

Thanking God With Our Gifts



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 24

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 6:19–21; Ephesians 2:8; 1 Peter 4:10; Luke 7:37–47.

MEMORY VERSE: “God so loved the world [people] that He gave His only Son. Whoever puts his trust in God’s Son will not be lost but will have life that lasts forever” (John 3:16, NLV).

OUR GOD loves to give. This great truth is shown in the gift of Jesus’ death. “God so loved the world [people] that He gave His only Son. Whoever puts his trust in God’s Son will not be lost but will have life that lasts forever” (John 3:16, NLV). This truth also is shown in Luke 11:13.

God gives and gives. He gives because He is kind and not selfish. So, we need to give too. We want to be as kind and unselfish as God is. After all, who ever heard of “a selfish Christian”? A true Christian is not!

True Christians give back to God from the gifts God gives them. What is one way we give to God? We give Him our special gifts of money. These gifts give us a wonderful chance to show God our thanks and love. Now think about the day when Jesus welcomes us all into heaven. We will see many people there in heaven who were saved because of the gifts of money we gave to God. Our gifts made it possible for the Good News to be shared with these souls. They accepted the truth and will be in heaven because of the gifts we gave back to God to help spread the message. What a precious thought!

This week, we will look at what it means to give. We can give our money, time, and talents to God.



True Christians give back to God from the gifts God gives them.

“ ‘WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS’ ” (Matthew 6:21, ICB)

Read Matthew 6:19–21. As we see in these verses, the treasures on this earth try to control our lives. How can we escape from their control?

“ ‘Your heart will be where [in the same place as] your riches are’ ” (Matthew 6:21, NIV). In this verse, Jesus asks us to be wise with our money and the things we own. We can choose to save our treasures on earth. Or we can save our treasures in heaven. Jesus uses three words to talk about what can destroy our treasures on this earth. Those three words are “moths,” “rust,” and “thieves” (read Matthew 6:19, ICB). These three things show how the treasures on this earth last only a short time. We all have learned how quickly the things on this earth can be used up and disappear. “Everything on earth easily changes. Nothing seems certain or safe. Everything breaks down. Or it is destroyed, stolen, or lost. But heaven is very different. Everything in heaven lasts forever. Nothing there fades away. There is no loss in heaven.”—C. Adelina Alexe, “Where Your Heart Belongs,” in *Beyond Blessings [God’s favor]*, edited by Nikolaus Satelmajer (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 2013), page 22, adapted.

Think of everything you own. Maybe you do not own many things. But soon, most of your things will be thrown away. So, people who are wise managers for God will put their treasures in heaven. Nothing loses value there. Our treasures will be safe there too. We do not need to worry about thieves breaking into heaven to steal our things.

In Matthew 6:19–21, we learn one of the most important ideas about being good managers of everything God gives us. Your treasure wants to control your heart. And your heart follows your treasure. So, where you put your treasure is very important. We must be careful not to fill our minds only with thoughts of what we need and what else we want. Those things make it harder for us to think about heaven.

What if we say we believe in God, but we put our treasures on earth? Then we are not honest. What we do must match what we say. So, we must have the faith to believe that the gifts we give to God are saved as treasures in heaven (2 Corinthians 5:7).

As we see in Hebrews 10:34, what is the difference between treasure on earth and treasure in heaven?



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SHARING GOD'S LOVING-FAVOR WITH PEOPLE (Ephesians 2:8)

As we see in Ephesians 2:8, what great gift has God given to us?

God's great gift to us is grace. Grace is God's loving-favor. We did nothing to earn this gift. We are not worthy of it. But God poured out His loving-favor on this planet. God's loving-favor will change our lives forever. So, we must not reject this precious gift. God's great gift to us includes all the riches and power of heaven (2 Corinthians 8:9). Even angels are surprised at this wonderful gift (1 Peter 1:12).

