

## Entrusted 2: The Lord's Steward – Motivated by Grace

Proverbs 3:9-10; 22:8; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Philippians 4:13-19

**MPS** Grace motivates Christians to live faithful as stewards so that the discipline of giving produces greater grace for stronger faith in life.

**OBJ** Every person can know their giving is motivated by grace with it is characterized by nine qualities.

**INTRO** What motivates you to give? Statistics reveal that there are many commonalities across generations in why they give, including need, vision and purpose, and to make an impact. **What would you say if I told you the New Testament teaches that there is only one motivation for giving?** I will tell you this today.

Today's message will be a bit different in format because while still drawing from an expository base, I want to use a systematic treatment of our subject to cover the whole counsel of God's Word. I begin with a general teaching from Jesus.

*"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup>but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* **Matthew 6:19-21**

Jesus states that your life follows your treasure because your heart is steered by that which is its highest glory and value. This doesn't mean that your life is better when there is more. Very often, the opposite of that is the case. Rather, whatever consumes your treasure is what consumes your heart. Therefore, Jesus instructs Christians to lay up treasure in heaven. **How does one do this?** Christians lay up treasure in heaven by honoring the Lord through faithful stewardship on earth.

**ILLUS** Some argue, "I don't need to give my money to God to control my heart. I can keep my heart wanting God without giving my money to Him." The fact is, we can't keep our heart from wanting a fat, juicy hamburger with sloppy fries, or from daydreaming about the value menu at Taco Bell.

Knowing that your treasure directs your heart, then it is important for us to ask, "**what motivates your heart to give?**" Many people think to themselves, "When I make more I will begin to give." But statistically this is not true. Of Christian families making less than \$20k/year, 8% of them gave at least 10% in tithing. For families making a minimum of \$75k or more, the figure drops to just 1%. Statistics show that the more money a person makes, the less likely they are to tithe.

Another statistic I heard earlier this year put things into perspective on this issue. Starbucks customers are more committed to Starbucks than the average church-attender. The average Starbucks customer spends over \$2,800 a year on drinks. In 2017, the average church attender gave \$650 annually. Today it is less than \$200 a year.<sup>1</sup> Would you believe me if I told you that, as of 2017, 37% of people who attend church every week and identify as Evangelical don't give any money to their church.<sup>2</sup> When it comes to stewardship in the church, statistics are not our friend, but they do reveal a sobering reality. Our stewardship reveals that the greatest reason Christians and churches are in such hard times is because so little of our hearts are consumed with Jesus Christ. **Christians give to God as a response of faith to His love with the treasure of our life, just as serving is responding with our talents and abilities, and sabbath with the time of our life.**

**TRANS** Today I want to attempt to address these questions in our time together. **What does the Bible teach, and how should Christians think about and practice giving?**

*Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.* **Proverbs 3.9-10**

The Bible commands Christ-followers to give not just as a 'law of tithe', but to honor God with your wealth. So, however we give it must honor God for it to be Biblical. **Giving a Christian's most practical way of honoring God with that which is most hallowed in our world.**

<sup>1</sup> Statistic taken from Building God's Way seminar, May 2023.

<sup>2</sup> All giving statistics were taken from Healthresearchfunding.org Stats (2017) unless otherwise noted.



Grace motivates Christians to live faithful as stewards  
so that the discipline of giving produces greater grace for stronger faith in life.

What does it look like for a Christian to draw from God's grace as our motivation for giving? Four passages shape the New Testament teaching on giving; 1 Corinthians 9:1-23; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Philippians 4:15-17. When a Christian draws from grace as their motivation for giving, the discipline of giving produces an increasing experience of God's grace in life.

OBJ Scripture identifies nine qualities that characterize one's giving as motivated by grace.

1. Giving that is motivated by grace is **Systematic**

*"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum..." 1 Cor 16:2a-b*

Giving should be done on a regular basis; weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, etc. This first principle of grace-based giving also aligns with the Biblical principle of 'first fruits'. What we give to God is not simply a portion of what we have, but the first and best. What and How we give to God must represent His worth to our life and His priority in our life.

2. Giving that is motivated by grace is **proportional**.

*"...in keeping with his income" 1 Cor 16:2b*

*"they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability" 2 Cor 8:3*

*"the gift is acceptable according to what one has" 2 Cor 8:12*

The Bible teaches that what we give should be in proportion to how God has prospered you. God does not expect you to give in accordance to anyone else's income or treasure. Giving to God as an act of worship represents the treasure God has given to you.

**A steward recognizes that all we have belongs to God.** The Bible establishes that there is a portion of what we have that is distinctively set apart as God's. This is called the tithe. Tithe means "tenth" and is the first portion that represents the whole. God ordains this first portion as distinctively His to represent that we are His, that all we have is from Him, and that all He provides is sufficient for all my needs. The Christian's stewardship is a testimony to the goodness of God's provision. When we are unfaithful in our stewardship, we testify that God is unfaithful in His provision and protection, His joy and pleasure, and any other way we use money to try and make up for how God has let us down. Tithe doesn't accomplish or fulfill anything but reveals and expresses the state of the heart with God.

ILLUS Tithe Statistics

- 2.5% of Christians tithe, down from 3-5% in 2017.
- 77% of those who tithe give 11%-20% or more of their income, far more than the baseline 10%.
- 97% of Christians who tithe make it a top financial priority to give to their local church.
- 70% who tithe base it on on their gross income and not their net income.
- People are more likely to practice tithing when they begin the practice in their teens or early twenties.
- People who tithe regularly typically have less debt than other demographics: 80% have zero credit card debt & 28% are completely debt free, including no mortgage.

Statistics reveal that tithing not only honors God, but it works practically to establish a stronger financial portfolio.

