

Week Two: "Compounding Joy"
Day One: "Who Is the Owner?"

Read: Psalm 24:1-6 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 606)
Read: The Treasure Principle, p. 20 to bottom of p. 24

Reflect: What things have you been given that you are in charge of? Toys? Food on your plate at mealtime? Your clothes? On my 16th birthday, my mom gave me a big box and said, "Do you promise to use this gift at least once a week?" I said, "yes," but when I opened the box, I was shocked to find that in it was a vacuum cleaner! It was definitely not what I expected! Although that was more of a joke, we are often given gifts and are expected to take care of them in some way. Toys are supposed to be put back where they go when we are done playing with them, new clothes are supposed to be worn with care, and dessert is supposed to be enjoyed, not given to the dog. When you get something new from someone, do you usually say 'thanks' and throw it in the trash, or do you take care of it? Give some examples of how you may take care of gifts given to you.

Dig: According to Psalm 24:1, what does God own? Look around your house. Where does all the stuff come from? For example, the chairs you are sitting on may be made of wood from trees. What about your clothes, your food, or your home? Where does it all come from?

If "the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it..." what does that make us? (Psalm 24:1) Are we simply renting out God's house? Actually, God has put us on this earth for a purpose, to manage all His "stuff" with care and joy.

Fill in the blanks: Psalm 24:4-5 tells you who will receive blessings from God. For those who have "_____ hands and a _____ heart, who does not lift up his soul to an _____ or swear by what is _____." And since "the earth is the Lord's," God can bless us with everything and anything as He desires.

Apply: So, since God owns everything and we are just his managers, how does that make you feel when it comes to sharing what you have? If God owns your toys and someone wants to play with them, how does that help you when it comes to sharing? What things do you have that are owning you instead of you knowing that they are just a gift from God? Are your TV, computer, or video games an idol? Are there other things that are keeping you from reaching out to others around you? Remember, it all comes from God. Don't let the things God has given you keep you from seeking him. Pray for God to help you take care of what He has given you and to use your "stuff" to help others whenever you can.

For younger children, ages 5 - 9, and their families . . .

Read: Psalm 24:1-6 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 606)

Activity: Look around your room. What things do you have that God gave you? List at least 5.

Dig: If "the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it..." (Psalm 24:1a), then we are basically guests in God's guesthouse, the earth. He built it for us to live in and take care of while we are here. How do you act when you are visiting someone? Do you throw your trash on the floor? Do you leave your clothes lying around? How do you think God wants you to act and take care of all the things he has given you?

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for my clothes, my toys, and all the beauty you have given me on Earth. Help me to take good care of all your gifts. Amen.

The Treasure Principle-- Devotions for ages 9 and up
Week Two: "Compounding Joy"
Day Two: "Joyful Giving"

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1337)
Read: The Treasure Principle, bottom of p. 24 to middle of p. 28

Reflect: Have you ever given someone something and you knew it would be awesome when they received it? Maybe it was a birthday or Christmas gift, or maybe it was your favorite toy that you had outgrown. How did it make you feel? Were you excited or nervous? Were you afraid they wouldn't like it? What happened when they opened it? Were they excited, then, too? How did that make you feel?

Dig: God has given us many gifts that you can touch, see, smell, hear, and eat. Close your eyes and use your senses. What are your favorite gifts from God that you can touch, see, smell, hear, or eat? In Genesis 1:31b, (FiCB, p. 5) it says, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." He not only delighted in what he has made, but he delights in YOU!

Now think about your heart. God has given us gifts that are the fruits of our spirit: "...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,

goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control" (Galatians 5:22-23, FICB p. 1352). Which of these fruits do we experience when we give to others? Think back to how you felt when you gave something away. JOY, JOY, JOY! This is the ultimate consequence of true giving. When we give without feeling like we have to or like we owe it to someone, we feel God's joy. 2 Corinthians 9:7b says, "for God loves a cheerful giver."

When someone gave you a gift, how would you feel if they gave it to you while crying or angry about giving it to you? Just as this would make you sad, God looks into our hearts when we give and when we give selflessly, it not only makes us happy, it makes God smile on us.

Apply: What are you having trouble sharing or giving away? What areas do you need to have more joy in doing? Giving a gift can also be found when we give of our time with joy to help someone out. Ask God to show you who you can bless today with your time, a kind word, or maybe even something you have that they need. Ask God to open your heart to the joy of giving. Ask him to give you a joyfully generous heart.

