



DAVID BUTTS

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Introduction

This book can be helpful to anyone who wants to grow deeper in his or her giving life, but it particularly targets churches. From time to time, churches go through giving campaigns for various purposes, often related to paying off a mortgage or launching a building campaign. Sometimes it is a “catch-up” effort to remove debt and prepare a church for a new season. Or it may be a new missions focus. Some churches sponsor annual giving campaigns; others only on special occasions.

Whatever the reason for a financial initiative, it still comes down to individuals making decisions about what they will do with their finances. Each day of this devotional has a Scripture to shape your concepts of giving. Stories of generous churches and individuals are scattered throughout the book to offer encouragement as you give.

Ultimately, this devotional is intended to bring glory to Jesus. He is the Ultimate Giver. All that we own is a gift from Him. All that we give to Him will be used by Him to accomplish His purposes. Although this devotional focuses on giving, it’s really about so much more! It’s about receiving from the Lord and using it all in ways that bring Him honor and glory.

The Cries of Those in Need

Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered. (Proverbs 21:13)

The poor are everywhere and their needs can be overwhelming. Jesus said we would have the poor with us always (Mt. 26:11). Given this reality, how can a congregation meaningfully minister to the poor? We don't want to close our ears to their cries, but we need wisdom in how we attempt to meet the needs.

Given the astonishing array of ways we might minister to the poor, it is always right to begin in prayer. As we ask the Lord how best to open our ears to the cry of the poor, He will give direction in practical ways. Churches across the nation have discovered creative ways to use their resources to care for those who have very real needs.

A friend from the Dallas, Texas, area told me about a church that found a way to maximize finances in caring for others. Instead of devoting significant finances to commercial advertising, this Texas church decided to spend its money on something much more meaningful. On Easter Sunday, a pastor at the Covenant Church of Carrollton announced they had bought out and forgiven \$100,000 worth of medical debt for local families. The church made the transaction through RIP Medical Debt—an American nonprofit that buys up and abolishes medical debt. Since medical debt can be bought by collection agencies for a fraction of what they're worth, \$100,000 translates to more than \$10 million in medical debt that has now been lifted off the shoulders of struggling Texas families. Imagine 4,229 families and veterans who received letters notifying them of forgiven medical debt because of this donation!

This is a church that did not close its ears to the cries of the poor. According to the Scripture passage, this act of generous giving actually opens the door for answered prayer. What begins with prayer for direction will lead to generosity, resulting in more answered prayer. A giving church will find itself walking in close intimacy with the Lord.

Prayer Points

- Ask the Lord how your church might reach the hurting in your area through creative, generous giving.
- Pray for a greater sensitivity for those who are poor.

My Prayer

Lord, You pour out Your blessings upon us in amazing ways. Thank You for being a generous God. Help us to reflect Your generosity in the ways we deal with others. We want to be a light in our community through our generosity.

Beyond Bargain Giving

Then Ornan said to David, “Take it, and let my lord the king do what seems good to him. See, I give the oxen for burnt offerings and the threshing sledges for the wood and the wheat for a grain offering; I give it all.” But King David said to Ornan, “No, but I will buy them for the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, nor offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing.” (1 Chronicles 21:23-24)

I love a good deal. It’s great when I can find what I’m looking for at half the regular price or less. Free is even better! But I have discovered that cheap or free is not always the best. Not only is there the issue of quality, but it may also change the way I view my purchase. Free doesn’t seem as valuable. Cheap sometimes means I don’t need to take care of the item like I would something expensive. Price affects perceived value.

King David understood this at a very basic level. When looking for a place to build the Temple, he was offered the ideal place for free. But he realized that price affects perceived value. How could he offer God a place for His sacred Temple that cost David nothing? Giving—especially extravagant, expensive giving—is an act of worship far beyond simply offering a free piece of property.

Our giving to God is not looking for the best bargain. It is not just trying to find the “biggest bang for our buck.” It’s hard to turn down a free piece of high-value property, especially when it looks like you’re really getting a good Kingdom “deal.”

What made David such a unique man of God was that he looked first to the value of the One receiving the gift. He realized he couldn’t give a bargain gift to the King of the Universe.

The challenge for us is to look beyond the size of our capital campaign or budget initiative. Who is the real recipient of your gift? What do you want to give to the Savior of your soul? What kind of extravagant gift will you bring to your King?

Prayer Points

- Ask the Lord to help you overcome any sort of “bargain-giving” mentality.
- Pray for open eyes to see the majesty and awesomeness of the One to whom you are bringing your gifts.

My Prayer

Lord, You are an extravagant Giver to me. You have poured out physical and spiritual blessings upon me and I am grateful. Help me now to give back to You with that same kind of extravagance. May I, like David, not give to You what cost me nothing. Help me to see Your glory and respond appropriately with my giving.

Over-Abundant Giving

“Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whom the Lord has put skill and intelligence to know how to do any work in the construction of the sanctuary shall work in accordance with all that the Lord has commanded.”

And Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whose mind the Lord had put skill, everyone whose heart stirred him up to come to do the work. And they received from Moses all the contribution that the people of Israel had brought for doing the work on the sanctuary. They still kept bringing him freewill offerings every morning, so that all the craftsmen who were doing every sort of task on the sanctuary came, each from the task that he was doing, and said to Moses, “The people bring much more than enough for doing the work that the Lord has commanded us to do.” So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, “Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary.” So the people were restrained from bringing, for the material they had was sufficient to do all the work, and more. (Exodus 36:1–7)

Imagine this common problem in churches everywhere: people giving too much! In this instance, Moses and the church leaders sent out an order to the whole congregation: “Quit giving! The abundance is starting to be a problem.” Does this seem like a dream when you think of the Church today?

