

# GROWTHguide

## "What If... You Follow Jesus?"

November 20, 2016



### THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

2 Corinthians 9:8-11, 2 Corinthians 8:6, Luke 3:8 and 10-11, Matthew 14:15-18, Leviticus 23:22

#### DAY 1

Every day we are bombarded with mailers, phone calls and television commercials asking us to give our hard earned money to a cause. There are times when that can certainly make you feel overwhelmed. Trying to determine how to carve the pie of generosity can be a real challenge. Perhaps it makes sense to look at this in another way. What if instead of seeing an invitation to give money you saw it as a way to bless God?

#### [Read 2 Corinthians 9:8-11](#)

Paul had a lot to say to the early Christian church about transformation and identity. When we give it's more about God than it is about the giver. Now, it is important to be a person of generosity, one who shares the goodness one possesses. But what if through our giving we saw the important message that God is truly the source of everything we have and, as we learn to give, it creates in us the character of the One who gives to us in the first place. Giving is a lot of things but it is most definitely an expression of God's heart.

- How does your giving to others demonstrate the love of God? How does it demonstrate your gratitude for what you have been given?
- Maybe it is important to take a step back and realize that God gives us what we have so that we can use it

- as a means to generosity and accomplishing His work. What does that mean to you?
- How will you discover a new meaning to the word, "generosity?"
  - Paul emphasizes that God gives seed to the farmer, which becomes bread for your meal. The abundance you reap from the seeds he gives you are to be used to help others. Is this hard for you to do? Why/Why not?

## **DAY 2**

When you read the Bible there is a clear cut message that giving is evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence within you.

**[Read 2 Corinthians 8:6](#) and [Luke 3:8, 10-11](#)**

- What does it mean for you to have the presence of the Holy Spirit in you? Where do you see this in your life?
- The Bible teaches us to give "joyfully and not begrudgingly." Do you struggle with giving back to God's work through the local church? Why?
- Jesus spoke more about money than he did on the Kingdom of God, Resurrection, forgiveness and mercy. Why do you think he spent so much time on the subject of money? What did he say about being generous?
- When our approach to giving causes us to hold onto what we have believing it is all ours, it leads very quickly to a spirit of selfishness. Do you believe this statement is true? Why or why not?
- If God designed giving to be the pathway that leads us to a deeper joy and into a spirit of love for others, what's holding us back from being "all-in?"

## **DAY 3**

**[Read Matthew 14:15-18](#)**

- Reflect on the following statement: Giving is God's means of economic provision for the least and the

- lost. What does this mean to you?
- When you look around your neighborhood or community, who would you identify as the "least and the lost?" Why?
  - In the reading for the day we are reminded of the feeding of the 5,000. Note the disciples' words to Jesus as the day was getting late and the crowds were not leaving. What are they asking the people to do? What are they wanting Jesus to do?
  - Why do you think the disciples didn't have compassion on the crowds?
  - It is important to note Jesus' words when he tells the disciples what to do. What did he say? Why didn't Jesus handle the problem himself, but instead asked the disciples to handle it? What does this say about your responsibility to meet the needs of others through your giving?
  - Too often we want to push the responsibility to help someone else onto another person and not take the responsibility ourselves. Reflect on a time when you did that. Why didn't you want to take action yourself?

## **DAY 4**

### **Read Leviticus 23:22**

- Today's culture has some pretty harsh words to say to those who are unemployed, underemployed or needing assistance from the government to put food on their table. What do you feel is behind the anger or frustration many seem to feel when it comes to helping those who don't have a roof over their head or a meal on their table?
- Notice the text shows that we are only to harvest what we need, but we are to produce more than we need and allow the poor to have access to our crops. How does this play out in a capitalistic world today?
- Have you ever found yourself being judgmental toward the homeless or poor? Why is it so easy to blame them for their circumstance versus taking a leadership role in helping them with their situation?

- Take time this week to think about this text. How can you look at the plight of the poor differently? Better yet, what are you willing to do in producing/giving more to those who are without?

## DAY 5

God takes the things we give and grows them into something greater. Jesus' purpose wasn't just to get us into Heaven. If that was his sole purpose then we would immediately be swept up to be with him. Jesus' purpose is to get Heaven **into us** and Heaven's resources out into the world **through us**. How do you feel about this? How is God using you?

Make a chart listing all the ways you spend your money during the year. What percentage of your money is spent on food, housing, travel, entertainment, etc? Where is your money going? Did you make a pledge on Sunday? Where does that fall on your chart? How much are you spending on yourself versus helping others? What changes are you willing to make so that your spending reflects more of what God's definition of generosity looks like?

## DAY 6

A few weeks ago Pastor Bob shared how he and Patti made significant changes in their life after a Christmas Eve service in 1989. They once pursued the American dream to feed their wants versus living within their means and it led them to a difficult place. He also shared how he and Patti sought a restart for their life so that they would prioritize God's work and more importantly, recognize God as the owner of everything. They were not owners, but stewards (taking care of God's riches for a short time). There was a new accountability which begged the question, "With all you have been given, what will you do with it for God's glory?"

- **What If...**You allowed the Holy Spirit to transform your wallet for God's service?
- **What If...**You began each year reducing the monies you spent on your wants, took those funds and dedicated them to God's hand to be used through the ministries of His church?
- **What If...**Each year you ramped up your giving an additional 1%?
- **What If...**You didn't just aspire to become a tither (10% of your gross income) but saw the joy in going beyond the tithe and became a sacrificial giver instead?
- **What If...**You were living pay-check to pay-check and began trusting God more to be your provider and reflected that through your offerings?
- **What If...**Instead of believing you have nothing to give or your gift is too small to make a difference, you threw that kind of thinking out the window and believed no matter what you gave, when it is placed in the hand of Jesus Christ it will make a difference?

**End the day with the following prayer:**

*I know that I am Cared for*

*By an Abundant Provider.*

*I choose to be grateful and trusting.*

*I believe I have enough*

*And that what I need will always be provided.*

*I choose to be content and generous.*

## **DAY 7**

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.

If you have trouble viewing this e-mail, you can download a PDF of the Growth Guide by [clicking here](#).



St. Paul United Methodist Church  
1199 Highland Ave. | Largo, FL 33770  
727-584-8165 | [church@stpaulumc.org](mailto:church@stpaulumc.org)

[www.stpaulumc.org](http://www.stpaulumc.org)



St. Paul United Methodist Church, 1199 Highland Avenue, Largo, FL 33770

[SafeUnsubscribe™ {recipient's email}](#)

[Forward this email](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [About our service provider](#)

Sent by [church@stpaulumc.org](mailto:church@stpaulumc.org) in collaboration with



Try it free today