God gives us many gifts. But the gift of His loving-favor is the best gift of all. Without the promise of God's loving-favor, we would have no hope for our sins. Sin has awful power. Humans cannot ever hope to be free of the power of sin on their own. Our obeying God's law cannot free us from sin or give us life. "Is the Law against the promise of God? No! Never! If it had been possible to be saved from the punishment of sin by obeying the Law, then being right with God would have come by [from] obeying the law" (Galatians 3:21, NLV). God's law was perfect. But Paul says even God's perfect law could not save us. Only God's loving-favor can save us.

Read 1 Peter 4:10. What does caring wisely for God's gifts to us have to do with His loving-favor? Also, explain how giving to God and to others shows His loving-favor.



Giving gifts to other people shows them God's loving-favor.

Peter says that we must share with other people the gifts God gives to us. "God has given each of you a gift. Use it to help each other. This will show God's loving-favor" (1 Peter 4:10, NLV). Yes, God gives us gifts. So, we need to give back to God and other people from the gifts God gives us. God gave us these gifts because of our faith in Him. God did not give them to us so that we could use them only for our own pleasure. Instead, God gave us these gifts to help spread the Good News about Jesus to other people. God gave His gifts to us because He wanted us to have them. So, we need to give to people in every way we can. Giving gifts to other people shows them God's loving-favor.

Think about all of God's gifts to you. How can you be a good manager of the loving-favor God gives to you?

OUR BEST GIFT (Luke 7:37–47)

Read Luke 7:37–47. What does the story found in these verses teach us about the right reason for giving to God?

Luke says Mary entered the room and saw Jesus at the table. She opened her jar of expensive perfume. Then she poured it on His feet. People in the room thought what Mary did was wrong. What is worse, Mary was an awful sinner.

But Jesus freed Mary from the demons that controlled her (Luke 8:2). Later, Jesus brought her brother Lazarus back to life from the dead. And Mary's heart was filled with thanks to God. Mary's perfume was worth more than anything else that she owned. Mary showed Jesus her thankfulness when she poured her perfume on Jesus' feet.

This story shows the reason why we should give our gifts to God. We should give because we are thankful to God for everything He does for us. We should feel thankful to God for giving us the precious gift of His loving-favor. God's gift to us should cause us to want to give too. The gifts we give to God from grateful hearts make our gifts worth a lot in God's eyes. These gifts include more than just our money. These gifts include our time, talents, skills, treasures, and our bodies.

Read Exodus 34:26; Leviticus 22:19–24; and Numbers 18:29. These verses talk about bringing gifts to God. Maybe we would not bring to God the gifts talked about in these verses. But what important rule can we learn from these verses about why we should bring our gifts to God?

Our best gifts may seem small in our eyes. But they are worth a lot in God's eyes. We show we put God first in our lives when we give Him the best gifts we have. We do not give gifts to get God's favor. Instead, we give gifts to God because we are thankful for the gift of Jesus.

"We must bring God our gifts with grateful hearts. Then the smallest gifts we offer Him will be filled with the perfume of heaven. Those gifts will have more value than we ever will know. Look at all we owe God! All our gifts to God seem very small next to the gifts He gives us. Our gifts may seem very poor to us. But angels take these gifts to God, and God accepts them."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies [Messages] for the Church*, volume 3, page 397, adapted.



Mary opened her jar of expensive perfume. Then she poured it on Jesus' feet. This story shows the reason why we should give our gifts to God. We should give because we are thankful to God for all He does for us.

THE TRUE REASONS FOR GIVING (2 Corinthians 8:8–15)

Luke tells about the widow who gave a large gift to God (Luke 21:1–4). True, rich people gave more money than she did. But in God's eyes the widow's gift was big. It showed what was in her heart. Her gift caused Jesus to say, " 'This poor widow gave only two small coins. But she really gave more than all those rich people' " (Luke 21:3, ICB).

Only God knows our true reasons for doing things (James 4:12; Proverbs 16:2; 1 Corinthians 4:5). We may do the right thing for the wrong reason. We do not need a lot of faith to give gifts when we already have many things from God. But what if we give when we do not have a lot of things to begin with? Then we show the love in our hearts.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:8–15. What does Paul say in these verses about giving and the reasons why we should give? What important rule can we learn from these verses about being wise managers over everything God gives us?

