

## SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

October 18, 2026

**In His Steps – A Stewardship Series**

**“Give to the Father”**

**Matthew 6:104**

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Someone I knew years ago who waited on tables at a restaurant told me that the least favorite shift to work at that restaurant for the waitstaff was on Sunday afternoons and Sunday evenings after church. Why was that? The reasons were that all of a sudden there is the Sunday rush of a lot of people coming who often acted impatient and came in large groups wanting to be seated together with high-maintenance requests. The biggest complaint of the waitstaff was that many Christians were poor tippers and even some did not tip at all. Whether that stereotype was and still is accurate or not, that is our reputation. Yet the picture that we have of the followers of Jesus in the Bible is that our nature is that of being generous givers in every area of our lives. Jesus spoke extensively about money, wealth, and possessions, so much so that one out of every ten verses in the Gospels deal directly with stewardship, greed, or material goods. Almost half of Jesus' parables dealt with money, debts, or material possessions as a core element. The remedy for greed, and materialism is that of obediently giving as God directs and doing so for the right reason. One of the vows that you make when you join a Global Methodist Church is that you will be a faithful member of the church by ***“doing all in your power to strengthen its ministries through your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness as Christ's representative in this world?”*** When we refer to “gifts” in our vows, we are making the commitment to obey Jesus' teachings and follow Jesus' example of giving. Let us listen carefully to one of Jesus' teachings that goes to the heart of being a giver.

**MATTHEW 6:1-4**

***“Watch out! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. <sup>2</sup> When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. <sup>3</sup> But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. <sup>4</sup> Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.***

## ***JESUS ASSUMES THAT HIS FOLLOWERS ARE GIVERS***

In this teaching of Jesus, we first learn something interesting and that is ***Jesus Assumes that His Followers are Givers***. Jesus begins *verse 3* with three important words, “*When you give . . .*” Jesus didn’t say, “*If you give . . .*” or even “*You must give!*” Jesus assumes His followers are giving as God has directed. From where does Jesus get this assumption? It starts with the heart of God who loves us so much he gave us Jesus who gave His entire life to us by becoming one of us through His miraculous birth, living the perfect life for us, dying on the cross for us, raising from the dead for us, ascending back to heaven to then send the Holy Spirit through whom God now lives in us. In our relationship with God, God gives us His perfect love, grace, forgiveness, and a new life in Jesus that begins now. God freely, continually gives us protection, compassion, comfort, health, strength, all our daily needs of food, shelter, and clothing. God gives us a purpose in life, wisdom, His perfect truth, peace, security, and hope deep within our souls. God gives family, friends, our church family, and eventual victory over death where God will then give us heaven on earth, and new bodies that will live forever. That is just scratching the surface of all that God has given us. Everything we have and all that is to come God has freely given to us because it is the heart of the nature of God to give.

Jesus also based His assumption that God’s people are givers from the Old Testament where God lays the foundation of how His people are to follow in His footsteps as givers. God tells the Israelites that they are to annually give what is called the ***Levite Tithe***. They were to give 10% of their agricultural produce and livestock to the priests at the temple. This would support the ministry of the priests and the ministry of the temple, just as people giving their tithe to the church does today. Also, God required the Israelites to give what is called the ***Festival Tithe*** where the Israelites were to annually set aside another 10% of their agricultural produce and livestock to be consumed during national and religious festivals in God’s presence. In other words, they gave 10% for numerous potluck dinners. In addition to these two different tithes, every three years another tithe was given called the ***Poor Tithe***, which was another 10% of their agricultural produce and livestock that was stored locally every third year to care for the Levites, strangers, fatherless, and widows. This mandatory **23.3%** acted as a kind of “government tax” used to support the community, their religious system, and social welfare. That was how God organized His nation and their contribution to it. On top of this required amount, devout Jews frequently also gave ***Freewill Offerings***—voluntary, spontaneous gifts out of their abundance when additional needs might arise.

The assumption that God’s people are givers in the New Testament continues, but it takes giving to an entirely new level. New Testament giving moves away from a legalistic kind of “governmental tax” system of exact percentages to still giving a percentage of our income to God but now it is determined through prayerfully asking God how much He would have us give to the church. The financial gifts we give today, which is the equivalent of agricultural produce and livestock of the Old Testament, are no longer given out of obligation to a law but are now given voluntarily, cheerfully, joyfully, and sacrificially. Some people in hearing this think, great, I don’t have to give 10% anymore. First, that totally misses the point of our giving. Our giving is not a “have to”, but a “get to”. If we are giving only because we have to then we are still living by the

Old Testament system of law, which is not the spirit of the New Testament teaching on giving. Also, when we study the entire teaching of the New Testament on giving, 10% was never the ceiling of biblical giving. It was the beginners “training wheels” of giving. As Christians who live under grace rather than the law and are to understand that the Old Testament tithe is a minimal baseline rather than an optional target.