The story of over-abundant giving in Exodus 36 is not a dream. These were real people, just like us, who grasped a vision bigger than their own lives. They gave to the building of the Tabernacle, an ornate tent that preceded the building of the Temple and represented the Presence of God in their midst. This God-sized vision consumed them and caused them to give abundantly more than needed.

Could it be that our giving goals are too small with short-sighted vision? Of course, our building needs, our budget, and special projects are important. But is our call to give God-sized? Is there a promise of the Presence of God in our midst? Does it cause us to

look for ways to give even more because we are so excited by the possibilities of God's work in our midst?

To have this big vision requires two things. First, it means church leadership couches any campaign in terms of spiritual victory and not just financial goals. Giving toward the Presence of God is a huge motivator for extravagant giving. The second requirement is for those of us in the congregation. We need to see with spiritual eyes what this campaign will accomplish in the Kingdom of God. Buildings aren't ultimately about brick and mortar. They are about ministry and changed lives. They are about places to worship and enjoy the Lord's Presence. They are tools in the hands of the Lord to accomplish His purpose.

Prayer Points

- Ask the Lord to give you the spiritual vision to see His purpose behind this campaign.
- Pray for a spirit of extravagant giving to be poured out on your congregation.

My Prayer

Lord, it is hard to imagine what happened in Moses' day when Your people gave so much that they were ordered to stop giving. Would You do that again in our day in our church? Give us a God-sized vision of what You want to do in our congregation. Give us an excitement about Your Kingdom and Your purposes that creates the kind of giving that we saw in Moses' day. We pray for abundance!

Dangerous Giving

Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine. (Proverbs 3:9–10)

This Scripture passage is dangerous. Although the biblical principle is absolutely true, it is risky. It can bring great harm if not used with understanding. Let me explain.

One clear way to honor the Lord is by giving back to Him. This includes making sure that the first use of your finances is directed toward honoring God. This is firstfruit giving. If the passage ended with this instruction, all would be fine.

But there's more. God promises an abundance given back to the giver. That's where the danger comes. Our motives can blur when the promise of abundance is made to firstfruit givers. This is when the condition of your heart is revealed. Are you giving to honor the Lord, or are you selfishly giving to receive back an abundance? Can you recognize the danger?

God's Word often connects abundant giving with abundant receiving. That's a good and godly principle. God delights in giving to us, especially when our giving habits demonstrate that money has no hold on us. When we honor God in our giving, we will continue to receive from Him, sometimes in physical or spiritual blessings.

It is a biblical principle that also tests our hearts. Why are we giving? If it is to honor God, then we are blessed. If we give simply to receive more, then money has attained mastery over us and we have failed the test. What is often called the prosperity gospel is false, mixed in with enough truth to make it dangerous. We do receive from God when we give. But God looks on the heart to determine our motives and real desires.

Let's decide today to give in a way that honors God. Put your giving *first* as you manage your budget. That's firstfruit giving! Then determine to give as an act of worship that doesn't look for anything other than the joy of giving. Guard your heart and expect God to work in you through your giving.

Prayer Points

- Ask the Lord to guard your heart regarding finances.
- Pray that God will show you what firstfruits giving looks like in your circumstance.

My Prayer

Lord, You are the Giver of every good and perfect gift. Thank You for the way You abundantly give to me. Help me to honor You with my wealth. Everything I have comes from You and I am grateful. Show me how to honor You in my giving and use of material blessings. Guard my heart, Lord, so that money does not grab hold of me and cause me to worship it. Show me the freedom in giving that releases Your power in my life.

Here's My Lunch

“There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?” (John 6:9)

It's a wonderful story of selfless giving. Five thousand hungry people and one little boy with his lunch. He gives it away with no thought of keeping anything for himself. Of course, we know the end of the story. Jesus takes the small gift in His hands and changes lives with it—something He still does today!

The town of West Union, Illinois, has a population of less than 300 people. The Christian Church there struggles to reach 100 in attendance on most Sundays. It's not a wealthy area with an abundance of resources, but the church always pays its bills. Beyond that is their Faith Promise, which is an annual commitment to missions that is above their regular church gift. For most, it is a faith stretch. In 2018, their Faith Promise giving was more than \$70,000!

If you are in a larger church, a missions budget of \$70,000 might not sound like much. But many churches larger than the West Union church don't give nearly as much to missions. You see, this small gift, given away to the larger Kingdom, is taken by the King and used to change lives.

Giving money away is not a burden but a privilege. God takes care of our needs. Although the text of John 6:9 doesn't tell us more specifics about the little boy, I believe he had plenty to eat that day. Jesus takes care of His generous followers.

What a privilege to give, whether as a little boy with fish and bread, or a congregation with a Kingdom vision. It isn't the size of the gift, but the hands of the King that make the difference.

Prayer Points

- Give thanks to the Lord for the privilege of giving.
- Ask the Lord to show you what sort of gift you can give that will make a difference in the hands of the King.

My Prayer

Lord, thank You for including in Scripture this story of the little boy who offered his lunch to You. We, too, are witnesses of this amazing miracle of provision. Thank You for giving us the same privilege—of placing in Your hands what You have already given to us. We want to keep our eyes open to see what You do with our gifts. Help us to be generous at all times!

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