

Generosity 2021

Our hope is that you will use this resource in your daily devotion and prayer. There are devotionals, scriptures and places to journal each day. We are so grateful to the authors who shared their hearts and stories of generosity and faith. As you read, we hope you appreciate their courage and faithfulness to prepare our hearts for an exciting journey we are entering into in the weeks to come at St. John's.

As we read, pray and journal together each day, may God bring us closer together. May we discover that these precious moments of the day will help prepare our hearts and minds for a successful spiritual journey as we launch our two year Ministry Plan.

Peace & Joy,
St. John's Generosity Prayer Team

Cindy Fuller
Terry Gray
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Vicky Mills
Cindy Riddick (ad-hoc)

Special thanks to Pastor Stephanie Hughes, Rev. Cindy Riddick, and Ingrid Clark for their assistance!

Friday, October 1, 2021

2 Corinthians 9:7

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.

When life gets comfortable, it's easy for me to let my relationship with God drift. Rather than talking with God throughout the day, I may slip up and only pray at night when I'm going to bed. That's the time I should be expressing how grateful I am for my many blessings all day long. Unfortunately, human nature allows me to be forgetful in my most comfortable moments. However, when I am in need, I do not hesitate to cry out to God for help continuously. All throughout the day and every time I roll over at night, I am praying for God's help. So why is it that I let the busyness of my day allow me to forget that God has provided everything in my life? I know that no matter how hard I have worked, I did not achieve anything without the grace of God. I need to praise Him for all the good things by giving back, just as I would cry out in my times of need.

Joyful generosity to the Lord our God is one of those things we all need to practice. I love the joy I feel in my heart when I contribute. I love supporting others for hurricane recovery, or when we have the angel tree to provide families with food and gifts at Christmas, or when we have a special need like playground equipment for Mother's Day Out. We received the money for the playground a couple of weeks later! The more we practice giving obediently and joyfully, our attitudes will change for the better.

Tithes and offerings are not like paying bills nor is it to get something in return. Everything I own belongs to God anyway. I need to live in faith that God will provide. God will always give me just enough of what I need day in and day out.

Cindy Fuller

Saturday, October 2, 2021

Prayer

Prayer is supposed to be a real part of our life as a Christian, right? But many times it is not.

Prayer doesn't always come flowing out like a river. Two years ago when my brother was having a heart attack all I could think of was "Help" and "Go, God, Go." A lifelong Christian should do better than that.

A prayer like exemplified in the Bible doesn't come automatically. You have to cultivate it like you would anything you want to learn. So, get something to write in. Think of a situation recently where you had a crisis, but felt you failed miserably with your prayers when all you could think of was one liners, like Help, Protect, Save, Deliver and Find. Now, those are good words, but you may want more than that.

Think of words you wanted to say and could not think of at the time of crisis. Write these words down in your journal/composition book. Look up scriptures, maybe about "fear." Write down the entire verses in your book, and when you need this you have God's words right before you. Research God's words on your subject of need before you need it. Find words that sound like they could go in a prayer, like

Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God..." Then thank God for all he has created in your life and your world.

Another I Kings 17:5 "So he went and did according to the word of God." Doesn't that sound like words of a prayer, pray those words as applies to your life.

I Kings 17:13 (and Elijah said unto her) "Fear not, go and do." Expound on that, telling God you are fearful of such and such, and why, and ask for his help.

I Kings 18:12 "the spirit of the Lord shall carry thee." That is a great spring board for your prayer. Say, I thank you Lord that I can trust you to carry me through my situation of.....

As you read scriptures (any scriptures) and a word or phrase speaks to your heart write it down to use in your next prayer. Maybe this would be called your personal prayer book.

I Kings 18:15 "As the Lord of Hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself unto him today." Show yourself to God today, Say, "Hello Lord, can we talk?"

Doris Glanz

Sunday, October 3, 2021

God's Generosity

When I think about how God has been generous with me, there are not enough words to express how much He's done. When I look back on how far He's brought me from the scared, young, teenage mother who was living on welfare and food stamps to where I am today — that's nobody but God! There's no one on Earth who can explain the blessings and the goodness that He's not only given to me and my family, but to all of us, no matter the circumstances that we may face day-to-day. And, although I may not have much materially/financially in some instances, God has been better than good to me and I'll praise His name as long as I live.

