

LEADER'S GUIDE

TAKE GOD AT HIS WORD: EXPERIENCE THE POWER OF GIVING

LESSON 1—SUNDAY SCHOOL/SMALL GROUP LESSON PLAN

TAKE GOD AT HIS WORD

“GIVING THAT FEELS GOOD”

At first, probably not many people actually look forward to a study on “giving.”

But think about it for a minute. Who stands to win when we approach the topic with suspicion and prejudice? Who wants to plant the seeds of distortion? Who wants to stop all of us from rethinking and carefully examining the whole subject? We all know who wants to distract, distort, and destroy our commitment to the Lord—Satan.

On the other hand, who has addressed the topic again and again? Jesus. If we follow Jesus, the course is clear. He wants us to study. He wants us to think. He wants us to be fully aware of both the benefit and the danger of our wealth.

INTRODUCE IT

- Honestly, what was your first reaction when you heard about this stewardship study? *Apprehension? Dread? Many Christians are convinced that they can't give to God because of Fear that He won't keep His promises in His Word to provide when we are obedient. Their gifts are often made with wrong motivations. Motivations for giving will be the focus of our study today.*
- Why did Jesus make wealth the subject of so many of his parables and sermons? *Our giving acknowledges the Lordship of Christ in our lives and Him as our Source. When we give to God, we are giving of ourselves. After all, we spend so much time in our lives trying to get money. Further, investing in heavenly purposes ensures that it will never be stolen or destroyed (Matthew 6:19-21). It is important to make investments in eternity.*

STUDY IT

Motivation #1 Guilt—“I Have to Give”

- As a motive for giving, what are the strengths and weaknesses of “Guilt”?
 1. *Strength: Guilt can be effective in bringing in some money.*
 2. *Weakness: It's actually unbiblical! It brings no joy and doesn't help people outgrow materialism. (Remember, attitudes matter to God.)*

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Motivation #2 Responsibility—"I Ought to Give" (2 Cor. 8:7)

- As a motive for giving, what are the strengths and weaknesses of "Responsibility"?
 1. *Strength: Because money is given for ministry, this approach feels better than the guilt motivation, and people learn responsibility, which is a healthy character trait.*
 2. *Weakness: Giving solely out of responsibility limits the joy and the amount given considerably. (When people give out of a strictly legalistic approach, it's easy to feel that "I've done my part.")*
- Why is duty often without any real "joy"?
Duty implies an obligation, a lack of choice, and an undesirable sacrifice. Life is so much more fulfilling if we can learn to live with joy and (eternal) purpose!

Motivation #3 Needs—"I Want to Give" (2 Cor. 9:7)

- As a motive for giving, what are the strengths and weaknesses of responding to "Needs"?
 1. *Strength: Giving to satisfy needs feels good.*
 - a. *This kind of giving brings a cheerful heart and doesn't rely on compulsion to force people to give reluctantly.*
 - b. *This motivation touches our heart strings and encourages people to learn the discipline of sacrificial giving.*
 - c. *It can raise larger sums of money and increase involvement because some people give only when they see a need.*
 2. *Weakness: Some people don't approve of or see the "need."*
 - a. *Some will ignore the request, even though there is a need.*
 - b. *The church has ongoing efforts, which may not tug heartstrings.*
- Why does personally responding to a need feel so good?
Responding to a need is great, because you often can immediately see the impact of your gift. This feels great, because the gift has served a purpose, often impacts people's lives directly, and solves a problem.

Motivation #4 Thanksgiving—"I Can't Help but Give" (2 Cor. 9:13)

- As a motive for giving, what are the strengths and weaknesses of "Thanksgiving"?
 1. *Strength: Giving out of thanksgiving feels very good!*
 - a. *This type of giving points our hearts in God's direction since we have a tangible way of showing our thanks to Him.*
 - b. *This unselfish giving encourages others to focus on God's activity in their lives, as well!*
 2. *Weakness: While there is nothing wrong with this motivation for giving, this motivation is limited by our perception of thankfulness.*
 - a. *If we aren't aware of our blessings, we tend to not be as thankful.*
 - b. *Some people can miss the joy of how God has blessed them because they're not paying attention (Luke 17:17).*
- How can generosity be a way of saying "Thank You"?
Being generous can affirm the worth of the person or ministry, as it acknowledges that they are worthy of generosity, or over and above giving, which is a great way to say "thank you."

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Motivation #5 Worship—"It's My Nature to Give" (2 Cor. 8:5)

- As a motive for giving, what are the strengths of seeing giving as "Worship" to God?

There are only strengths of this motivation.

1. *Worship is the highest possible motivation. It creates true commitment, pleases God, allows much work to be done to advance the cause of His Kingdom, and feels good, too!*
2. *There are no weaknesses in this giving motivation! The devil can't steal your joy in the Lord or stop your work for Christ.*

It's important not to settle for anything less than God's best motivations for our giving. As we grow upward from this motivational game plan, our joy will soar, and our efforts for the Kingdom will expand dramatically.

- When a heart is focused on God, filled with God, and lost in praise to God, what happens to the selfishness in that heart?

As we spend time in God's presence, He has can refine us and burn out impurities, such as selfishness. As we make God our focus, we adopt His desires and priorities as our own.

