



A
Spiritual
Journey
to a more
Generous
Life!

WEEK
ONE

Days 1-7

Biblical Perspectives
Let Me Illustrate
Quotes and Quips
Facts & Figures

Day 1

Read: Genesis 1:26-31 – Creation; Subdue and care for it

26. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

God has made us in His own image. That is a powerful concept. God put us on earth to be like Him – in His image, in His likeness, to be and do like Him. Mankind's task on earth was to rule over the earth. The idea of ruler ship over earth has in it the concept of management. Man was to be a manager, a steward, or an overseer of God's creation. He was to take care of what God entrusted to him.

In the end of all things every man will be brought before the Creator to give an account of himself. To paraphrase the question Jesus was asking in Matthew 25, "Were you a good steward or a bad steward? Did you manage well what God gave to you and did you use it for the King or did you waste it and squirrel it away?" It does not belong to you in the first place. You are just the appointed caretaker.

John Wesley's Example of Generosity

Take John Wesley for example. He was born in 1703 and became one of the great evangelists of the 18th Century. In 1731 he began to limit his expenses so that he would have more money to give to the poor. In the first year his income was 30 pounds and he discovered that he could live on 28 pounds, so he gave away two. In the second year his income doubled but he held his expenses even, so he had 32 pounds to give away (a comfortable year's income). In the third year his income jumped to 90 pounds and he gave away 62 pounds. In his long life Wesley's income advanced to as high as 1,400 pounds in a year, but he rarely let his expenses rise above 30 pounds. He said that he seldom had more than 100 pounds in his possession at a time. This so baffled the English Tax Commissioners that they investigated him in 1776 insisting that for a man of his income he must have silver dishes that he was not paying the excise tax on. He wrote them, "I have two silver spoons at London and two at Bristol. This is all the plate I have at present, and I shall not buy any more while so many round me want bread." When he died in 1791 at the age of 87 the only money mentioned in his will was the coins to be found in his pockets and dresser. Most of the 30,000 pounds he had earned in his life had been given away. He wrote, "I cannot help leaving my books behind me whenever God calls me hence; but in every other respect, my own hands will be my executors. In other words, I will put a control on my spending myself, and I will go beyond the tithe for the sake of Christ and his kingdom."

Quotes:

"Stewardship is the act of organizing your life so that God can spend you."

– Lynnn A. Miller, Author

"When money is sent to me for my own use, I pass it on to God. As much as \$5,000 has been sent at one time; but I do not regard such gifts as belonging to me; they belong to Him, whose I am and whom I serve. Save for myself? I dare not save; it would dishonor my loving, gracious, all bountiful Father." – George Mueller, English Pastor

Day 2

Read: Genesis 4:1-5, Hebrews 11:4 – Cain and Able; Giving My Best

1. Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." 2. Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. 3. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. 4. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering...

Cain and Abel were twins, look-alikes, mirror images of each other physically, yet miles apart when their hearts were examined. If we look only on the surface of the story we don't get it. Why did God honor Abel's offering and not Cain's? Does God have something against fruit or grain offerings? In Leviticus, God ordained them as part of the sacrificial system, so that can't be true.

The difference is found in Hebrews 11:4. God does not look on the outward appearance but on the heart. God was looking for a sacrificial heart. According to this passage Able offered some of his firstborn unblemished lambs with a heart of faith in God which was dearer to God than a barn full of grain or a bushel of apples given out of obligation or plenty. Cheap offerings don't please the Lord. David learned that well and stated when he could have gotten off dirt cheap, "I will not offer to the Lord that which costs me nothing."

When our tithes and offerings become old hat, or routine, and cost us nothing dear to our hearts, then it is time to look back to the meaning of sacrifice. The meaning of sacrifice is to lose something you hold dear to gain something even dearer – the favor and smile of God.

His Legacy Lives On – Will yours?

Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.

Confederate Currency Worthless at War's End

Imagine that you're alive at the end of the Civil War. You're living in the South, but you are a Northerner and plan to move home as soon as the war is over. While in the South, you've accumulated a lot of Confederate currency. Now, suppose you know for a fact that the North is going to win the war and the end is imminent. What will you do with your Confederate money? If you're smart, there's only one answer. You should immediately cash in your Confederate currency for U.S. currency—the only money that will have value once the war is over. Keep only enough Confederate money to meet your short-term needs. As a Christian, you have inside knowledge of an eventual worldwide upheaval caused by Christ's return. *This is the ultimate insider-trading tip: When Christ returns—or when you die, whichever comes first and either event could happen today. Earth's currency will become worthless!*

Quotes:

"The fellow that has no money is poor. The fellow that has nothing but money is poorer still."

– Billy Graham

"We are rich only through what we give: and poor only through what we refuse to keep."

– Anne Swetchine, Russian-French Writer

Day 3

Read: Genesis 14:18-20 – Tithing: law or principle?

18. Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, 19. and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. 20. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

What do you give God when you don't have to give anything? That is the point of this story. Abraham, called Abram, lived before God gave Moses the law of tithing. He was under no obligation to give a dime to the high priest. His heart was fully in control of his giving. He was motivated not by the law of tithing, but his motivation was grace. He was so thankful to the Lord who had blessed him and given him all things richly to enjoy that he gave willingly, joyfully, and bountifully to the servant of the Lord. He shared his blessings that others in turn might be blessed. Tithing then is not to be a law for us but a principle. We give our tithes willingly, joyfully, and abundantly because we are thankful to the "Source" of all our blessings.

So what is your answer to the question, "What do you give God when you don't have to give anything?"

The Left Hand and the Right

Charles Spurgeon and his wife, according to a story in the Chaplain magazine, would sell but never give away the eggs their chickens laid. Even close relatives were told, "You may have them if you pay for them." As a result some people labeled the Spurgeons as greedy and grasping. The criticisms were accepted without any defense. The full story was not revealed until after the death of Mrs. Spurgeon. All the profits from the sale of eggs had been used to support two elderly widows. Because the Spurgeons were unwilling to let their left hand know what the right hand was doing (Matthew 6:3), they endured the attacks in silence.

Quotes:

"I never would have been able to tithe the first million dollars if I had not tithed my first salary, which was \$1.50 per week. – John D. Rockefeller, Sr., American Industrialist and Philanthropist

Day 4

Read: Genesis 22:1-18, Hebrews 11:17-19 - Trusting God with my all

7. Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8. Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." . . . the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! 12. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

It seems like God loves to give "pop quizzes." God often set out to prove or test the love of his people. It isn't that God doesn't know our hearts, because He knows all things. But in the book of Job we get a glimpse of what takes place behind the curtain in heaven. Satan is the one accusing us of not being honest, loving, faith-filled, and obedient to God. Thus the test – not to prove anything to God, but to display to the evil one that God's child has a pure heart and trusts him implicitly.

What a test! To wait 99 years for a son, then finally get him in your old age and God asks you to give him up. Would you? You've asked God for that good job. He gave it to you and now you are doing better than ever before. Then He tests you with a church construction project, a missionary need, or some other worthy cause. Will we selfishly hold back? After all God gave you the good income, why should you give it away? The lesson here is about willingness to part with what is dear to us when God asks for a portion or all of it back.

Paul said, "...God is able to make all grace abound toward you... in all things..." (2 Corinthians 9:8) Don't fear that God is going to ask you to do more than you can or should. When He tugs on your heartstrings listen, and lean on Him. He will not rob his own.

Temporary Hotel Stay

Suppose your home is in France and while visiting America for three months you live in a hotel. You're told that you can't bring anything back to France on your flight home, but you can earn money and mail deposits to your bank in France. Would you fill your hotel room with expensive furniture and wall hangings? Of course you wouldn't! You'd send your money where your home is. You would spend only what you needed on the temporary residence, and send your treasures ahead so they'd be waiting for you when you got home.

Quotes:

"What I possess, God owns." – Howard Dayton, co-founder of Crown Financial Ministries.

"Without a rich heart wealth is an ugly beggar." – Ralph Waldo Emerson

"I find all this money a considerable burden." – J. Paul Getty, American Industrialist

Day 5

Read: Genesis 28:20-22 – Giving a tenth of all I have

20. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear 21. so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God 22. and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

It is so amazing to see these Old Testament guys, without Bible, without the law, without any outer constraint, willingly and generously giving back to God one tenth of all they have. Jacob did not have to give a tenth but he did because of God's faithfulness to him. Note that it was not just a tenth of his weekly, monthly, or yearly income. It was a tenth of all that he had.

So, let's do the math. Figure out your net worth. Calculate the value of your house, your car(s), your retirement, your savings, your investments, your land, and all your clothing, household appliances, dishes, silverware, DVDs, Videos, CD, stereos, TVs, etc. and finally your yearly income.

Go on. Everyone – do it! Have you done it? What is it worth? It's staggering isn't it? God has blessed us in so many ways yet we hold on like paupers who are about to go to the poor house. It is that beggar, poor-me attitude that will kill the joy of giving back to God. It is ingratitude dressed up in its most self-righteous garments.

OK, now you can throw that list of values away. Just keep it in mind when the Lord asks you to give to the building of His temple. Give of your substance, not just your income and you will see greater joy and blessing.

The Plane Crash Victims

Another way to understand this principle is to picture 269 people entering eternity in a plane crash. Before the crash there is a noted politician, a millionaire corporate executive, a playboy and his playmate, and a missionary kid on the way back home after visiting grandparents. Picture them after the crash as they stand before God, utterly stripped of every MasterCard, checkbook, credit line, image, clothes, success, books, and Hilton reservations. The politician, the executive, the playboy and the missionary kid on level ground with nothing, absolutely nothing in their hands, but only what they brought in their hearts. O how absurd and tragic the lover of money will seem on that day! He will be like a man who spends his whole life collecting train tickets and in the end is so weighed down by the collection that he misses the last train. Don't try to get rich, "for we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of the world."