Angela Wilson
Community News Editor
Galveston County Daily News

Monday, October 4, 2021

God has been Generous to us

Moses told the people of Israel a truth that continues to this very day:

“He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. He will bless the fruit of your womb, the crops of your land – your grain, new wine and oil – calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks in the land that he swore to your forefathers to give you. You will be blessed more than any other people...”

Deuteronomy 7: 13-14a

We practice generosity because God has generously blessed us in every way. Our generous giving is a response to God’s outrageous goodness.

Write down what you are grateful for. Look over what you wrote and take some time to praise God for these good gifts.

Tuesday, October 5, 2021

Questions for Reflection: My Influence

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it."

-Psalm 24:1

What are my *key roles* God has given me influence in? (i.e. husband, parent, manager, etc.)

What do I believe are my *key areas* of influence?

What are the *key resources* God has entrusted to me?

Wednesday, October 6, 2021

Examination of my life: Personal Influence

(Check the boxes that apply)

Looking In (Personal Evaluation)

- I am consistently aware of my ability to influence others.
- I often forget that I have a significant sphere of influence.
- I feel good about how I use my resources to influence others.
- I would like to do more to impact the lives of others.
- I need to be more intentional about how I can influence others.
- I need direction in maximizing my influence to others.
- I would like to mentor others so they can make a greater impact for the Kingdom of God.

Looking Out (New Possibilities)

- I need accountability in my life to improve my influence.
- I could plan one thing each week in each role to become more influential in that relationship.
- I can strengthen my influence through mentoring a few others.
- I will identify my resources to leverage them in better ways.

Looking Up (God's Leading)

- It would benefit me to study people of influence in the Bible.
- I will look for other like-minded Christ Followers with which I can build relationships and share my passion to be an influencer.
- I need to pray consistently to be a faithful person of influence.

How can you be influential in sharing your faith? Pray for God to lead you.

Thursday, October 7, 2021

Mark 11:24

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

For ten years we had been dealing with our son's addictions. I ask God how he could help us! My husband always prayed, "Lord, thanks for healing our son". It was God's timing, he has recovered, and is working at a job he loves, and we have our loving and respectable son back. Thank you God and thanks for my husband for believing that God would heal him.

Leanne Post

Friday, October 8, 2021

Power of Prayer

When I was a junior in high school when my elderly parents asked me to quit school and go to work full time because we couldn't meet our bills with my part time pay check. Months behind in rent, I was supposed to drop out of school the next day. But that evening, Dad and I (although very despondent) had a long discussion and prayed God to help us. We believed in prayer, but it seemed that our faith was growing weak now.

The next day, I didn't quit school, and went home to sadly tell mother that I didn't drop out. "THAT'S OK", she said, "Your Dad got money in the mail we never knew was coming, and it was enough to pay all our bills and gives us enough to last. And over 66 years' time, and with God's help, I have now earned three college degrees. God does answer prayer and has a plan for you.

Hershel Glanz

Saturday, October 9, 2021

Purpose

What is/has been my purpose in life? I still don't know and I have more life behind me than before me.

Nothing worthy or grand or exemplary has come from me. In fact it has been a number of failures. I have always wanted to be worthy and to show the love of God, and have that love seen in me. It seems to me the worst part of me is exposed to my friends and family and those I don't even know. I never wanted it that way. I confess disappointment. I want to hide under the wings of God and let God protect me from future mistakes and wrong doings. It is my wish for the love of God to be seen in me. It is my wish to know God intimately and completely, to interact with God continuously and commune with him. I don't seem to be able to maintain a good relationship with family, individuals, friends, and acquaintances far or near. Even if I could go back to each individual and apologize, it is too little too late. Opinions cannot be changed, actions cannot be undone, and words cannot be taken back, disappointment cannot be changed to "appointment." I have one thing sure. God loves me just as I am, and he says he has separated my sins as far as the east is from the west. When I look back and see a pile of ugly rocks, God doesn't even see that. God says in his word, He sees a beautiful garden where I walked. And, when I get to heaven, God says "Enter in My Child."