APPLY IT

- How can we be more trusting of our leaders to apply our gifts to "needs" of which we may be completely unaware?

Believers in the early church had many needs, and in Scripture, we see that leadership and organization were necessary to properly administer benevolence. God is a God of order. The body of Christ has different parts with different gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-8), and some are better suited to this responsibility. We need to submit to our church leadership in implementing established benevolence policies. We should pray for wisdom for our leadership, as they seek the leadership of the Holy Spirit in allocating our gifts (God's money) to meet needs.

- How has this first week of study and reflection changed your thoughts on stewardship?

Do you now think of Excitement, Trust, or Joy? We can trust God to keep His promises in His Word to provide. Knowing this truth can give us Joy in giving!

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LESSON 1—SCRIPTURE INDEX

TAKE GOD AT HIS WORD

CHAPTER ONE—"I WILL MAKE YOU RICH IN EVERY WAY"

2 Corinthians 9:10,11

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.

OPENING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the most important or meaningful thing you learned or read in this chapter?
2. What is your biggest question from this chapter?

LESSON POINTS AND DISCUSSION IDEAS

1. God is the source of all blessings. Read and discuss Philippians 4:19.
2. What is your list of the top 5 or top 10 major blessings in your life?
3. The law of the harvest teaches us that the more you want to reap, the more you have to sow. Read the following passages and discuss their importance and meaning: Genesis 8:22, Galatians 6:7, Matthew 17:20-21, and 2 Corinthians 9:6.
4. God promises rewards to those who are obedient. Read the following passages and discuss their importance and meaning. See Matthew 6:4, Matthew 10:42, Hebrews 11:6, Matthew 6:19-34, Ephesians 6:1-3, and 2 Corinthians 9:11.
5. Discuss these specific rewards:
 - a. You will be rich in every way. God's definition of rich is in 2 Corinthians 9:10-11. (Rich means being "able to be generous.")
 - b. The Bible describes riches as both spiritual and material.
 - c. Read 1 Timothy 6:9,10, Titus 3:14, 1 Chronicles 29:12, Joshua 1:8, Proverbs 3:9,10 and Malachi 3:10.
 - d. You will receive more than you give (Luke 6:38).
 - e. You will receive a greater blessing (Acts 20:36, Galatians 6:7).
6. We receive blessings "in kind"—the type of seed you sow determines the kind of crop you receive. Apply this to Genesis 8:22, Galatians 6:7, Matthew 17:20, 2 Corinthians 9:6, and Luke 6:37.
7. We are to trust God to provide. Read and apply 2 Kings 4:1-7.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION POINT

- If you were to see God as the true source of your blessings, what would be the first financial decision you would make?

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LESSON 1—DISCUSSION HANDOUT ANSWER GUIDE

TAKE GOD AT HIS WORD

WORD ONE—"I WILL MAKE YOU RICH IN EVERY WAY"

1. Share a moment when you experienced or were impressed with the truth of Jesus' words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).
2. Some Christians feel uncomfortable believing that God wants to bless and reward His children when they obey His Word. How do the following passages from both the Old and New Testaments illustrate that God rewards obedience?

Old Testament

Genesis 15:1 *God rewarded Abram with a son*

1 Samuel 26:23 *David did not harm God's anointed king—Saul—even though he had opportunity. God protected David despite Saul.*

Psalms 62:12 *God promises to reward according to what we have done.*

Proverbs 13:21 *Prosperity is the reward of the righteous.*

Jeremiah 32:19 *God rewards us according to our deeds.*

New Testament

Matthew 6:33 *Serving the Lord should be our first priority.*

1 Corinthians 3:8 *God rewards us according to our labor.*

1 Corinthians 9:23 *We share in spiritual blessings.*

Galatians 6:6,7 *We reap what we sow, whether good or bad.*

Philemon 6 *God rewards obedience with understanding.*

Hebrews 11:6 *By having faith, we can please God, who rewards us.*

3. Read the following passages and identify the general theme of each one.

Passage

Joshua 1:8

Malachi 3:9-11

Proverbs 3:9,10

Luke 6:38

Theme

It is important to meditate on God's Word.

Tithing is critical to avoid financial hardship and to receive financial blessing.

Tithing is a prerequisite to blessing.

The amount of blessing is proportionate to what we give.

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4. God's Word teaches that we should "give to get to give again." (See page 13.) Identify at least one time when you experienced this blessing. What can you do to make this teaching a greater reality in your life?
5. Read the section on receiving "in kind" blessings from God (page 17) and list as many examples of this teaching as you can. Can you think of any biblical exceptions to this principle?
For instance, if you sow corn, you reap corn. If you sow finances, you reap financially. Sometimes, we sow financially or spiritually into someone's life, and we don't see the results (or crop) of what we've sown right away. In some instances, we won't know the impact of what we've sown until Eternity.
6. What advice would you give to Christians who want to see God as the source of their blessings but are afraid to trust Him with financial decisions?
Meditate on the promises in His Word, and spend time with him in prayer and praise so that you can become more like Him and make His priorities your own.

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A complete download of the *Take God at His Word* Sunday School/Small Group Leader's Guide is available with your purchase of the *Take God at His Word* program. For more information, please contact our offices at 1-800-962-7499.