

# *Live a God-Pleasing Life!*

## **Bible Study 3 (Part 1)**

### *Generosity Is the Hallmark (part one)*

#### **Prayer**

*Lord, you are the owner of all the animals in the forest and the cattle on a thousand hills. Through faith, we know that all we are and have are gifts from you, and, in our giving, we are merely returning to you what you have already given to us. We pray that you will grant us giving and generous hearts. We ask you to bless this study as we examine your words that pertain to our need as your children to give generously. May all that we say and do give you honor and glory. In your precious name we pray. Amen.*

#### **Our Generous God**

*"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1). Our generous God has given us the whole earth in which to live. He has given us light and darkness, the seas and the dry land, towering mountains and deep canyons, tiny flowering plants and giant sequoias, microscopic animals and huge sea creatures, birds that soar higher than the eye can see and fish that inhabit the depths of the ocean. The universe is so vast that no one has come to an end of its exploration. Its study has occupied the minds of brilliant scholars for centuries and to think about its breadth and beauty and mystery overwhelms us. Besides this vast creation, God, our generous Father has created for each of us a special place, a niche that is our own. He began with Adam. *"Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed"* (Genesis 2:8). It was a perfect place, a place of such beauty and perfection that we often use the phrase "Garden of Eden" to describe an ideal location or situation.

Adam was the steward of that garden. *"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it"* (Genesis 2:15). From this we learn that stewardship is the oldest activity on earth. It was the first task God gave to us, and it remains our task to this day. Even though Adam sinned and was banished from the Garden, he still served as a steward of God's creation. Until that time, he served with complete joy and in perfect harmony with the owner. Whereas his stewardship of the Garden was effortless, outside the Garden his labors increased, and he obtained his food by the sweat of his brow (Genesis 3:19).



Adam was not content to let God be God. Since that time, we, too, are not content to be stewards; we want to be the owners. That greed has impeded our stewardship throughout the

whole history of mankind. God, our generous Father, gives us all we need, but Satan's temptation, along with our own sinful nature, gets us off track, and we try to go our own ways. Instead of imitating and responding to God's generosity, we store up and hoard the gifts he's given us. Like Adam, we lose the joy of our stewardship as we find ourselves outside the protective garden walls.

What a sad, hopeless situation! But God, seeing our plight, indeed, knowing what would happen even before He laid the foundation of the world, came to our rescue with his most generous gift of all: his very own Son. Of Christ, God said to Satan, "*He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel*" (Genesis 3:15b). Satan knew he was beaten, and we know we are triumphant. Daily and richly God pours out his forgiveness on us, his wayward stewards. Daily and richly he provides for all our physical and bodily needs. Daily and richly he sustains that which he has created, generously giving us the task of being stewards of his gifts.

Jesus, our generous brother and true God, has the same character as his Father. He, too, gives without measure. He left the glory of Heaven for a bed in a manger. He laid aside the Ruler's crown for a crown of thorns. He removed the royal robes so that he might wash his disciples' feet wearing a towel around his waist. He gave his life for us; his blood was spilled and his body bruised so that we might be healed (Isaiah 53:5). This was the ultimate gift. "*Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!*" (2 Corinthians 9:15). He generously gave himself, holding nothing back, asking nothing in return.

Jesus' giving did not end with his Ascension, for, from his place at his Father's right hand, he intercedes for us. He promises to prepare special places for us that will be ready when we meet him in Heaven. He generously gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, who convicts us of sin so that we do not continue in unbelief leading to eternal destruction and who guides us into Truth.

When we stop to ponder the gifts of our generous God, we must stand in awe. Even more mind-boggling is the realization that he gives these gifts regardless of our response! "*He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous*" (Matthew 5:45). Even though we hoard our gifts, he continues to provide for us. Even though we reject his gift of eternal life, he does not withdraw it. Even though we ignore him, he never takes his eyes off us (Matthew 10:29-31).

## **Questions for Discussion**

1. How has the improper understanding of ownership affected your stewardship?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 4:7. Are you giving to God or is there another word that more aptly describes what is taking place?
3. Read Luke 12:48. Have you "been given much"? In what specific ways can you respond to God's generosity?
4. Read Isaiah 53 and meditate on Jesus' giving of his life for you. How can you respond to that love and that gift?
5. Read John 16:5-15. What gifts does the Holy Spirit give to you?