There are many different reasons for why we give. Some of these reasons are very selfish. Some of these reasons are because we want to help people. There is a fight going on inside us between selfishness and our desire to give. This spiritual war is fought in our hearts and minds more than any other spiritual fight. Selfishness will make a heart become cold after it was on fire for God. The problem starts when we let selfishness come into our lives. Then we try to find reasons to make our selfishness seem OK.

But the true reasons for giving are found in one word: love. We cannot show love if we are not willing to say "No" to pleasing ourselves. Also, we must be willing to give to other people. Sometimes giving means we need to give up something we want so that we can help someone else.

We must show God's love in our lives. Then our giving will show His love. A selfish heart loves only self. So, we must ask God to help us to " 'obey the Lord' " and " 'not be strong-willed [stubborn] any more' " (Deuteronomy 10:16, NLV). Then we can love other people as God loves us.

Love is the real reason for true giving and helping the poor. God's love for us leads us to love Him back.

What is wrong with giving money to God because we feel a duty to give and not because we love Him?



The true reason for giving is found in one word: love.

THE GOOD THAT COMES FROM GIVING (2 Corinthians 9:6, 7)

Jesus came to show us the love of God. So, we should understand clearly one thing by now: God loves us. He wants only the best for us. He asks us to do only what would be good for us. He never asks us to do anything that would hurt us. God asks us to be giving. He wants us to be happy givers. So, we should be happy when we bring Him our gifts of money. Then those gifts will bless us as much as they bless the people who get them. Only the people who give with a happy heart will know that giving is better than getting.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7. How do these verses show us what giving should be about?

Giving a large amount of money to God can and should be a very spiritual experience. Giving shows our faith. Our gifts show how thankful we are to God for everything He gives to us in Jesus.

Giving causes our faith to grow stronger. The Bible tells us that “faith that does nothing is worth nothing” (James 2:20, ICB). So, we must show our faith by what we do. There is no better way to make our faith grow stronger. When we give, we show the love and kindness of God. Did you know that when you give, you also learn more about God? It is true! We experience the goodness of God when we give to people. So, giving builds our trust in God. Giving helps us to “examine and see how good the Lord is. Happy is the person who trusts the Lord” (Psalm 34:8, ICB).

“The face of Jesus shines with great beauty. That great beauty comes from His unselfish love. The Cross shows us that the law of love is the law of life for heaven and earth. Love that does not try to please self starts in the heart of God. In Jesus, we see that love. That love comes from the Father.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 20, adapted.

In what ways has your faith grown from giving freely from all the things God gives you?



When we give, we show the love and kindness of God.



“What happens when the followers of Jesus look at the cross? Then their hearts are filled with the desire to give, give.”—Ellen G. White, in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 17, 1882, adapted.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “God has an unselfish heart. But selfishness is the action of Satan. Jesus showed His love for us when He died on the cross. He gave everything He had to save us. Then He gave up His life. What happens when the followers of Jesus look at the cross? Then their hearts are filled with the desire to give, give. That is the law of the cross. We must follow this law in our lives by sharing and doing good works. These things show a true Christian life. The law that rules this earth is to get, get. The people who live only to get things feel that getting things will make them happy. But these people will experience only suffering and death.”—Ellen G. White, in *Advent [Having to do with the Second Coming] Review [Magazine] and Sabbath Herald [Announcements]*, October 17, 1882, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Why is our selfishness very different from the unselfish heart of God? What are some things we can do to stop acting selfish?
- ② “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give. You [should not] give if you [do not] want to. You [should not] give because you are [feel] forced to. God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7, NIV). The Greek word written as “cheerful” appears only one time in the New Testament. This Greek word also can mean “showing a lot of joy.” What should this meaning tell us about how we should feel when we give?
- ③ Make a list of everything that Jesus gives us. What does this list teach you about why we should give? At the same time, what does this list teach us about how our very best gifts to God can seem so small next to the gifts God gives to us?
- ④ Why is selfishness the best way to make yourself unhappy?
- ⑤ Think of someone in your own church family who is in need. You may have to live without something you need so that you can help this person. But remember that Jesus gave up everything to save you. So, what can you do right now to help this person?