For younger children, ages 5 - 9, and their families . . .

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1337)

Activity: Sing "I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy Down in My Heart!"

What gives you great joy? Getting something? Going to the park? How about giving someone a gift? Have you ever given someone a present you were really excited to give? How did you feel?

Dig: God has given us many gifts that you can touch, see, smell, hear, and eat. Close your eyes and use your senses. What are your favorite gifts from God that you can touch, see, smell, hear, or eat? In Genesis 1:31b, (FICB, p. 5) it says, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." He not only delighted in what he has made, but he delights in YOU! God also loves a cheerful giver and when we give we can feel the joy of the Lord!

Prayer: Dear Lord, you have given me so much. Thank you for reminding me that I can grow in joy just by giving cheerfully. Help me to do this. Amen.

The Treasure Principle-- Devotions for ages 9 and up

Week Two: "Compounding Joy"

Day Three: "Thunder, Lightning, and Grace"

Read: 2 Corinthians 8:9-10 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1336)

Read: The Treasure Principle, middle of p. 28 to top of p. 31

Reflect: When I was a child, my dad would immediately begin to give us food off his plate if we told him we were still hungry. This immediate act of giving out of what one had with no thought to oneself was amazing to see as a child. Often, we would say, "Wait, Dad, I'm not that hungry, anymore." He knew what it was to truly be hungry as a child and never wanted us to have that feeling.

Even now, as an adult, I remember how selflessly my father gave, not just to his own family, but to anyone else he saw in need. That example stays with me as I raise my children and go through different stages of "needs" of my own. Yet, through all of this, the one lesson I have learned is that whether I have little to give or a lot, there is joy in giving sacrificially. To me, that may mean giving some of my favorite food to a food pantry instead of just the leftover cans of peas I have in my pantry. It may also mean stretching my dollar a bit farther to give a gift to a young couple starting out in marriage. Whatever the case may be, it involves an inner stretching and a check on my habits of true selfless giving. When it comes to God, however, everything we receive is by his great grace and mercy poured out on us. If "grace" is getting what we don't deserve, in what ways in your life have you received grace both from God and from others?

Dig: Read verse 9 again. Jesus began "rich" and "became poor" for us so that we "might become rich." What things did Jesus give up for us, in terms of "richness"? Read John 1:1-4 (FICB, p. 1197) for some ideas.

How did he become "poor" for us? Jesus gave up everything to give us life!

Yet, because of what he gave up, what blessings do we receive? The list of blessings could be endless... eternal life, free conversations with God the Father, the Holy Spirit, hope, etc.

Apply: Just as my earthly father has blessed me by his own selfless giving, Jesus has blessed me so much more with his grace. List the ways that God has blessed and graced you. What people, circumstances, or things has he put in your life that have carried you through or helped you grow?

Now list the ways that you ought to be gracious in response.

Who does God want you to bless in return for His blessings, whether they deserve it or not?

For younger children, ages 5 - 9, and their families . . .

Read: 2 Corinthians 8:9-10 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1336)

Activity: What have you been given that you maybe didn't deserve? Ask your parents what they got that they didn't deserve.

Dig: God's grace is like that. We get what we don't deserve and we don't get what we do deserve. Jesus died for us so that we could go to heaven. It is a free gift from God. But Jesus paid a big price: his life. He was our sacrifice. What things can you do or give to others that might be a sacrifice for you?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for dying for me. Help me to give without keeping the best to myself. Amen.

The Treasure Principle-- Devotions for ages 9 and up

Week Two: "Compounding Joy"

Day Four: "The Fringe Benefits of Giving"

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:12-13 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1337)

Read: The Treasure Principle, top of p. 31 to bottom of p. 33

Reflect: Just the other day, I received an unexpected gift. The funny thing was, two weeks earlier we had given the same type of gift to someone else. I wanted to return the gift by saying, "Really, this isn't necessary," when I remembered how much of a thrill it was for us when we had the opportunity to give a similar gift away. It was then that the idea of the joy in giving hit me in a new way. It truly was more fun to do the giving than the receiving. See Acts 20:35 (FiCB, p. 1264).

Not that receiving a gift isn't fun. I love gifts as much as the next person. However, there seems to be something very special that happens when you give something away.