## God's Generosity Through Others

*"The Lord said to Moses, '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.' . . . and everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the Lord . . . All who were willing, men and women alike, came and brought gold jewelry of all kinds . . . yarn . . . hides . . . silver or bronze . . . acacia wood . . . fine linen . . . stones and gems . . . spices and olive oil . . . All the Israelite men and women who were willing brought to the Lord freewill offerings . . ."* (Exodus 25:1-2; 35:selected passages). Wow! Can you imagine such wealth? Where did it come from? After



all, these Israelites were nomads in a desert with no home. As always, it came from God's hand. God's generosity through others prepared their way. In Exodus 11, we read of God's plan to provide the Israelites with what they would need. *"Now the Lord had said to Moses, 'I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt . . . Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold.' (The Lord made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh's officials and by the people"* (Exodus 11:1, 2).

God never asks for that which he does not supply. As the Israelites were abundantly blessed, they generously gave. They gave so much they had to be restrained. *". . . the skilled craftsmen . . . said to Moses, 'The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the Lord commanded to be done.' 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 . . . ' so the people were restrained from bringing more, because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work."* (Exodus 36:4-7).

Has this been the case in your church? Have you come to church one Sunday morning and heard the pastor announce, "Please don't give any more money. We've paid all our bills and have a surplus. We've raised the salaries of our teachers and staff so that they can live in luxury. We have fed the hungry and provided homes for the homeless. We have sent offerings to all the war-torn and disaster-ravaged countries of the world. Our missionaries are well cared for and we have excess money in our scholarship funds for the education of those called to ministry"? Not in this century!

Why is it that so many churches suffer deficits? Why are the shepherds of our flocks struggling to make ends meet? Why do the harvest fields lack for workers? Why are children dying of starvation? Is it because Christians lack resources to carry out the work God has left us on earth to complete? If God provided for the Israelites in the desert with no means of support, will he not also provide for us so that we, too, can bring our offerings?

Hundreds of years after the building of that Tabernacle, King David set out to build a Temple for the Lord. Although the Lord did not allow him to do the actual building, it was he who was given the original idea and made the plans for it. He was the fund-raiser, also. First he set the example: *"Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of*

gold and silver for the temple of my God, over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple" (1 Chronicles 29:3), and then he went on to list his contributions. Then he issued a challenge to his people: "Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the Lord?" (verse 5)

The people willingly followed David's encouragement to give generously. In his prayer he said, "And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you" (1 Chronicles 29:17b).

David was a wealthy man. Beginning as a shepherd boy, rising in Saul's household from harp player to warrior, losing Saul's favor and becoming his enemy, hunted and threatened for years, David finally ascended the throne God had promised him as a very young man. God had been faithful to him throughout his life, and now, in his prosperity, David had not forgotten his God. Studying David's life, we realize there is nothing wrong or sinful in Christians' having wealth, if, like David, we acknowledge that it is God's gift to us and we use it for his glory.

Problems arise when we forget that we are only stewards, not owners, of anything we possess. When we desire to accumulate wealth and consider it our own, we make a god of our earthly treasure instead of allowing others to see God's generosity through us. David never saw the temple; his son Solomon was the one who actually built it. David had an eternal perspective, though, which enabled him to look beyond the here and now to what would be.

What was the key to David's joy in generosity? We find the answer when we come to David's Prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:10-13: "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; Wealth and honor come from you . . . we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name." David knew absolutely and certainly that everything he had was God's; he only used it – and he used it for God's glory. And he was grateful for it! His heart was full of thanksgiving. It pours out of his prayer, and his gratitude spilled over into the people: "Then David said to the whole assembly, 'Praise the Lord your God.' So they all praised the Lord . . . they bowed low and fell prostrate before the Lord and the king" (verse 20).

## Questions for Discussion

6. Read Exodus 25:1-2.
  - a. Who commanded the Israelites to give?
  - b. To whom and what were they giving?
  - c. Who is to give? (Read also 2 Corinthians 9:7. Where did Paul get the idea about how we are to give?)
7. Read Exodus 35:4-29. Jot down the thoughts that mean the most to you—the thoughts that convict you—the thoughts that encourage you.

What's significant to me?

What convicts me?

What encourages me?

8. Read Exodus 35:30-36:7.
  - a. Who were Bezalel and Oholiab? How did their practice of good stewardship show us God's generosity through others?

- b. What kind of stewardship was being practiced here?
9. Read 1 Chronicles 29:1-9.
- a. How was David a stewardship leader?
  - b. How did the people respond?
10. Read David's Prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:10-19, phrase by phrase.
- a. What "points" does David cover in his prayer?
  - b. What can you learn from his prayer about your stewardship?

