

A Verse to Live by

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 (NIV)

December Prayer Focus

Pray for those around us in need. Ask God to use you to bless someone this Christmas season. This is the perfect time of year to practice cheerful generosity. Just wait and see what God does. One guarantee I can give you; God fulfills ALL His promises!

Life Application Challenge

Take a blessing inventory. Write a list of what you are grateful for, answered prayers and the good things you have. Take some time this month to take an honest look at your attitude when you give. Are you angry or feel unappreci-

ated when you volunteer? Do you say yes to helping out but then regret it later? If so, it is time to get real with yourself. Find out why you feel the way you do. Are you saying yes to the wrong things? Do you have guilty feelings when you say no, so you overcommit yourself and end up stressed and worn out? That is compulsive giving. No is not a bad word, and sometimes we even have to turn down good things. But challenge yourself, when you do give, give cheerfully. None of us can give everything but we all can and should give something. And that should be given generously and cheerfully.

Recommended Scripture Reading

Luke 1-2 - These chapters tell the Christmas story.

2 Corinthians 9 - This chapter is an instruction manual for how to give and why.

Pay careful attention to the promises given to those who are generous.

Church On Fire!

Eleventh Street Church of God | December 2020 Prayer Newsletter

LUKE 2:10

GOOD NEWS

FIND GREAT JOY THIS CHRISTMAS

Grateful Heart, Cheerful Giver, Joyful Life

Ahh, Christmas, the most wonderful time of the year. Sadly, for some it isn't, especially this year. Our efforts to share the joy and gratitude of the Christian life and the birth of Jesus seem to be getting drowned out by the tides of grief, sorrow, fear, disease and death. We may not even feel grateful or joyous ourselves, and so our efforts to share the joy of the Christmas story fall flat. "The joy of the Lord is your strength," (Neh. 8:10) and we all could use a hefty dose of that right now.

Joy is a beautiful thing. It is the result of having the Spirit (Ga. 5:22) and increases with every answered prayer. "Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." (Jn. 16:24) Gratitude naturally follows, and that compels us to be cheerful givers. Then, God blesses us even more. "Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." (Lk. 6:38) Christmas is the perfect time of year to focus on joy and generosity.

Having a grateful heart produces cheerful giving, resulting in a blessed and joyful person. Have you ever seen a happy miser? I have known a few, but never a cheerful one. They tend to be grumpy, lonely people that no one wants to be around. Generous people on the other hand tend to be some of the happiest people I have ever met. They usually have a smile on their faces and are truly a pleasure to be around. That's who I want to be like; I admire generous people. It's easy to become selfish isn't it? But God calls us not just to be a giving person, but cheerfully so, "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9:7) Our Father knows us well doesn't He? He knew we would struggle with being selfish, griping about how much work we do for the church, or complaining that others don't do as much as we do. Not very cheerful attitudes to have. We all have worked alongside a complainer (or been the complainer). They are mad they got asked to help, mad they said yes (but always mad at the wrong person for that), mad they are there and complain the whole time about bad kids, lazy volunteers and usually the word ridiculous gets thrown around during the rant. I know it sounds like I am picking on them; but if we are honest, we all have had these thoughts at times. It's near impossible to give cheerfully if you are ungrateful, because an ungrateful person doesn't believe they have enough themselves. So giving away the "little" they have is begrudgingly done out of a sense of duty or so they don't look bad. Two problems with that thought: 1) they are blessed more than they realize, and 2) giving reluctantly and out of compulsion is actually disobedience. Being able to give cheerfully starts with an attitude of gratitude. An easy way to become more grateful is to do a blessing

inventory. Not to guilt yourself into giving, but to motivate yourself into giving cheerfully. Guilt is not a good motivator; at best it produces only a temporary change. Taking the time to write down all you are grateful for and all God has done for you will help you realize just how much He loves you and how blessed you actually are.

Being grateful for all God has blessed us with really isn't that hard. The mere fact He sent His son to earth so we all could know Him personally, then sacrificed His son so we all could know how much He loved us is a reason for gratitude, "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Ro. 8:32) When we understand we weren't worthy, but we were WORTH it to Him (a very important distinction) our hearts fill with gratitude. To the infallible Almighty Creator, we were worth saving! Why? Because He loved us, "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Ro. 5:8) And if that isn't enough to fill you with gratitude think of this, "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ. And so through him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God." (2 Co. 1:20) Those promises we read in the Bible are meant for us! Over and over in the Bible we read about blessings if we obey Him. If that doesn't fill you with gratitude then you either don't really believe it yet or you haven't taken the step of asking Christ in your heart. The remedy for no relationship with Christ is a simple prayer. Please call Pastor Randy or someone in our church if you are ready to take this step. The remedy for the doubt is to do it anyway. Take the risk and give, and watch God fulfill His promises. It isn't always money we are asked to give, sometimes it is our time, friendship, forgiveness, patience or other things. But give, and give generously, whatever it is God asks of you, "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." (2 Co. 9:6) When we are provided for and blessed by God abundantly, and realize His promises are 100% true, we become the "cup running over" type of Christians. And that kind of person becomes a very cheerful giver.

And the best part of being generous, "God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Co. 9:7) If there is something specified in the Bible God loves, I think we should take heed. So let go of your reluctant or compulsive giving. Give generously, give happily, give faithfully. He has already promised to bless you and He will make good on that. All you have to do is trust and obey. May God give you a cheer-filled Christmas and an abundant New Year.

Cheerfully Watching God Work,

Carolyn Abel