3. Giving that is motivated by grace is **sacrificial generosity**.

*"Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity...they gave...even beyond their ability." 2 Cor 8:2-3*

*"I have received the gifts you sent...They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God." Phil 4:17-18*

Faith empowers Christians to give not only what they can afford to give, but beyond that, what we believe God would have us to give, trusting him for our provision by our giving. God leads us to give beyond our means because it puts us in a place of full dependency upon Him. When we give only out of management, we remove our need for God, and try to honor God without faith. When we practice sacrificial generosity we say to God, "not my will, but thy will be done in my life, in this way, in this area, in this sacrifice."



#### 4. Giving that is motivated by grace is **intentional**.

*“they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in the service to the saints.” 2 Cor 8:2-3*  
*“for even when I was in Thessalonica you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.” Phil 4:17-18*

Faithfulness in stewardship never happens by accident. Faithful stewardship is a regular practice of counting the cost of following Jesus to say “no” to the world so we can say “yes” to Him in ever-increasing and ever-deepening ways and means. Christians don’t wait to be moved by a need or stirred by strong emotion. [Christians are intentional to honor Jesus in our giving because He intentionally came to give Himself for us.](#)

#### 5. Giving that is motivated by grace is **purposed by love, equality and blessing**.

*“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” 2 Cor 8:8-9*

*“Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality.” 2 Cor 8:13*  
*“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.” 2 Cor 9:6, 10-11*

**WHY is always the greatest factor in determining to give.** When you consider “why” you give, it should always return you NOT to yourself, but first to God and then to others, some of which you don’t even yet know. Stewards recognize that God blesses us to be a blessing to others. When we show love practically through giving, we demonstrate God’s love and blessing upon our life. [Stewards honor God when we give to demonstrate love and equality toward others to be a blessing.](#)

#### 6. Giving that is motivated by grace is **cheerful**.

*“Each man should give...not reluctantly...God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Cor 9:7*  
*“God loves (blesses) a cheerful & generous man.” Prov 22:9*

Cheerfulness will likely not be the first result of giving, but it will become the most rewarding. **ILLUS** My first couple of months at college I stopped giving to the church, even though I still went. But I noticed church and God started to become less important to me. After a couple of months, I was conflicted by a decision. I began to question why God didn’t just take care of it for me. Then, Holy Spirit’s conviction led me to realize God had become less important to me, primarily in my lack of giving. That week I started tithing again. As a college student, the church didn’t recognize any difference, but my life did. Investing where you get to experience the powerful work of God brings a joy that is unmatched. Not every gift will begin from cheer, but every gift multiplies the glorious joy of heaven within. [When our giving brings genuine joy from God, we can be assured that our treasure is submitted to the Lordship of Jesus.](#)

#### 7. Giving that is motivated by grace is **voluntarily**.

*“Each man should give what he has decided in his own heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion,” 2 Cor 9:7*

When people argue that the Bible does not command giving “as a law”, they are both correct and missing the whole point. IF an expression of love simply fulfills an obligation, then there can be nothing received from that gift because it is not an expression of love. But when we give voluntarily, we receive the full blessing as the giver. [God works in us to lead us to give voluntarily so He can bless us more.](#)

This verse doesn’t provide an excuse to give whatever you want, but a principle teaching how to give by grace. Too many Christians take no time with their ‘hearts full of Christ’ to decide what to give, but only rather what their bank account says is allowable to give, without too much effect. When we give in this way, we fail to realize that we have shown ourselves to have given from our heart, that is empty, absent and weak for Christ. [God works in us to lead us to give voluntarily so He can fill us with more of His presence and power through Christ.](#)

#### 8. Giving that is motivated by grace is **excel in giving**.

*“just as you excel in everything...see that you also excel in the grace of giving.” 2 Cor 8:7*



As our relationship with Christ grows, so should our giving to him. Growth is a part of all things living. When our giving fails to grow, it reveals that a stagnation that remains within our heart. In all, love for Jesus motivates our giving. We cannot make Jesus love us more or less through giving, but we do come to love him more as we practice giving more to him. We want to grow in life, in marriage, in parenting, in competition, in recreation, and even in our relationship with God; to not desire to excel, to grow and mature in our giving doesn't make sense.

**9. Giving that is motivated by grace is established on the promise of grace.**

*“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all time, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” 2 Cor 9:8-9*

*“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” Phil 4:19*

There is no small amount of debate on the Bible's teaching of giving from the Old to the New Testament. But they do not stand in opposition to one another. The issue of giving is really an issue of understanding **“how much greater is grace than law?”**

Philippians 4:13 provides a powerful promise, and is a very popular verse, *“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”* But typically, its popularity is not for the right reasons. In it Paul is stating that he has learned contentment in times of great need and plenty because Christ was the one through whom all things came to Him. As he finishes that passage to the Philippian church, he is talking about giving, and states, *“And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”* **Philippians 4:13 is not about accomplishment in life, whether in athletics, business, personal or other, but in rejoicing in Jesus Christ to remain faithful and generous no matter the situation in which I find myself. Why are we so quick to claim Phil 4:13, but ignore verse 19?**

**CLOSE** Without utilizing these principles of grace, it is unlikely that you honor God with your wealth. **When we fail to honor God with our wealth through grace-motivated giving, we rob God of something of far greater worth than money, His glory.**

Faithful giving by grace of life's treasure can produce the strongest faith in every other area of life because it is our giving that guides our heart in loving and believing. When we move to grace as our motivation, we give out of gratitude and consumption of his gift to us, Jesus Christ. When we consume our lives with Jesus, or live in a growing consumption of him, we can only seek to live toward giving more of ourselves to him, including our money. Adrian Rogers says, *“If your gift means little to you, your gift means little to God.”* **WHO gets honored by your life in the way you give?**