## **Prayer**

*Dear Lord, we thank you for your Word that teaches us how important it is for us to be generous with our time, talents, and treasures. Please open our eyes and hearts to the needs of others and the needs of your church. Help us to respond with loving, caring, and generous hearts. May our generous giving give you honor and glory. We ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. **Amen.***

# Bible Study 3 (Part 2)

## *Generosity Is the Hallmark (part two)*

### Prayer

*Dear heavenly Father, we ask your blessing on this study as we again examine our need to grow in the grace of giving. You have so abundantly blessed us, and, through our giving, we demonstrate our gratitude for who you are and what you continue to do for us each day. Just as you want us to “excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in [our] love” (2 Corinthians 8:7) help us to excel in the grace of giving. May our time together today give you honor and glory. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*

### God's Generosity Through Us

Because of God’s generosity to us, we should live with an attitude of gratitude. Just like any of God's gifts, this is not an attitude we can work up on our own. God builds it into us as we reflect on who he is and what he has done for us. This happens through Word and Sacrament. Already we've read several portions of Scripture that focus on the gratitude of others. Through the Word and in the Word, we are reminded of the grace of God that is ours. As we participate in the life-giving Sacrament of the Altar, we are grateful for the body and blood of Jesus who gave his life for us.



Christ redeemed us not just for eternal life, but in order that we might be his faithful stewards on earth as we live and work in a loving relationship with our Father. The Apostle Paul wrote, *"For it is by grace you have been saved . . . for we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do"* (Ephesians 2:8,10). What are those works? Jesus said, *"The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent"* (John 6:29). The Apostle James contended that *"faith without deeds is dead"* (James 2:26). Since God has given us faith and

has given us gifts, we must be good stewards of those gifts. The only way we can do that is to help, serve, and give to others, just as Christ did during his ministry on Earth. We must follow the example of Christ who said he came to *"preach good news to the poor . . . proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed"* (Luke 4:8).

God's first command to his first steward, Adam, was, *"Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it"* (Genesis 1:28). Usually we think of that in terms of physical replenishment, but, especially in light of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), we can

understand replenish to mean spiritual reproduction. That is our goal as Christians: to be good stewards of all God has given us in order that his Kingdom might be expanded on earth.

## Generous with Our Treasures

In what areas should God's generosity through us be seen? First of all, in our giving we've studied the giving of the Israelites of Moses' time and of David's era. We've learned that their generosity sprang from hearts filled with gratitude. We should be aware by now that we have no less reason, no fewer blessings than they, for which to be grateful to God. Gratitude is the best motive for giving. Gratitude expands our hearts and minds to give and produces even more joy within us. We also give to show God that we love him. The Apostle Peter urged his readers to *"grow in the grace and knowledge of [their] Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 3:18). The grace of Christ is his infinite love for us, his undeserving children, evidenced in his giving of his very life. As we grow in his grace, we will be even more eager to give. We also give to honor God. Think about the shepherds and the wise men who came to the manger and gave what gifts they had to honor the Christ Child. Solomon wrote that not just any gift honors God, but admonished, *"Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops"* (Proverbs 3:9).



No one is exempt from the command to give. Has God's grace bypassed any of us? The Apostle Paul wrote, *"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income . . ."* (1 Corinthians 16:2). Each one of you should give. Many of us can recount times when we thought we just had nothing to give. We were in debt; we saw no way to give. Look at what Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians: *"And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will"* (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). Study this closely to see where their generous giving originated.

- ✚ What was given to the Macedonian churches?
- ✚ Did they give because they were rich with lots of wealth to spare?
- ✚ Did they give because Paul pleaded with them to give?
- ✚ To whom did they give?
- ✚ How could they possibly do what they did?

Each of us is to give his first and best. Re-read Proverbs 3:9. Search the Scriptures to see what kind of offering pleases God. *"In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did*

*not look with favor"* (Genesis 4:3-5). A haphazard gift does not honor God; our leftovers are not worthy of God who gave his best. We need to offer the best we have.

We should give generously with an attitude of thankfulness that God will even accept our gifts. We previously read David's Prayer in which he prayed, *"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand"* (1 Chronicles 29:14). We are like children who get an allowance from their dad so they can buy him a Father's Day present. Most dads are thrilled with those gifts, but small children don't even realize how the transaction has occurred. As mature Christians, we come humbly before our Lord, offering our first and best with thankfulness that God is honored by our giving back what has always been his.

Part of Paul's direction on giving was that each of us should give *"in keeping with his income"* (1 Corinthians 16:2). If we give proportionately and, if we are giving our first and best with a humble attitude of thankfulness, we need not be concerned with the size of our gifts. God does not require from us what we don't have. Again, we look to Paul for encouragement: *"For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have"* (2 Corinthians 8:12).

