

**Connection with Unit Theme:** To complement the small group study of *Thrive: Living in Real Joy*, these sermon outlines will use the same Scripture passages as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

**The Point:** Join God in His work of giving by the benefit of others.

**Introduction:** When a preacher addresses the subject of money, he is inevitably treading on dangerous ground. Many people will misunderstand and even attack our motives for daring to bring up the subject. It's true that money isn't everything, and we can't take any of it to heaven with us. On the other hand, money is a necessity for living in this world. Churches need money to operate, and missionaries need money to do their work. Moreover, the Bible says a great deal about money, and we wouldn't be true to God's Word if we ignored it.

The Bible also has much to say about giving. Why is it important for us to give to God's work? It's not because God needs the money; He already owns it all. The truth is, we need to give. Giving not only helps the people that receive the money, but it also blesses the one who gives. In fact, I would go so far to say that your Christian growth will be greatly stunted until you learn the joy of giving.

## I. The reasons for giving.

- A. Paul rejoiced over the Philippians' generosity.
  - 1. They had wanted to send him financial support earlier, but had been unable to do so.
    - a. The reason they were unable to give is not stated. Travel issues may have been a factor.
    - b. Epaphroditus, who had delivered the gift to Paul, had fallen seriously ill during his stay in Rome (Phil. 2:25-30).
  - 2. The church had been very generous to Paul in the past.
    - a. Lydia lived there, and had helped out Paul and Silas on their first visit to the city (Acts 16:14-15).
    - b. The Philippian jailer had fed Paul and Silas after they led him to faith in Christ (Acts 16:33-34).
    - c. Paul had bragged on the Macedonian churches (which included Philippi) to the church at Corinth (2 Cor. 8:1-5).
- B. Though Paul was thankful for their gift, he was not in need.
  - 1. He had learned to be content in all circumstances.
    - a. He could get by whether he was rich or poor.
    - b. He had supported himself as a tentmaker (Acts 18:1-3).

- c. Contentment does not come naturally. We learn contentment from our various circumstances.
- d. His contentment was in Christ, not in his personal finances.
- 2. Though he ultimately depended on Christ to take care of him, he was still grateful for the Philippians' gift.

## II. The results of giving.

- A. It blesses the recipient.
  - 1. Paul was pleased that they had remembered him.
    - a. When Paul had first left Macedonia, the Philippian church was the only one that kept in touch with him.
    - b. This was not the first time they had helped him.
  - 2. Even though he was not in deep need at the time, he would put their money to good use in spreading the gospel.
- B. It blesses the giver.
  - 1. Those who give have an investment in God's work.
    - a. You invest in your pastor and church staff.
    - b. You invest in your church's various ministries.
    - c. You invest in missionaries that your church supports (if you are a Southern Baptist, that includes the Cooperative Program).
  - 2. God makes up the gift to you, and then some (Luke 6:38).
    - a. "According to His riches in glory" – That is, God blesses giving in accordance with His glory and purposes.
    - b. It's a trite statement, but true nonetheless: you can't out-give God!
- C. It brings glory to God.
  - 1. "A sweet smell" – This was a figure of speech used many times in the Old Testament, and it meant that a sacrifice was pleasing to God.
  - 2. The more we give to God's work, the more He is glorified.

**Conclusion:** Years ago I saw a "Peanuts" cartoon where Charlie Brown and Linus were talking. Linus said when he grew up, he wanted to be a great philanthropist. Charlie Brown said, "You have to have a lot of money to be a great philanthropist." Linus paused, and then he said, "I want to be a great philanthropist with somebody else's money." As I write these words, our country is in the midst of an election. Candidates at all levels of government are promising to help people in various ways. Many of them talk about helping the poor and needy. Frankly, I'm not impressed by that kind of generosity, and I doubt God is impressed, either. Anyone can be generous when they're spending someone else's money!

How are you using your money for the glory of God? Remember, no matter how much money you make in this life, you can't take any of it to heaven with you. If I understand the New Testament correctly, we will give account to God for how we've used our earthly riches (Matt. 25:14-30). Are you making investments that will matter in eternity? (Matt. 6:19-21).

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