Doris Glanz

Sunday, October 10, 2021

Matthew 25: 42-45

⁴² For I was hungry, and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

⁴⁴ "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

⁴⁵ "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.

Many years ago, there were masons and carpenters building a great cathedral. Under the eaves of the great building one of the carpenters was carving beautiful little birds. Another carpenter asked him why he was carving such beautiful birds under the eaves where no one could see them. The man carving replied "*God sees them*".

Remember that all you do for others and all you give to others is seen by our Father. It doesn't matter if our neighbors or our fellow church people or even our pastor sees what we do for others. Our Father sees everything we do. He loves us so much and we are his children.

Let's all try to make Him proud.

Pam Scoggin

Monday, October 11, 2021

We give generously to be a blessing to others.

The Apostle Paul reminded us of this certain truth:

“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus himself said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

Acts 20:35

We practice generosity in order to share the blessings of God with those who are in need of every kind. Our generous giving provides a place for worship, food, shelter, medicine, clothing, comfort, and hope.

God calls us to branch out into community in blessing. Pray for the missions and outreach ministries of St. John’s that we may answer God’s call to be a blessing.

Tuesday, October 12, 2021

Questions for Reflection: My Lifestyle

Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.

- *Proverbs 30:8-9*

What is an appropriate lifestyle?

What are the dangers and opportunities of wealth from a spiritual perspective?

How much is enough and what are the benefits of simplicity?

Wednesday, October 13, 2021

Examination of my life: My Lifestyle

(Check the boxes that apply)

Looking In (Personal Evaluation)

- I find fulfillment in my currently-chosen lifestyle.
- I have spent time asking God why He has provided more than I need and what He wants me to do with the excess.
- I feel guilty at times for what I've been entrusted with.
- I experience a sense of purpose when I look at how I choose to use my resources and time.
- I consider myself a conduit of God's resources for others.

Looking Out (New Possibilities)

- I need to set aside time to take an inventory of what an appropriate lifestyle for me looks like.
- I have modeled living simply and could help others from sharing my story.

Looking Up (God's Leading)

- I am excited at the thought of being challenged to cut back in some areas of my life.
- I would gain much from taking a six-week study for those, like me, who have been entrusted with significant means.
- I will make time to pray more often about living simply so others can be blessed with my excess.

God calls every disciple to be a blessing. Praise God for God's blessings and ask for more awareness of how you can share your blessings.

Thursday, October 14, 2021

2 Corinthians 9:6

Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

We have so many ways to be able to show generosity, a kind word, a smile to a stranger, a compliment, providing toys at Christmas to families from our Angel Tree. These are outward gifts of generosity. But we are also able to show generosity from our inner spirit. If we are to live like Jesus, we are called to be generous with our love for others, generous with our acceptance of others, generous with serving our church and generous with our giving. God gave us the perfect example of generosity. God gave his Son to die on the cross for our sins. As followers of Christ let's live a life of generosity.

Prayer: Father thank you for the blessings we receive and the opportunity to show generosity to others. Father, guide us to be bold followers of Christ with our love and generosity.

Robin Bartholomew

Friday, October 15, 2021

Malachi 3:10

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.”

I hope that our whole church will see that our time, talent, treasure and lives belong to God. Being blessed with five healthy children and two loving husbands, how can I not be grateful? Growing up as the middle child of 11 gave me a reason to turn to God often. Through the years I have kept a journal even if not every day. Sometimes I would write once a week to think about how ‘God had blessed me. Recently I picked up a small notepad and it was a list of major statements of blessings from childhood all the way to the present time. Sixteen pages later I was just shocked! I was close to death 8 times. For some reason God kept me around.