*"If the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable."* If we are willing to honor God, not ourselves, our gifts are acceptable. Jesus told us how to give: *"When you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you"* (Matthew 6:3-4). He said that, if we want glory from men, that will be our only reward (verse 5). If we are willing to give in response to God, not to earn favor with him, our gifts are acceptable. *"Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him"* (Romans 11:35)? What could we possibly offer to God that is on a par with the least of his gifts to us? Yes, *"if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable,"* for *"God loves a cheerful giver"* (2 Corinthians 9:7).

## **Questions for Discussion**

1. What attitudes are necessary for you to be a generous giver?
2. What part do Word and Sacrament play in your life as a generous steward living a God-pleasing life?
3. What are proper motives for giving? Wrong motives?
4. What stewardship principles for giving are indicated in 1 Corinthians 16:2?
5. Why was Cain's offering not pleasing to God (Genesis 4:3-5)?
6. In light of the last two Scripture references, are your offerings God-pleasing?
7. What did the prophet Malachi have to say about your offerings to God (Malachi 3:8-12)?

## **Generous with Our Time**

God's generosity through us is seen in ways other than giving of material things. Jesus himself was born in poverty. His parents were among the working class. When they went to Bethlehem for the census, they didn't have reservations at the Ritz; the place for them was a cattle shed, and Jesus' bed was a manger. As he grew up, Jesus, the carpenter's son, did not build

a thriving business which made him rich. During his three-year earthly ministry, he did not earn an executive salary. Jesus was very poor in material goods, but, oh, the gifts he gave!

Jesus gave the gift of time. Do we ever read in Scripture that Jesus went somewhere in haste? Do we read that he was too busy to talk to someone, to heal someone, or to show compassion to someone? No, we know Jesus was generous with his time. One of the most tender passages of Scripture deals with Jesus' love for children. Although he was exhausted from teaching the crowds, when mothers and fathers brought their children to him to be touched by him, Jesus welcomed them. When the disciples tried to set their Master's priorities for him, telling the parents to take their children away, Jesus *"called the children to him and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these' "* (Luke 18:16). Jesus was generous with his time.

Solomon wrote, *"A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed"* (Proverbs 11:25). When we allow our schedules to be interrupted in order to do a favor for a neighbor, we remember the good feeling that came from giving of our time much longer than the task we had originally planned. Having given generously of our time to "refresh" another, we ourselves are refreshed.

The Apostle Paul reminds us to make use of the time we're given, for the opportunities to use our time for God's purposes may be limited. *"Be very careful, then, how you live -- not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is"* (Ephesians 5:15-17). We know what the Lord's will is. Jesus showed us every day what his will is. The servant is like the Master. As the Master gave of his time, so should we, his servants.

Our time on earth may be brief. Jesus had about thirty-three years, three of them in public ministry. Very few of us know how long or short our lives will be, but, in relation to the age of the world, our time is very short. *"As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work"* (John 9:4).

We're so busy. Families color-code their calendars to make sure each offspring is where he or she is supposed to be at the right time. Even the children must plan their days to have sufficient time for school, homework, and extracurricular activities, and we read about the lack of sleep that is just part of a teenager's life. Executives plan their lunches and dinners to meet clients so as not to waste any time. Do we have time for the "work of him who sent him"? God takes time to provide the sun and rain and all of nature for our use. He takes time to provide for all our needs and most of our wants. He takes time to hear every prayer, no matter when it is uttered. He says to us, *"Open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest"* (John 4:35). This work was so important to Jesus that he called it his "food" in the preceding verse. It should be important for us, as well, to take time to do God's work.

The use of Jesus' time and the works he did go together. The time he gave to others always resulted in helping them. After all, that's why he came to earth. *". . . the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"* (Matthew 20:28). The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, *"Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds"* (1 Timothy 6:18). We aren't given an option; we are commanded to do good works. God has given each of us gifts to use in service to the Body of Christ. *"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms"* (1 Peter 4:10). Peter goes on to describe some of the gifts God has given to equip his church for service.

## Generous with Our Abilities

It is important not to put too much emphasis on human abilities. On the one side, this can lead to self-pride, while, on the other, it can excuse the shy, less self-assured person from getting involved. The great Apostle Paul wrote, *"When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God . . . so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power"* (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). It is God's generosity through us that allows us to use the gifts he gives us for his glory, not our own, and for the furthering of the Cross of Christ, not our own agendas.

