

5 Day Devotional

Day 1: Beyond Tradition: Understanding Why We Give

Devotional

Many of us grew up hearing about tithing and giving in church, but do we really understand why? It's easy to follow traditions without grasping their deeper meaning. The Old Testament established three different tithes that taught God's people essential principles: supporting their religious community, caring for the vulnerable, and investing in personal renewal. While we're not bound by these specific laws today, the heart behind them remains vital for healthy Christian communities.

When we understand the 'why' behind giving, it transforms from a religious duty into a meaningful expression of faith. Churches today operate just like any organization - paying utilities, insurance, staff salaries, and ministry costs - but entirely through the generosity of their members. No government funding exists to support the work of the church. This reality makes every contribution significant and purposeful.

Understanding why we give helps us move beyond mere obligation to genuine participation in God's work. It's not about following rules our grandparents followed; it's about recognizing our role in supporting the community that nurtures our faith and serves others.

Bible Verse

'We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the Macedonian churches. For during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.' - 2 Corinthians 8:1-2

Reflection Question

What traditions in your faith journey have you followed without fully understanding their purpose, and how might understanding the 'why' change your perspective?

Quote

I want us to know why we believe what we believe because there's so many people who are like, we're Christians, and we just do it because.

Prayer

Lord, help me move beyond tradition to truly understand the heart behind giving. Show me how my contributions can be a meaningful expression of my faith and love for Your kingdom.

Day 2: Giving Through Hardship: The Macedonian Example

Devotional

The Macedonian churches faced what we might call a perfect storm of financial difficulties. They endured persecution, famines, inflated living costs, and crushing taxation. By every earthly measure, they should have been focused solely on survival. Yet something remarkable happened - their extreme poverty overflowed in generous giving.

What made the difference? Their abundant joy. Despite their circumstances, they had discovered something that transcended their financial struggles. They didn't give because they had extra; they gave because they understood the privilege of partnering in God's work. In fact, they begged Paul for the opportunity to contribute to the ministry.

This challenges our modern perspective on giving. We often think we need to reach a certain financial comfort level before we can be generous. The Macedonians show us that generosity isn't about having abundance - it's about having the right heart. Their joy in the Lord created a wealth of generosity that defied their economic reality.

Their example encourages us that regardless of our financial situation, we can participate in God's work with joy and purpose.

Bible Verse

'They voluntarily gave according to their means and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the favor of partnering in this ministry to the saints.' - 2 Corinthians 8:3

Reflection Question

How might viewing giving as a privilege rather than an obligation change your approach to generosity, especially during challenging financial seasons?

Quote

During a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

Prayer

Father, help me find the same joy the Macedonians had in giving. Show me how to see generosity as a privilege, not a burden, regardless of my circumstances.

Day 3: Love Cannot Be Commanded

Devotional

Paul makes a profound statement about giving: it cannot be commanded because it tests the genuineness of our love. Think about this in your relationships. If someone has to force you to show love, do you really love them? True love expresses itself naturally, even when it costs us something.

This principle revolutionizes how we think about giving. It's not about meeting a quota or fulfilling a religious obligation. Instead, giving becomes a genuine expression of our love for Jesus and His church. When we truly love someone, we want to express that love in ways that might even 'destroy us' when we can't.

Jesus himself demonstrates this perfectly. He didn't give because He was commanded to, but because of His incredible love for us. Though He was rich, He became poor so that we might become rich through His sacrifice. His giving flowed from love, not obligation.

When we understand giving as an expression of love rather than a command to follow, it transforms our hearts. We begin to ask not 'How much do I have to give?' but 'How can my giving show my love for Jesus and His people?'

Bible Verse

'For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.' - 2 Corinthians 8:9

Reflection Question

In what ways does your giving currently reflect genuine love versus religious obligation, and how might this distinction change your approach?

Quote

If I have to be forced to show my love for another, I simply don't love them. However, if I love someone, I will want to express that love in such a way that it just destroys me when I'm not able to.

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for Your generous love that led You to become poor for my sake. Help my giving flow from genuine love for You and Your people, not from duty or pressure.

Day 4: Rethinking Our Needs

Devotional

Paul encourages giving 'according to your means,' which requires honest evaluation of what we actually need versus what we want. In our consumer culture, this distinction has become increasingly blurred. We often confuse wants with needs, making it difficult to determine what we can joyfully give.

The question shifts from 'How much can I afford to give?' to 'How much do I actually need to live?' This isn't about living in poverty or denying ourselves everything enjoyable. Rather, it's about thoughtful stewardship that considers both our genuine needs and our opportunity to participate in God's kingdom work.

Living within our means is a skill many struggle with, but it's essential for generous living. When we clearly understand our true needs, we can joyfully release resources for kingdom purposes without creating financial stress or hardship for our families.

The goal isn't to give until it hurts, but to give from a place of wisdom and love. Paul emphasizes that giving should create equality in the community - not relief for some at the expense of others' genuine needs. This balanced approach allows us to be generous while being responsible.

Bible Verse

'I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance.' - 2 Corinthians 8:13-14

Reflection Question

What would change in your giving if you honestly evaluated the difference between your actual needs and your wants?

Quote

I think that instead of asking how much we can afford to give, we should really go back and reevaluate and ask ourselves, how much do I actually need to live?

Prayer

Lord, give me wisdom to distinguish between my needs and wants. Help me live within my means so I can joyfully give to Your kingdom work without creating unnecessary pressure on my family.

Day 5: A Community of Grace

Devotional

The ultimate vision for Christian giving is beautiful: a community where no one has too much and no one has too little, where giving is a privilege rather than pressure. This isn't about forced redistribution, but about hearts transformed by grace that naturally care for one another.

In this kind of community, the wealthy aren't constantly begged for money, and those with less aren't shamed for their circumstances. Instead, everyone simply does what they can out of love for Jesus and each other. The focus isn't on percentages or amounts, but on hearts that have been changed by God's grace.

Giving becomes a means of grace that transforms us from the inside out. When we give, something changes in our hearts. We develop empathy, break free from materialism's grip, and experience the joy of participating in God's work. It's not just about helping others; it's about what God does in us through the act of giving.

This vision challenges us to see giving not as a burden to bear, but as a privilege to embrace. When our hearts are aligned with God's heart, generosity flows naturally, creating communities marked by love, care, and mutual support.

Bible Verse

'As it is written, "The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little." - 2 Corinthians 8:15

Reflection Question

How can you contribute to creating a community where giving is seen as a privilege rather than pressure, both in your attitude and actions?

Quote

My prayer is that God would make Mercy Springs a community where no one has too much and no one has too little, but rather where giving is a privilege, not a pressure.

Prayer

Father, transform my heart through the grace of giving. Help me contribute to a community where everyone feels valued and cared for, regardless of what they can contribute financially.