To name a few — at age 4, I nearly had lock jaw from jumping off the porch barefoot onto an upright rusty nail. At ages 5 and 13 I nearly drowned in the same lake. Dad saved me first the an older sister saved me. At age 7 I was walking to town as there was a carnival. My sister Charlotte, (10) held brother David’s (5) one hand and I held the other. Suddenly I ran to the other side of the 1-way road to walk with our teenaged neighbor, Margaret. Just as suddenly a car came around the corner very fast and struck David and knocked Charlotte into the ditch. I’ve always wondered why God had me let go of David’s hand. I surely would have been hit also. Dave just retired, and he turned 80 on Sunday, so God saved us all. Growing up in South Dakota meant winter activities, and a Methodist Youth Fellowship party took us to a farm close to the Missouri River hills (about 10 miles from home) where we were pulled on a huge sled behind a tractor. We were swung around quite a bit. We all fell off and one of the girls was hit in the temple

by the sled. No it wasn't me, but it could have been. I went head first into a snowbank. God has been so good to me. Many of you know about the tree that fell on our cabin in Woodville during Hurricane Rita in 2005. Charles and I were in it praying. Two trees fell on our car and it never got a dent or a scratch. There's not enough time to tell all the ways God has brought me through dangerous situations.

I was so young when I started Sunday school that putting my pennies into the offering plate thanking God for His love was just natural. I still remember the little blue, thin, hardback song books. As we grew, the nickels and dimes grew to quarters. Dad always made sure we had offering. We knew it was a sacrifice. Soon we were taught to use our own baby-sitting money for offering. Today my love for Jesus has grown and so has my tithe. If you've seen the power of God in your life, how can we not return a portion of our wealth to Him through our church? The scripture above is the only one listed in my Mother's Bible in her hand writing. It's the first one I think of always when we talk of stewardship. He truly has blessed me as I've grown.

Joyce Shanks

Saturday, October 16, 2021

Scriptures taken from the book of Ezra. These various phrases and statements were joined together to make these thoughts.

Stir up my spirit, O Lord God. Let it be that the word of the Lord is fulfilled in my life. May God be with me. The Lord God of heaven is mighty to save. May God be the foundation of my life in order for me to live for him and worship him, and to always seek to Bless His Holy Name. Praise the Lord and give thanks unto the Lord because the Lord is good. His mercy endures forever.

Doris Glanz

Sunday, October 17, 2021

Prayer Sunday

Lord God,

Help me to be
rooted in love,
growing in Christ, and
branching out in service.

Amen

Monday, October 18, 2021

We practice generosity to expand God's kingdom of love.

Jesus himself told us:

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life...But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” Matthew 6:25a, 33

Our generous gifts empower our ministry of sharing the good news of God's love for all people as we work for justice, righteousness, and peace.

We root down into God's love, so that we can grow in our faith and be an expression of God's love. Praise God for all the ways that St. John's has helped you grow in faith through discipleship and worship. Also pray for the children and youth ministries.

Tuesday, October 19, 2021

Questions for Reflection: My Generosity

(Check the boxes that apply)

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each person should give what they have decided in their heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.

- 2 Corinthians 9:6-9

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What giving experience has brought me the most joy?

What, currently, is my annual giving goal?

How could my family be more involved in giving?

Wednesday, October 20, 2021

Examination of My Life: My Generosity

Looking In (Personal Evaluation)

- I give as an outward expression of my inward spiritual passion.
- I give primarily because of relationships, tax savings, or a feeling of obligation to do so.
- I struggle with being a generous person (from the heart).
- I enjoy anonymous giving since it keeps me from the temptation of giving to receive the praise of men.
- I am cheerful when I give my time, talents, and treasure.
- I am pleased with my current level of giving.

Looking Out (New Possibilities)

- I will make an effort to learn more about what a generous lifestyle looks like.
- I need to spend time with my family working on a giving plan.
- I want to learn how to develop my own “giving story” so others who hear it are also motivated towards generosity.

Looking Up (God’s Leading)

- I need to find others who can challenge me in the area of biblical generosity.
- I will seek out financial advisors who will help me make giving decisions based both on practical and spiritual wisdom.
- I want giving to become a more worshipful experience for me.

What are your joys as you express your generosity? What are some stumbling blocks that keep you from being more generous? Raise these joys and challenges to God in prayer.

Thursday, October 21, 2021

Matthew 6:3-4 When you give to the poor don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

Give your contributions privately. You Father sees what you do in private. He will reward you.