Sadly, one of the most neglected aspects of being a follower of Jesus is that of giving. *Christianity Today* magazine reported in 2022 that more than a quarter of American Christians do not give any money to a church. The article said that giving, historically, increases with income and age, but the study notes that millennials and Gen Z, or those today that are anywhere from 14-45 years old, are much more likely to give directly to family, friends, or even strangers than to support institutions including the church. The study reported that 10% of the people give more than 8%. Twenty-three percent of the people give between 2% to 8%. Twenty-six percent of the people then give 0% and 42% give less than 2%. Some say that roughly the average gift given to the church annually is about 2.5%.

### ***THE REASON WE ARE TO GIVE***

In this teaching Jesus gave in Matthew 6, Jesus goes to the real heart of the matter of giving as Jesus gives us ***The Reason We are to Give***. Jesus does so by using an example of giving to the poor. As a master teacher, Jesus uses hyperbole or exaggerated imagery, saying when we give to the poor, we are not to announce to the world that we are giving by having someone sound a trumpet to turn the attention to ourselves. Jesus says those who give to be seen by others are hypocrites, which means they are making a theatrical performance of their spiritual duties. On the outside they are going through all the motions expected of God’s people, but they are doing it all for the wrong reasons.

Genia Obal of Montrose, British Columbia wrote in *Christian Reader* about the time that their 7-year-old daughter had just won \$2.00 for her memory work in Sunday school. After the morning service, the pastor’s wife congratulated the girl which led to the girl proudly announcing, “And I put it all in the morning’s offering!” The pastor’s wife exclaimed, “My, how wonderful! I’m sure God will be pleased.” The child replied, “Yes, and now maybe God will let me do some of the things I want to do!” Even this wonderful gift of this little girl was given for the wrong reason. We don’t give to earn points with God, to get our own way from God, or give for notoriety, or to think that if we give money at the church, we have more say than those who do not give as much. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Jesus then points to the real reason people are to give by once again using hyperbole to say when we give, our left hand should not know what our right hand is doing. Instead, the only One we want to see our giving is our Heaven Father who sees what we have done in secret. In other words, the reason we give as followers of Jesus is to please God! We give out of obedience to God’s direction of how we are to give. We also give to God out of gratitude for all that God has given us. The why of giving goes to the heart of each one of us. Instead of asking God, “*How little do I need to give or how much is the 10% requirement that I have to give?*”, those who want to please God above all, who love God, who want to be obedient to God, who are grateful to God for

who God is and all that God has done for us, we now ask, *“How much can I give out of gratitude for what God has given me?”* That is the heart of a true disciple, a true follower of Jesus. As 2 Corinthians 9:15 says, *“Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!”* That indescribable gift that God has given us is Jesus and because of all that we have from Jesus who gave us His entire life, we now joyfully, sacrificially, voluntarily, and generously give back to God in light of all He has given us. We don’t have to give; we get to give.

### **GOD WILL REWARD OUR GIVING**

If we give obediently as God directs and give it to God for the right reason, Jesus then says **God Will Reward Our Giving**. Jesus said that those who give to be seen by others receive immediate human applause, which is their only reward. On the other hand, those who give quietly and for the right reason are rewarded by God. Jesus also promised in Luke 6:38 that we would be rewarded if we obediently give for the right reason, *“Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.”*

What rewards will God give us if we obediently give for the right reason? Second Corinthians 9:6-11 points to some of them as it says, *“6 Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. 7 You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. ‘For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.’ 8 And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. 9 As the Scriptures say, ‘They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever.’ 10 For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. 11 Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.”* For God, generosity is an investment in God’s kingdom that brings spiritual blessings and the possibility that God might give us even more resources not for us to just selfishly save up for ourselves, but so that we can generously, sacrificially, voluntarily, and cheerfully give even more to God’s kingdom work. We also discover when we give obediently and to God, the great blessing is in giving itself. The Apostle Paul put it this way in Acts 20:35, *“And I have been a constant example of how you can help those in need by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”* Giving is far more joyful, enjoyable, and a blessing to us than receiving and hoarding all our wealth for ourselves. Giving God’s way is a joy!