How about you? Have you ever had the funny experience of giving a gift away and then becoming a receiver shortly after? Although both are fun, how was the giving away part different for you? Which part gave you a longer lasting feeling of joy?

Dig: As the Corinthians gave, it became their way to show God how thankful they were (vs. 12). In addition, their "confession of the gospel of Christ" (vs. 13) went hand in hand with their giving! Thus, they would tell of their love and faith in Jesus and help someone at the same time. This "telling and doing" combination led "men to praise God" (vs. 13).

If we really want to:

- 1) show God how thankful we are,
- 2) receive blessings from God, and
- 3) help others learn about God...

then, we really must give obediently as God puts things on our hearts. If we listen and look around us, we will see plenty of opportunities to give, whether we lend a helping hand or give a gift someone can hold.

Apply: A friend once told me that when some kids came to their door to sell candy bars for a school trip, they had no money to buy one. Yet, instead of turning them away on that hot summer day, they offered them a glass of ice water and words of encouragement. Something like this may not seem like a big deal at the time, but you never know how your kindness can encourage others. Think about the words to this song: "Cups of cold water, given in Jesus name. Cups of cold water, are never given in vain. Someday in heaven, when we meet the Lord. Each deed of kindness will bring a rich reward." What kind of "cups of cold water" can you give to lighten someone's load in Jesus' name? If you don't know, just ask God and he will show you.

For younger children, ages 5 - 9, and their families . . .

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:12-13 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1337)

Activity: How do you say thank you to God for what he has done and given you?

Dig: When you give, it helps God's people and shows God you are thankful. In return, people will praise God and pray for you! Isn't that awesome? Read the words to the song in the above Apply section.

Prayer: Dear God, help me to think of ways to be like a cup of cold water through kindness to someone I know. Amen.

The Treasure Principle-- Devotions for ages 9 and up

Week Two: "Compounding Joy"

Day Five: "God Owns Everything, I'm Just His Money Manager"

Using the lectio divina process (described below), meditate on this Bible verse:
"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it." Psalm 24:1 (FiCB, p. 606)

To help yourself meditate on this verse:

- Find a quiet, comfortable spot to sit where you won't be disturbed
- Take a moment to pray the prayer of protection (in bold) below
- Close your eyes and be still in God's presence for a moment
- Slowly read the scripture aloud
- Read it again, emphasizing the first word as you read out loud
- Next time, emphasize the second word
- Keep going, emphasizing each word in turn . . . take time for God's words to sink in
- Take time to answer some of these questions: Which reading gave you new thoughts? What did it make you think? What does this verse mean for you in your life now? Does it tell me that I need to change anything in my life -- my attitudes, my actions, my thoughts?
- Take time to pray and confess any sins that may have been shown to you. Ask Jesus to help you have victory in this area. Thank Jesus for anything he revealed to you. Ask him to make it real in your life today.

Dear Heavenly Father, I know you are in this room with me and in my life. I want to know your Word better and have a closer relationship to you. I ask for your complete protection and for your guidance as I meditate and pray now. In the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command Satan and all evil spirits to flee. I bind their power in Jesus' name. I ask, Father, that you close my ears and heart to any deceptions that Satan would try to plant in my mind. I want to hear only your voice, Heavenly Father. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and lead me into all truth. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

-A Word about Meditation in General

Lectio divina is a form of contemplative prayer and meditation on Scripture. It's different from other forms of meditation that people today practice. We need to understand that many kinds of meditation (such as Transcendental Meditation) can allow the enemy, Satan, to get a foothold in our lives. Just because we are learning here a specific type of meditation doesn't mean that any kind of meditation is OK to practice. We need to be careful.

Lectio Divina -- Background

Lectio divina [LEK sio di VEE na] is an old form of prayer that early Christians used. Through lectio divina, which means "sacred reading," we take time to read God's holy Word over and over again until we memorize it and allow it to sink deep into our heart and mind. The early Christians believed that as they read the Word in this manner, they would hear from God -- hear him speak to their heart through his inspired Word.

In our busy society today, we like to do everything fast. It takes discipline for us to slow down and devote time to meditate on God's word and to pray. If you want to develop a deeper prayer life and have a more intimate relationship with your blessed Savior, Jesus, then you will do well to use lectio divina as part of your weekly devotional time.