As a small child I was taught by my parents that God has been so generous to me. He has been generous with his faithfulness and his love for me. He has been generous with giving me knowledge and by opening many doors for me to becoming a better and stronger Christian. He has been generous with his patience with me. He has taught me to be a better person and that all things are possible through Him. God has been so generous with his time. He is always there to listen to me and to guide me and comfort me. God has shown me a way when I thought there was no way. I have seen generosity being shown at St. John's every day through our mission projects, through volunteer opportunities, as ushers, working the Welcome Center and so much more. Always give back to the church financially and by giving of your time and serving your church.

God has shown me to have a generous heart and to help those in need, but to never be boastful about it. You should never do good or help others to gain recognition. You should always do it because that is what God teaches us to do. God has taught me to be a vessel for Him.

Matthew 6:3-4 is one of my favorite scriptures

When you give to the poor don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Give your contributions privately. You Father sees what you do in private. He will reward you.

I am so grateful for all of God's generosity. I am honored to serve such a generous and loving God. I love you, God! I am thankful to be one of your children.

Your faithful servant, Sheri Reznicek

Friday, October 22, 2021

Proverbs 11:24 ESV

One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.

It took me a long time to understand this paradox for giving. How can you give away your resources and grow richer? How can it be that if you keep your resources when you *should* give, you end up with less? When I was very young, my parents regularly gave to the church. Every month, my dad would write a check and put it in the offering plate. When I was old enough, I started giving to the church because it was the expected thing to do, and I had seen my parents give. As I've grown deeper in my faith and my relationship with God, my giving has become more of a gift of gratitude for how generous God has been with me. God gives good gifts! I have come to understand that these gifts are not mine to hold tightly. I am simply a steward of all that I have been given. I have discovered that the more I allow God's gifts to flow through me to others through church ministries, the more peace I have with what I give away. An added blessing is that no matter what I am prompted to give, I still have enough to meet my needs. That's one of those amazing mysteries of life with God. The benefit of giving freely isn't more income. The benefit is growing richer in God's peace and joy and love. I also know that when I am prompted to give and I choose to keep my resources for myself, I feel hollow, empty, and incomplete. I much prefer the joy of partnering with God in God's ministry of love by giving freely of what has been entrusted to me.

Cindy Riddick

Saturday, October 23, 2021

Maranatha (come, our Lord!)

This world has been given a mentor and His name of Jesus Christ. Jesus reforms us and saves us and gives us back to God. So, while on earth it is our duty to read the instruction book, The Bible. How often do you pull out the book to find God's instructions? To be certified in an area, you have to walk the walk, talk the talk, study the books, do research and practice. If you want to be a mechanic, you must do more than pick up a tool or touch a tire or visit a garage. You have to familiarize yourself with the tools of the trade, by knowing their name, their function; you have to always update yourself on how to be a mechanic. It is daily learning and practice, practice, practice, and it takes a commitment of time.

A mechanic will not get certified if he presents a paper like the following:

"The holder of this paper spent one hour in a class, and picked up four tools. They knew the name of two of the tools. They went in a garage and watched for one hour a week."

We as Christians want to be certified as a Child of God whose sins are covered by the blood of Jesus.

May Jesus pour his blood out over me so I can be glorified as a child of God. Maranatha

Doris Glanz

Sunday, October 24, 2021

We Gather Together

How have you seen generosity at work in St. John's?

“We Gather Together”

We work together for the Lord and that means a lot to so many. Taking care of others weeds is a big deal to this church. We see it throughout the whole year when providing for those in storms and personal needs at whatever time of year it may be. We are there gathering their needs as a part of sharing and generosity. Sharing is a part of love for one another. We can't do enough for others. We gather together says it all!

Edna Day

Hymn We Gather Together

We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing;
He chastens and hastens His will to make known;
the wicked oppressing now cease from distressing.
Sing praises to His name; He fails not His own.

Beside us to guide us, our God with us joining,
ordaining, maintaining His kingdom divine;
so from the beginning the fight we were winning;
Lord, thine be the glory, the victory is thine!

We all do extol Thee, Thou king of all nations,
and pray that Thou still our defender wilt be.
May thy congregation escape tribulation;
Be Thou forever praised, Thou God of the free.

