



# Real Life Giving!

Text: Matthew 25:14-30

## Day 1—To Whom Do the Talents Belong?

Read Psalm 24:1; 50:10-12; Haggai 2:8; Matthew 25:14-30; and James 1:17. Do you see your family, talents, time, and resources as your own or as God's? According to Scripture, whose is it? Do you hold tightly to that which God has entrusted to you and, like a petulant toddler, say, "mine!" or do you come to God with open hands and heart? Which attitude brings the most joy? Have you noticed how your spirit soars when you share, with abandon, the gifts God has given you? In prayer, thank God for all you have and acknowledge that it is God's.

## Day 2—Created by God and for God

Read and prayerfully reflect on John 1:2-4 and Ephesians 2:4-10. Pray you will see yourself as God sees you and that you will understand that all you are and all you have flows from God's grace and love. Now read again the parable in Matthew 25:14-30; also read 25:40. The parable speaks of being entrusted with material wealth, but the section that follows reminds us that our entire lives are to be spent in response to God's goodness and grace. Do you find it harder to share your time, your love and compassion, or your resources? Ask God to stretch you in the next week and give you opportunities to share beyond your normal comfort zone. Expect joy.

## Day 3—Sharing the Master's Joy

Read the parable in Matthew 25:14-30 and story in Mark 12:41-44 and Luke 21:1-4. Who is invited to share the master's joy; who isn't? Do we have to give much or have amazing gifts/talents to please God? Do you think the widow, commended by Jesus in Mark and Luke, left the temple with fear and trepidation or with joy, trusting God to care for her? Probably no one but Jesus noticed the generous widow, but she is the giver who receives Christ's commendation. In our lives, and in our giving, whom are we trying to impress? Pray you will trust God as the widow did and that you will give with the same love that motivated her. Embrace the truth of John 15:9-14.

## Day 4—With Thankful Hearts

Read Psalm 100; 2 Corinthians 9:15; and Colossians 2:6-7. Now pray or sing Henry Smith's chorus: "Give thanks with a grateful heart. Give thanks to the Holy One. Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son" (*Integrity's Hosanna! music, 1978*). As you celebrate Thanksgiving, ask God to give you a thankful heart every day. How will you live in response to God's indescribable gift? Can we out-give God as we share the time, talents, and resources God has first given us? Ask God to remind you of the many ways you are blessed. Spend some moments in silent reflection. Is your heart overflowing with thanks? Speak or write a prayer of thanksgiving.

## Day 5—"Unto the Least of These"

In Matthew 25:1-13, Jesus says we must be alert and ready to meet him when he returns. Then, after the parable of the stewards (25:14-30), Jesus pictures a time when all will be gathered before him; he praises those who, as they served others, ministered to him. Sometimes our ministry is hands-on; sometimes we minister through giving our financial resources. In what ways are the two good stewards (25:14-30) like the sheep (25:33-40)? When we serve, who deserves the glory? Paul says, "We put no

confidence in human effort. Instead we boast about what Christ Jesus has done for us" (*Philippians 3:3b, NLT*). Pray you will see Jesus as you serve others.

#### **Day 6—"We Give Thee but Thine Own"**

Begin by singing or praying, "We give Thee but Thine own, Whate'er the gift may be; All that we have is Thine alone, A trust, O Lord, from Thee" (*public domain*). Stewardship is offering back to God part of what already belongs to God but has been entrusted to us; it also involves wise management of what we keep. Are you willing to come to God with open hands, trusting God will care for you even if you give with extravagance and abandon? Read Malachi 3:7b-10; Matthew 6:19-21, 24-33; and Philippians 4:4-7, 19-20. What are the challenges/calls to obedience in these texts? What are the promises? Pray you will trust God's heart, promises, and provision.

#### **Day 7—So We Might Be Blessings**

In Genesis 12, God tells Abram (Abraham) that he is blessed to be a blessing; and so are we! Have you discovered the blessing and the joy of generosity? The churches in Macedonia, and Jesus himself, model this truth for us. Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5,9; 9:6-15. Take time to list the blessings of those who give and of those who receive. Who gets the glory? Are you more like a reservoir or a channel; do you simply collect God's blessings or do they flow through you to others? Ask God for an outrageously radical faith that trusts God enough to allow you to give with abandon (perhaps even anonymously—forget the deduction!). Know joy!