

DAY 1: "God's Teaching on Giving"

Read: Leviticus 27:30; Luke 11:42 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 141, 1174)

Read: The Treasure Principle, p. 59 to top of p. 61

Reflect: In the Old Testament, God required people to give him a tithe of everything they grew. A tithe means "a tenth" or ten percent of what came in. They also could give freewill offerings, but the tithe was required. It is also important to note that God asked for the "firstfruits" or the first ten percent of what they took in. That part was to be holy to the Lord. In the New Testament Jesus agrees that we should give the tithe, but all the other examples of giving in the New Testament go far beyond the first ten percent.

What are some things we can give to God?

Dig: In Old Testament times, most people lived on the food they grew. They didn't have to work outside of their homes to earn money to buy food and clothing like we do today.

According to Leviticus 27:30, what were the people of God required to give a tithe of? (A tithe is equal to ten percent.)

As most of us no longer grow our own food to make a living, what do you think we would use to give God our tithe today?

Do we still have to give God ten percent of what we earn, according to Luke 11:42?

In the Luke passage, Jesus said that there were two other things we should not neglect. What were they?

Apply: Since "tithe" means ten percent and everything is supposed to be tithed, what change do you think you should make? When will you begin?

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

Read: Leviticus 27:30 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 141)

Activity: Give your child/children ten pennies. Ask them to give you one back. Explain to them that this is what the "tithe" is - one-tenth or ten percent of what they get. Explain that this is what God commands us to give him in the Bible. Show them by reading the verse from Leviticus.

Dig: Ask your child/children where they could give their tithe so that God could use it for his work.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to obey you by giving you ten percent of all I get. In Jesus' name. Amen.

WEEK FIVE: "Getting Started"

DAY 2: "Training Wheels"

Read: Malachi 3:6-12 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1069)

Read: The Treasure Principle, top of p. 61 to bottom of p. 64

Reflect: In The Treasure Principle, the author describes giving as a skill we can learn. He says, "With practice, we can get better at it." (The Treasure Principle, p. 65) The tithe is kind of like "training wheels" for us – it is a good place to start learning how to give to God. In the Old Testament, the Israelites were "robbing" God by not giving him anything more than just their required ten percent. God wants us to be obedient to him in giving – we're to give him our required ten percent, but then more according to how much he has blessed us. He promises to pour out blessings on us if we do.

Did you ever use training wheels on your bike? What did you use them for?

Dig: According to Malachi 3:10, what is the reason we are to tithe? What does this mean? (Think of the workings of our church today.)

According to Malachi 3:8-9 what does God call it when we don't give the whole tithe?

Why is it important to give the whole tithe? What blessings does God promise if we do give the whole tithe?

Why do you think it's important to start giving a tithe (ten percent) on all you get now?

Apply: Ask God to help you practice giving by giving the full tithe (tenth) of everything you get.

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

Read: Malachi 3:6-10 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1069-1070)

Activity: Start practicing giving your child/children a small sum of money to tithe from each week. Have them set aside the first ten percent in a special place as their tithe. On Sunday, remind them to bring their tithe with them to give. Start this week.

Dig: After they give their tithe on Sunday, ask them if it was hard or easy to give that portion they had set aside for God. Ask them how they think it makes God feel when they give to him. Explain to them that by tithing they are learning to put God first and trust him for their needs.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for providing for all of my needs. Thank you that I can give to you. Help me to remember to set aside my tithe (your part) each week and bring it to church to give to you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

WEEK FIVE: "Getting Started"

DAY 3: "Give It Now or Give It Later"

Read: James 4:13-17 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1447)

Read: The Treasure Principle, bottom of p. 66 to middle of 69.

Reflect: When should we give our tithes and offerings to God? In this chapter the author encourages us not to wait, but to give to God now. James 4:17 also says, "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins." (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1447) We need to be faithful to give to God when we have it and not wait.

Look at a coin or a dollar bill. What does it say about God? Is this true of you?

Dig: In James 4:14, it says that our life is "a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." What does this verse say about tomorrow?

Do you think we should put off giving to God what we have set aside for him?

What do you think might happen if you waited to give to God until later?

James 4:15 and 16 reflect two different attitudes toward God and life. Which one do you think God honors?

Do you trust God with your money? How can we be obedient to God according to James 4:17? How does that tie into your giving?

Apply: Begin this week to set aside the first ten percent of everything you get as a tithe to the Lord. Bring it to church and give it this week. Don't put it off. Ask the Lord to help you honor him in your giving. Seek to do this each week with everything you take in.

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

Read: James 4:13-17 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1447)

Activity: Take out a coin or dollar bill and have your child/children look at it. Ask them to find a sentence that talks about God. Ask them what it says.

Dig: Ask your children what the phrase "In God We Trust" means. How does it apply to our money?

How can we show God that we trust him to provide for us? What can we give to God first?

Are we being obedient if we have the money set aside as our tithe but don't give it when we can? Read James 4:17 with your child. Ask your child what might happen if he or she kept the money to give until later.

Prayer: Dear God, help me to trust you with the money I am given. Help me to obey you and be faithful to give you your part first. In Jesus' name. Amen.

WEEK FIVE: "Getting Started"

DAY 4: "Why Has God Entrusted So Much to Us?"

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:10-11 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1337)
Read: The Treasure Principle, middle of p. 72 to middle of p. 75

Reflect: God has blessed us with much so we can be generous with others. We are God's servants – we do not live for ourselves but to obey him and carry out his plans. His plans are to use us to help meet the needs of others and in doing so, bring glory and praise to him.

Why do you think God gives us so much?

Dig: Who does our money really belong to?

Why does God give us so much according to 2 Corinthians 9:10-11?

On p. 74 in The Treasure Principle the author says that we are called God's servants. What does a servant do? Who does the servant obey?

Servants are to "prove faithful" according to 1 Corinthians 4:2. How can you "prove faithful" in your giving?

How does our giving generously bring praise and thanksgiving to God?

Apply: Prayer: Dear God, help me to prove faithful by giving generously. Help me bring praise and thanks to you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1337)

Activity: Read the passage together. From the sum of money you gave your child on day two, encourage them to set aside an extra amount to give this Sunday. Let them choose how much extra they would like to give.

Option: A fun idea for you as a family might be to identify a specific need (like purchasing a bed for a poor family) or pick an item from a ministry's gift catalog to take a special offering for. You can save up the offerings over a certain length of time or give them as a one-time gift. It's a great way for children to learn that the money they give does help others, and they tend to give joyfully for something they can see.

Dig: What kind of giver does God love? Are you a cheerful giver?

Talk over what some of the offerings at church are used for (i.e. missions, Christian Education, deacon's fund, etc.). Help your child to understand that the money they give goes to do God's work and to help others.

Prayer: Dear God, help me to give generously and cheerfully. Please use the money I give to help others. In Jesus' name. Amen.

WEEK FIVE: "Getting Started"

DAY 5: "Neither Too Little Nor Too Much"

Using the lectio divina process (described below), meditate on this Bible verse:

"Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God."

Proverbs 30:8-9 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 726)

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.

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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.