

Growth Pt 4 Giving & Worship

I. Last week, in our Growth series, we talked about the spiritual disciplines of simplicity and service.

A. With simplicity, we learned that:

1. Simplicity is an inward reality that results in an outward lifestyle.
2. That simplicity centers on what's important - Jesus.
3. That all we have is a gift from God.
4. That simplicity is expressed outwardly by...
 - a) Buying things for usefulness, rather than status.
 - b) Rejecting things that produce addiction.
 - c) Developing the habit of giving things away.
 - d) Appreciating creation.
 - e) Staying out of debt.

B. With service, we learned that:

1. True service doesn't distinguish between small and large. It's humble.
 - a) It's not about titles or positions.
2. Humble service causes us to see people with compassion.
3. It values hiddenness.
4. It's a calling we all share.

II. Giving (Stewardship)

A. We practice the spiritual discipline of giving with our **tithes and offerings**.

1. The word tithe means "_____ " of **all** we produce.

a) Deuteronomy 14:22 says, "**You must set aside a tithe of your crops—one-tenth of all the crops you harvest each year.**"

b) In today's language, it's a tenth of our **gross** income.

(a) **Gross is the total amount God provides.**

(b) If the idea of giving a tenth seems too legalistic, try 12% or 15%.

(c) Whatever amount we choose to give should not be like a tip tossed mindlessly on a table after a meal. It should be a meaningful expression of our dependence upon God and gratitude to him.

(d) 10% should just be a starting point for all believers. A baseline.

i) In Acts 4:32-35 we see that the believers shared _____ they had.

(e) Giving is all about priorities.

i) I've learned to live on the other 90% (Which is still God's) and have been challenged many times to live on less.

(1) When you practice simplicity, it's much easier.

c) Exodus 22:29, God says to hold nothing back in our offerings.

d) Proverbs 3:9-10 says, "**Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce. Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with good wine.**"

(1) If God blesses us based on what we give to Him, then do you want God to bless you based on your gross income or your net income?

(2) As we faithfully give, God entrusts even more into our care.

e) In Matthew 23:23, Jesus says we should tithe, and in addition, pursue justice, mercy, and faith.

2. Giving makes a difference.

- a) If you want to make a difference in the world, give.
- b) If you want to make a difference in the church, give.
- c) If you want to make a difference in eternity, give.
- d) If you want to make a difference in your life, give.
- e) What we do with our money influences eternity.
- f) Money is not a toy to play with, but a _____ to impact eternity with.
- g) If all Western Christians gave 10%, the goal of world evangelism and feeding the hungry could be reached.

B. Giving and the stewardship of finances is a _____ issue. (That's why we list it as a spiritual discipline.)

1. It is impossible to become a fully developing **follower of Jesus** without also becoming a fully developing **steward of financial resources**.
2. As Martin Luther put it, "There are three conversions necessary in the Christian life: the conversion of the heart, the mind, and the **purse**."
3. Giving is part of growing.
4. Larry Burkett once said, "Giving should be an outward, material expression of a deep spiritual commitment... an indication of a willing and obedient heart."
5. Discipleship is all about becoming more like _____.
 - a) Charles Swindoll wrote, "We are never more like God than when we give."
 - b) John 3:16 tells us that God loved the world so He **gave** his son.
 - c) 1st Peter 4:10 says, "**God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.**"
 - d) With the exception of the Kingdom of God, Jesus spoke more about money than anything else.
6. Nelson Searcy shares a story to illustrate spiritual maturity and giving.
 - a) On a crisp spring day a few years ago, I took my nephew, who was about eight at the time, to a baseball game. As the fourth inning wound down, he turned to me and said, "Uncle Nelson, can I have some Skittles?" Well, I love my nephew, and I want to grant him the desires of his heart, so of course I said yes. I pulled a couple of dollars out of my pocket, put them in his eager little hand, and watched as he walked the short distance to the concession stand. A few minutes later he returned, already digging hungrily into the bag of candy. Watching him eat those Skittles brought out my sweet tooth. So I asked him, "Can I have a few of those?" Without hesitating, he answered, "No, Uncle Nelson, they're almost gone." Though I didn't say it aloud, I have to admit my instinctive response was, "Look, kid, I gave you the money for those Skittles. Not to mention, I am a lot bigger than you are. If I wanted to, I could take the whole bag of Skittles away from you right now." Instead, I let him continue eating his Skittles in silence. As I sat there listening to my nephew chew and watching him wipe red, yellow, and green coloring off his mouth with his shirtsleeve, I couldn't help but think about how often I have watched people within the church - myself and other leader included - treat God the same way this child had just treated me. How often have we taken the resources and gifts God has given us and set about consuming them, with little regard for His ultimate ownership? And how often has He looked on, refraining from using his position and power to force us into obedience...(as we sit with our) Skittles tucked tightly in our pockets, our mouths stained from consumption.
7. The discipline of giving helps to move us from immature consumer to mature follower of Jesus.