Quotes:

"A lot of people are willing to give God the credit, but not too many are willing to give him the cash." – Unknown

I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all. But whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess." – Martin Luther, German Reformer

Day 6

Read: Exodus 25:1-2; Exodus 35&36 - Willing heart – a heart stirred up to give

Exodus 25:1 The LORD said to Moses, 2. "Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give..."

35:4 Moses said to the whole Israelite community, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 5. From what you have, take an offering for the LORD. Everyone who is willing is to bring to the LORD an offering..."

35:20 Then the whole Israelite community withdrew from Moses' presence, 21. and everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the LORD for the work on the Tent of Meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments. 22. All who were willing, men and women alike, came and brought gold jewelry of all kinds: brooches, earrings, rings and ornaments. They all presented their gold as a wave offering to the LORD.

To me this is one of the most thrilling stories of giving in the whole Bible. God challenged his people in the realm of giving. It was not a command given to everyone but more of a suggestion, "Let everyone who has a stirred up heart, bring an offering of what he has to the Lord." If you did not have a stirred up heart you were off the hook.

What if next Sunday the Lord comes up with a new rule? "No one has to bring any offering anymore. We will only receive offerings of those of you who beg to give, who are so stirred up they can't wait to give to the Lord. No one else has to bring anything." What do you think would happen to the offerings? Will God go broke? Will the bills be paid? Will the land be purchased or the building be built?

The result of God's challenge recorded in Exodus was accepted and the offerings poured in like never before so that there was more than enough, that is, there was not room enough to receive it. Oh, God, change our hearts! Change my heart!

*Exodus 36:3 ...And **the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning**. 4. So all the skilled craftsmen who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left their work 5. and said to Moses, "**The people are bringing more than enough** for doing the work the LORD commanded to be done." 6. Then Moses gave an order and they sent this word throughout the camp: "No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary." And so **the people were restrained from bringing more**, 7. because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work.*

The Consumptive Servant

Archdeacon Hare was giving a lecture at Trinity College when a cry of "Fire!" was raised. His pupils rushed away, and formed themselves into a line to pass buckets of water from the river to the burning building. The tutor saw a student, who was ill with consumption, standing up to his waist in the water, and cried to him, "What! You in the water, Sterling?" The reply was, "Somebody must be in it, and why not I as well as another?"

Quotes:

"One of the greatest missing teachings in the church today is the reminder to men and women that nothing we have belongs to us." – Gordon MacDonald

Day 7

Read: Exodus 34:20; Deuteronomy 16:16-No one empty handed

Exodus 34:20. "...No one is to appear before me empty-handed."

Deuteronomy 16:16 *Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles. No man should appear before the LORD empty-handed...*

Israelites, in the Old Testament as well as at the time of Jesus, gave their offerings at the treasury box where everyone could watch and see what they were doing. Everyone stopped and put something in. No one dared insult the Lord by coming before his throne empty handed. The poor were no exception. We are probably receiving our offerings all wrong in the church today. We probably should not pass the plate and let people off the hook in their giving to the Lord.

No man, that is, no bread-winner, should be so insulting as to come to present himself to the Lord without an offering. Even the widow that Jesus observed gave of her lack and was blessed.

God isn't poor that He needs our money. We who think ourselves to be rich are actually poor and need Him. It is for our benefit that we give. Giving helps us develop a looser attachment to the things that we possess. Even the word 'possess' is a misnomer. As we already learned, we don't really possess anything. We are given the privilege of taking care of something while we are in this world. When we leave this world we give up what we have cared for and another takes over the stewardship.

You are not magnanimous because you give. You are not throwing a tip to the heavenly waiter. God is not a beggar, nor our servant to be treated as a charity case. Giving is good stewardship of what belongs to God, nothing more.

The Eager Sunday School Children

The Junior Sunday School Teacher asked her eight eager 10-year-olds if they would give \$1,000,000 to the missionaries. "YES!" they all screamed!! "Would you give \$1,000?" Again they shouted "YES!" "How about \$100?" "Oh, YES we would!" they all agreed!! "Would you give just a dollar to the missionaries?" she asked. The boys exclaimed "YES!" just as before except for Johnnie. "Johnnie," the teacher said as she noticed the boy clutching his pocket, "why didn't you say 'YES' this time?" "Well," he stammered, "I HAVE a dollar."

Quotes:

"I have observed 100,000 families over my years of investment counseling. I always saw greater prosperity and happiness among those families who tithed than among those who did not." – Sir John Templeton, Chairman of Templeton Funds

"When we give to God, we are just taking our hands off what already belongs to Him."

"Give to God what's right – not what's left." – Anonymous