God uses us in spite of what we are, rather than because of what we are. *"God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things . . . so that no one may boast before him . . . Let him who boasts boast in the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 1:27-31). He chose us. We, with all our faults and weaknesses, are the stewards to whom God has entrusted his gifts and his work. Not our money, our time, nor our gifts produce the results. This is not our boast. No, our boast is in our weakness, *"For when [we] are weak, then [we] are strong"* (2 Corinthians 12:10).

## Questions for Discussion

8. What keeps you from expending time on behalf of others?
9. Read 1 Corinthians 12.
  - a. What is the first gift the Holy Spirit gives you?
  - b. Why is it essential for you to have that gift before you do your "good deeds" (Isaiah 64:6; Hebrews 11:6)
  - c. What are verses 4-6 emphasizing?
  - d. Are you sure you've been given a spiritual gift (See verse 7)?
  - e. What gifts does Paul mention here? For a more in-depth study, see also Romans 12:18 and 1 Peter 4:7-11. Participating in a spiritual gifts discovery class through your church will also help you to identify and use your gift(s).
10. Are human abilities the same as spiritual gifts?
11. Read Galatians 6:2-10. What needs of others are currently being addressed through the gifts of your time and service?
12. Read Matthew 25:40. What does this mean?



## What Happens when We're not Generous?

Why do we build up savings for a rainy day? Why are we nervous when the net amounts in our checkbooks dwindle lower and lower? Most of us, whether or not we admit it or even realize it, find our security in money. That's why we become so anxious when we don't have it or have it only in a very limited way. For many of us, the amount we think is necessary to have stashed away for emergencies goes up as we become more affluent. As wants become necessities, we rely more and more on money to get us what we "need." Some of us almost become misers as we hoard more and more and give less and less. When we're not generous, we begin to find our security in what we have rather than in the one who gave it all to us.

Jesus told the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21) to illustrate this point. This farmer grew richer and richer; he had so much wealth he had to build more storage space to hold it. Placing his security in his abundance, he decided to sit back and enjoy it all. Never did he share with anyone else, and never did he acknowledge his wealth as a gift from God. God was still in charge, though, and that night the Rich Fool died. His wealth could not save him.

What happens when we're not generous is that money becomes our god, just as it did with the Rich Fool. It becomes our god because we love it more than anything else. The Apostle Paul warned of this danger. He wrote, *"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs"* (1 Timothy 6:10). Money tends to cause us to wander from the true faith as we place our trust in it. Many griefs follow.

*"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have"* (Hebrews 13:5). The best way to break attachment with money is to give it away. Give it away to help the poor and needy. Give it away to help fund the ministry of the church. Give it away so that the kingdom of God may be advanced on earth. Develop an eternal perspective. *"What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Mark 8:36-37). It's true that wealth does not prohibit a person from entering heaven, but Jesus did say, *". . . it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God"* (Matthew 19:24).

These warnings do not mean that God doesn't want us to be rich. Most of us, by the world's standards, are rich. God doesn't want us to be taken in by the lure of wealth. In the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-23), Jesus talked about the seed of faith that was choked out by *"the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth."*

Being so wrapped up in ourselves and our own needs, we forget about biblical exhortations to give. *"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers,"* commanded Paul (Galatians 6:10). What happens when we're not generous is that, because we neglect our duty to care for the fatherless, the widow, and the sick, our government takes money from us to see to those responsibilities. By not using it, we have lost our privilege to give.

Giving what is demanded of us is not really giving at all, so we have lost our opportunities to show forth Christ's love and his ability and desire to provide for the needy through us. Gratitude is lost. Not many are grateful for government's assistance in their lives. However, when we give or receive help from a brother or sister in Christ, all thanks and praise goes to God. *"You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God"* (2 Corinthians 9:11).

## Questions for Discussion

13. Read Genesis 19:12-29. Why do you think Lot's wife turned around?
14. When Jesus told the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21), what was he warning his listeners about?
15. What point was Paul making in 2 Corinthians 9:11?
16. Read again 2 Corinthians 9:11.
  - a. What does God promise to do for us?
  - b. What are two results of God's initial gift?
17. Read 2 Corinthians 9:8.
  - a. How many times is the word "all" used?
  - b. What about the word "abound"?
  - c. What does the word "every" signify?

## Prayer

*We thank you for the privilege and opportunity we have had to study and learn from your Word today and during the past sessions. We thank you again for giving us the opportunity to be your stewards. Help us to be worthy of your calling. Through the working of your Holy Spirit, grant us the faith we need to be God-pleasing stewards. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

