincts. So let me help you to believe it and act upon it by giving you ten reasons why it is more blessed to give than to receive.

1. Giving obeys God’s command

The Old Testament has way more commands about financial giving – who, when, and how much – than the New Testament. Maybe the New Testament writers just assumed that as God had given far more to us in the New Testament – giving Himself to death – that our giving should follow fairly logically and easily. But, just in case we might miss the link, there are clear New Testament commands also (e.g. 1 Corinthians 1:2). As all of God’s commands are given to enhance our lives, obeying this command will increase our happiness.

2. Giving submits to God’s Lordship

Every act of obedience recognizes that there is a higher authority in our lives, that there is a Lord over us who is entitled to honor and respect. Due to our temperament, personality, or circumstances, we may find some commands relatively easy to obey. Our submission is really tested in the areas where our own nature and situation make obedience more difficult. For most of us, money is one of those areas. Our wallet is often the last citadel to fall to God’s rule, and even when it does fall, it gets rebuilt and re-secured again all too quickly. If only we could remember that Divine Lordship is not a threat; rather it’s the place of greatest safety.

3. Giving exhibits God’s heart

God is THE giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). As His image-bearers we are called to copy His giving, to be mini-pictures of His infinitely large heart. The larger our hearts (and the wider our hands), the larger the picture we paint of God’s character. What do people think of God when they think of the way you use your money?

4. Giving illustrates God’s salvation

At the heart of the Gospel is sacrificial self-giving (John 3:16). That’s why when the Apostle Paul wanted to encourage the Corinthians to give more, he pointed them to the person and work of Christ. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 2:9). Yes, you abound in faith, love, etc., but “see that you abound in this grace also.” When we give sacrificially, painfully, for the benefit of others, we are faintly and on a small-scale preaching the Gospel message.

5. Giving trusts God’s provision

The biggest deterrent to giving is fear, the fear that if I give away too much I won't have enough for this or that. When we give sacrificially, above and beyond what is comfortable and easy, we are expressing our faith and trust in God to provide for us and our family. This is not an argument for folly, but for faith. Many Christians have discovered the joy of casting their crumbs of bread upon the waters and multiple loaves returning after many days (Ecclesiastes 11:1). It's such a joy to see God fulfill His promise of provision when we obey Him.

6. Giving widens God's smile

The Lord loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 2:7). It delights Him to see His people gladly opening their hearts and hands to provide for the needs of His Church and indeed of all His creatures. Through Paul, God repeatedly commends and praises those who gave of their funds and of themselves to Gospel work (2 Corinthians 8:1). There's nothing that makes a Christian happier than knowing that she's made God happy, and happy giving means a happy God.

7. Giving advances God's kingdom

Many of us have contributed to Apple in one way or another. We have helped to grow the company from a garage operation to the worldwide empire it is today. And I'm happy about that, as it's a company that has brought many blessings to the world. But think of what blessing results when we fund the mission of Christ's church. We are paying salaries of ministers and missionaries. We are funding resources for outreach, evangelism, and discipleship. But above all we are investing in the spiritual and eternal welfare of people from every nation, tribe, kindred and tongue. Our dollars are changing homes, relationships, countries, and even the eternal destiny of many souls.

8. Giving promotes God's sanctification

Giving not only promotes God's work through us, but also God's work in us, our sanctification. Giving money, especially when it pains us, requires much self-denial and self-crucifixion. However, as every act of giving weakens and even breaks our sinful and selfish nature, the more God's grace spreads in our hearts. Yes, money leaves our pockets, but sin also leaves our heart. And that's a great deal. Priceless actually.

9. Giving testifies to God's power

Although we are not to let our left hand know what our right hand does, it's pretty obvious that Christians give a lot to their churches and Christian charities. Even secular observers have noticed with amazement how generous Christians often are with their money. They may not say it but they surely must think it: "This must be the real deal for people to give away so much of their own money. They must really believe this stuff. The God they worship and serve must be incredibly powerful to make people so generous."

10. Giving praises God's character

Giving in a right spirit is an act of worship. It is rendering Him a tribute of praise. It is saying. "You gave me everything and here is a small expression of my gratitude and praise for all your good gifts. It's only a token, a sample of what I really feel, but you know the heart that lies behind it. As David sang: "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" (Psalms 116:12).

Giving better than getting?

Do you now see how giving makes us more blessed than getting? We can get so much happiness when we see how God is glorified in our giving and when we see Him bless others through our giving.

David Murray is Professor of Old Testament and Practical Theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. He blogs at headhearhand.com and you can follow him on Twitter @davidpmurray. The above is an excerpt from his book *The Happy Christian*.