Netherland Folk Tune (1625)

Adrianus Valerius (1626)

Arranged by Edward Kremser

Monday, October 25, 2021

We give generously to discover true and lasting joy.

The Apostle Paul shares this life-changing insight:

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”
2 Corinthians 9:6-7

When we learn the lessons of generosity and practice them in our lives, we discover new joy and cheerfulness. Generosity brings joy!

Write about a time when giving or sharing what you had to bless someone else gave you great joy.

Tuesday, October 26, 2021

Questions for Reflection: My Legacy

Do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

-Matthew 6:19-21

Who has made a profound spiritual impact on my life? How did they do so?

What am I intentionally doing right now to profoundly impact others?

What does my eternal investment portfolio look like?

Wednesday, October 27, 2021

Examination of my Life: My Legacy

Looking In (Personal Evaluation)

- I have spent intentional time working on strategies to leave behind both a spiritual and financial legacy to my children.
- I have set up scheduled gifts to church and charities.
- I am not satisfied with the legacy I am set to leave for others.
- I have not made the spiritual impact in the personal lives of others like I really desire to.
- I think often about wanting my life to count throughout eternity.

Looking Out (New Possibilities)

- I want to learn from others who have left a legacy that changed lives in this life and in eternity.
- I need to increase my investments of time in people, not just my financial investments with them.
- I desire to see my assets more as a sacred trust that requires me to transfer both spiritual character and financial capitol to others.

Looking Up (God's Leading)

- As I grow in generosity, I want to lead others along with me.
- I want to better understand God's specific purpose and plan for my life and the legacy He wants me to leave.
- I will spend time taking stock of the legacy I could leave with my time, talents and resources that God has entrusted to me.

What is most important to you? In what ways do you invest in what is important to you? Is this the legacy you want to leave? Pray that God continues to work within your life to be an expression of God's love.

Thursday, October 28, 2021

JOHN 15:12-13

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

I love this verse; it’s one of my favorites! Jesus’ love for people was and is extravagant, and while we are not necessarily expected to literally lay down our lives on a daily basis for others, we can choose to lay down our lives and love extravagantly in practical ways. For instance, we can choose to go out of our way to help someone in need even though it may be personally inconvenient to us. I love that this verse leaves little to discern. It’s as simple as it says, “Love each other as I have loved you!” Christ gave all for us so for me it’s all I can do to show his love to others. My life long policy has been...if you have it to share, do so with an open heart and an open hand!

My grandmother, god-mother and countless others whom have influenced my life in a powerful and meaningful way were wonderful examples of this extravagant generosity. I remember visiting my grandmother and staying in her 2 room hut of a house with an outhouse and no indoor plumbing and yet she shared all she had with others around her. My god-mother’s house was the place where the weary, lost, sojourner, orphan and widows came to find rest. No one was ever a stranger and everyone was always fed and fed well. This spirit of generosity has been instilled in me, it’s part of my DNA and one way I choose to express my gratitude for all that Christ has done in my life is to financially support the ministries of St. John’s so that we can continue to reach out into our community loving the least and the lost. Friends, practicing generosity and hospitality can look a lot of different ways...Do you know a family that is struggling to make ends meet? Invite them over for a meal or buy them a few groceries. Do you know a single person who is in need of a place to live and you have a spare room? Offer your spare room to them while they get on their feet! It sounds radical I know but when we stop and think about what Christ did for us...It’s the least we can do.

“Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.” — Martin Luther King Jr.

Ingrid Clark

Director of Missions and Administration

Friday, October 29, 2021

2 Corinthians 9:7

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

I became a member of my hometown Methodist Church in fifth grade. I remember so vividly sitting on my knees in my new black and white dress listening to the pastor as he brought the group into the Methodist faith.

I realized that this was an impressive occasion, not knowing then how important Jesus and the church would become in my life.

At this time I received a box with envelopes in it, and each Sunday I would take one of those envelopes and put a nickel or dime in it and take it with me to Sunday School.

This was my first attempt at giving which I believe started my thinking and commitment to give to the church. I gave cheerfully then, and I give cheerfully now.