C. God, who is infinitely rich and owns all things, has assigned to human beings **management responsibilities over his** _____.

1. God has given us the responsibility of taking care of His stuff.
2. Nothing that we have is ours.
3. Our money is God's money.
4. God has recorded in the Bible everything we need to know about his investment priorities, his high standards of management, and the rewards he offers his faithful stewards.
 - a) He didn't leave us to try and figure out what to do with His money.
 - b) When we decide to ignore His way of managing His money, greed and materialism quickly creep in.
5. Malachi 3:8-9 says, "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. " And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," Says the LORD of hosts; And all nations will call you blessed, For you will be a delightful land," Says the LORD of hosts."
 - a) We rob God when we keep it all for ourselves.
 - b) Not tithing is poor stewardship of God's assets.
 - c) God promises a blessing when we faithfully handle His money and tithe.
 - (1) He even invites us to _____ Him on this!
 - (2) Giving leads to greater blessing, not to lack and poverty.

D. Giving is an _____.

1. In **Philippians 4:18**, Paul referred to their giving as a "sweet smelling sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God."

III. So let's talk about worship, our last discipline in this series.

A. What is worship?

1. Worship is the human response to the divine initiative.
2. God has drawn us to Him and we respond by declaring how awesome He is.
3. The word comes from the old English word "worth-ship", which means to _____.
 - a) In old English times, when royalty came on the scene, everyone would bow low to signify, "Your lowest point is greater than my highest point."
4. It's a discipline that God is always drawing us into.
 - a) John 4:23 says, "But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way."
5. Worship is our response to the overtures of love from the hear of the Father.
6. God is, and always will be the _____.
 - a) In Matt 4:10, Jesus says to "worship the Lord your God and serve only Him."

B. How do we worship?

1. Be still
 - a) Psalm 46:10 says to "Be still and know that I am God"
 - b) Still all humanly initiated activity.
 - c) Habakuk 2:20 says, "Let all the earth be silent before him."

2. Sing praise

a) Hebrews 13:15-16 says, "Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name. ¹⁶ And don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God."

(1) This is why we sing in church.

3. Enlist the Holy Spirit's help to worship.

a) 1st Corinthians 14:15 says, "Well then, what shall I do? I will pray in the spirit, and I will also pray in words I understand. I will sing in the spirit, and I will also sing in words I understand."

b) Sometimes feelings of God's awesomeness rise up in us (is't OK to feel while worshipping) and we don't have the words.

(1) Get the Holy Spirit's help.

4. Worship with your _____ (including your body).

a) Your face (look like you actually love Jesus).

b) Kneel

c) Bow

d) Dance

e) Raise your hands

f) Romans 12:1 says to, "give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him."

g) Richard Foster says, "To sit still looking dour is simply not appropriate for praise."

5. Offer a _____ of worship.

a) Worship when you don't feel like it.

b) Worship when you've had a bad day.

c) Worshipping only when we feel like it implies that worship is about us.

(1) Worship is all about Him, who is worthy.

C. Worship is _____.

1. The walls of Jericho came down with a shout.

D. Worship changes us.

1. It enables us to hear the call more clearly (Isaiah 6:8)

a) During times of worship, "Here I am. Send me." is a common response.

IV. This has been such a great series.

A. Let me encourage you to read "Celebration of Discipline" by Richard Foster.

B. I've heard that "The Spirit of the Disciplines" is good too.

C. Pray/close