Charles Feeney was raised by working-class parents who struggled during the Depression to pay a \$32 monthly mortgage. He served in the Air Force and got into the duty-free shopping business. The business went global. Profits were enormous. By the early 1980s he was investing tax-free annual dividends of \$35 million into hotels, land deals, retail shops, and clothing companies. He later invested in tech start-ups and multiplied his income exponentially. By age 50, he had palatial homes in New York,

London, Paris, Honolulu, San Francisco, Aspen, and on the French Riviera. But as Feeney said later, "I just reached the conclusion with myself that money, buying boats and all the trimmings didn't appeal to me." So, Feeney sold his limousines. He quit going to fancy restaurants and bought his clothes off the rack. He decided to secretly give away his money before he died. He gave \$2.7 billion to fund 1,000 buildings on five continents, and his name appeared on none of them. He gave grants by cashier's checks to conceal the source. Feeney funded public-health facilities in Vietnam, the University of Limerick and Trinity College in Ireland, AIDS clinics in South Africa, Operation Smile's free surgeries for children with cleft lips and palates, a medical campus for the University of California at San Francisco, and earthquake relief in Haiti. In his last decades, Feeney did not own a home or a car, wore a \$10 wristwatch, preferred buses to taxis and, until he was 75, flew coach. He lived in a two-bedroom rented apartment in San Francisco. Why did he do it? He said, "I cannot think of a more personally rewarding and appropriate use of wealth than to give while one is living, to personally devote oneself to meaningful efforts to improve the human condition." In an article titled *Zero Is the Hero*, Feeney summarized his mission in a few sentences. He said, "I see little reason to delay giving when so much good can be achieved through supporting worthwhile causes. Besides, ***it's a lot more fun to give while you live than give while you're dead.***" He discovered the truth that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

On another occasion in *Matthew 25:34*, Jesus promised the greatest reward of all for giving to those in need when He said, "*Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world.'*" Those of us who give will be rewarded in the best way possible, by God for eternity. So, what is our excuse for holding back from God and in so doing robbing ourselves of all the rewards of obediently giving to God.

I am convinced that our giving is a direct indicator of where our hearts are for God. We have mailed out our stewardship packets. These are tools for you to use as you and your family pray together as to what God would have you give through Killearn beginning January of 2027. We invite you to bring those faith pledge commitments with you to worship next week where we will offer them up to God together in love, gratitude and worship. If you are not able to bring them with you, you can access the forms through our app, through our website, mail in the commitments, hand deliver them or bring them in on another Sunday. Then be prepared to experience the joy of giving.

**SUGGESTED RESOURCES:** (Books marked with \* are available to be checked-out in the Asbury Discipleship Resource Center)

- *Giving Challenge* (weekly videos), RightNow Media
- *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*, Timothy Keller
- *The Hole in Our Holiness*, Kevin DeYoung
- *True Community: The Biblical Practice of Koinonia*, Jerry Bridges
- *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- *On being a Servant of God*, Warren W. Wiersbe
- *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*, Timothy Keller
- *The Treasure Principle: Discovering the Secret of Joyful Giving*, Randy Alcorn
- *Whose Money Is It, Anyway?*, John MacArthur

### Icebreaker Questions

1. What is one of the most meaningful gifts you have ever received that had little to do with its monetary value? What made that gift so special to you?
2. Have you ever experienced the unexpected joy of giving anonymously or blessing someone without expecting anything in return? How did that experience affect you?

### Sermon Discussion Questions

1. Jesus says, "When you give," rather than "If you give" (Matthew 6:2). What does this reveal about Jesus' expectations of His followers? How does recognizing everything God has generously given us change our perspective on giving?
2. In Matthew 6:1–4, Jesus warns against giving to receive recognition or praise from others. Why do you think our motives matter as much as our actions when it comes to generosity? How can we examine our hearts to ensure our giving is an expression of worship rather than an attempt to gain approval?
3. The sermon contrasts giving out of obligation with giving out of gratitude, describing the difference as "have to" versus "get to." How does understanding God's grace transform our attitude toward financial stewardship? What might prevent us from experiencing the freedom and joy of cheerful giving?
4. Second Corinthians 9:6–11 teaches that God provides for us so that we can continue to be generous toward others. How should we understand God's promises to bless our generosity without treating giving as a way to gain financial rewards? In what ways have you experienced blessings through generosity that went beyond material possessions?
5. As our church prepares to make its 2027 stewardship commitments, we are encouraged to prayerfully consider what God is calling us to give. What practical steps can we take, individually and as families, to make generosity an intentional part of our discipleship? How can our financial gifts, service, and everyday acts of kindness become a witness to Christ in our community?
6. What impacted you most from the sermon?
7. How might this group pray for you this week?