Dianne Ho-Gland

Saturday, October 30, 2021

Giving to God

I have always been a "giver to God" of time, actions, talents, possessions. I am always ready to donate the "item of the month." But, that is the easy part...let's discuss the hard core money. I have not been an "exemplary giver of finances." I would give when times were good and keep when times were hard. God does not teach us to give when easy and convenient, he says to give your part to God on all income that comes to you. But if you read the fine print, and read what God thru Moses taught the Israelites, God said give what is required, give more, give often, give sacrificially, and give generously. God doesn't say "don't give if you need it" or "give a little if you need it more than God does." God doesn't need it, he owns it to begin with. You need to give it and he needs to receive it.

This year I threw in the towel and said " Ok, I will tithe, plus." So, I did. Did money come pouring back to me? NO Did my bills go away? NO Did people treat me special? NO (But, don't write this idea off, it COULD happen, so accept if it does) But God knew my desire, and that 90% went further than I thought it would. Also, what else happened? We got hit with some big unexpected expenses. I don't know if Satan did this to us, or God allowed it to see if I was "real" or would falter. To make this experience, more workable, I set up a new checking account with the bank. It is called "Giving to God." So, when money/income shows as a deposit, I immediately transfer 10% + to the "Giving to God" account. (It is actually a pretty easy way to do this.)

Giving to God....G+G...Give + God.

Then I had another idea and I am still dealing with this idea. I guess I am hoping God will say "you don't have to do it." Selfish me. (smiles) Will I ever learn? If I have a \$126 grocery bill, transfer \$13 to G+G. If I go out to eat and spend \$32.40 + tip, I will give ten percent to the G+G account. Why shouldn't God "get a "tip" for giving me the health, wealth and ability to be able to go out to eat, to provide groceries to care for my family?

Titling is not/will not always be easy, but God says to do it, and so we should.
Doris Glanz

Sunday, October 31, 2021

Psalm 78:1-4

“Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our ancestors have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.”

As soon as I held my first born in my arms, I was amazed at the beautiful gift God had granted me. As I stared into his sweet little eyes, I was overwhelmed at the level of responsibility I now cradled. Not only was I supposed to keep this tiny human alive and healthy, I was also to nurture his faith. It dawned on me early on that I was to pass on my faith in some way. I prayed to God to help me! Fast forward a couple of years. In his first short three years of life, he learned the song, “Jesus Loves Me” and eventually could recite the Lord’s Prayer on his own. Most of his bedtime stories were some form of a Bible story, whether it was Veggie Tales or some other illustrated book.

At this time I was serving a very small church near Texarkana. The membership of this congregation was older and very rarely did we see children other than mine. Ethan was about 3 ½ years old at the time and he was the star of the show. He knew everyone by name and he knew that he was loved. Most Sundays, he would sit with an older gentleman named Barney and his wife Mary Lou. They became especially attached to Ethan, as they kept him on the days I had to make hospital visits or go to district meetings. They became Ethan’s church grandparents.

Every Sunday, Ethan would get a dollar to put in the offering plate. This particular Sunday, he had put it in his front little blue jean pocket. It was the time of the offering, and the plate was being passed through the rows and it went passed Ethan and then down the rest of the rows

to the back of the church. When I looked up from my seat up front by the altar, I saw Ethan chasing the offering plate. I found out later from Barney that he had struggled to get his dollar out of his little pocket. The plate had passed him up before he could get it out in time. When he finally did get that dollar bill out, he chased after the ushers, so that his dollar would be included in the offering.

At three years old, he didn't really understand what his dollar would go towards. Ethan just knew that he was giving, because he was taught to give and everyone else around him was giving their money too. This lesson in generosity was a part of his faith formation. And now that he is older, he gives a portion of his own earnings to the church. Generosity is now an expression of his faith. God is faithful. God heard my prayer for Ethan to have a strong faith and my prayers are being answered!

As I think about Ethan chasing that offering plate to the back of the church, I am reminded of God's goodness. We are blessed to be a blessing from generation to generation!

"He established a decree in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach to their children; that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and rise up and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." -Psalm 78:5-7

Rev. Stephanie Hughes