



REACHING AMERICA MINISTRIES

**A Five Week
Stewardship-Emphasis using the book
*Why Give?***

Sermon and Worship Service Ideas

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Table of Contents

First Sunday Pg. 4

“The Stream of Water”
Ezekiel 47:1-12

“Living Water”
John 4:11

Second Sunday Pg.7

“David’s Spoils”
I Samuel 30:20

“Jesus Met Them”
Matthew 28:9-10

Third Sunday Pg. 11

“Is anything too Difficult for the Lord?”
Genesis 18:14

“More and More”
James 4:6

Fourth Sunday Pg.15

“Meal Time in the Corn Field”
Ruth 2:14

“The Agape Way”
I John 4:7-21

Fifth Sunday Pg.19

“The Joy of the Lord”
Nehemiah 8:10; 11:43

“Rest, Rest”
Matthew 11:28-30

*Unless otherwise indicated, all of the sermon outlines come from the 19th century English preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

Why Give? for a “Lenten” series Pg. 22
Songs about giving/stewardshipPg. 24
Illustrations and testimonies. Pg. 27

First Sunday

Theme for the week: We are born again to be rivers, not lakes

Topics for the week:

1. Rivers are pictures of born-again Christians through which the Spirit flows.
2. In the first two chapters of the Bible, we see God as a river of life and constantly giving.
3. To be created in God's image means that we demonstrate the generosity of God in our lives.
4. The origin of the "river of giving" lies in self-denial, and no one has denied himself more than the Father in the gift of His Son—and the Son who gave up heaven to suffer and die. Salvation is not a possession but a condition in which we are transformed to give.
5. The triune God of the Bible, is the God of the outward flow. Satan reversed the direction of the flow from an outward river to an inward self-seeking pond.
6. The river of God's generosity flows constantly and is always increasing even if we can only give a little. God is always working downstream.
7. God perfects our giving and makes the results of it miraculous.

Sermon outlines:

Sample 1: (Old Testament)

"The Stream of Water"

Ezekiel 47:1-12

Message by Dr. John DeVries

I. God is like a stream

- A. The Jews used the wonderful picture of a stream to picture God and His generosity, (Jer.2:13, Psalm 36:9).

- B. Satan pictured God as demanding (Gen.3:1) tricking Adam and Eve into thinking that God is not a giving God.
- C. Satan also pictures God as being deceptive (Gen. 3:4) claiming that Adam and Eve wouldn't die as God had warned. Satan's view of God makes Adam and Eve think of God as a pond that doesn't share its water.
- D. The fall of Adam and Eve, and the entire human race, has warped our view of giving as people made in His own image.

II. The nature of the Stream

- A. The picture in Ezekiel 47 depicts a stream that is outward
 - 1. The very nature of God is giving which means the stream is always flowing out from God. His whole nature is outward flowing.
 - 2. Which way does the stream flow from your life? What about our culture?

- B. The picture in Ezekiel 47 also depicts a stream that is always increasing
 - 1. The guide measured the stream four times and by the time of the last measurement the stream could not be crossed.
 - 2. God's giving increases without tributaries flowing into the stream. The river swells without other sources of water flowing into it. God is the sole sources of all life, of all goodness and all blessings.
 - 3. Our first giving may be merely a little trickle, but the stream should expand as we grow in Grace.

- C. The picture in Ezekiel 47 depicts a stream that is always transforming life.
 - 1. The Arabah, which Ezekiel saw, is the world's most lifeless desert. It is totally dead and unattractive, and yet, it was into this lifeless desert that God's grace and goodness flowed.
 - 2. God's giving nature is revealed most when He gives to those who least deserving and most unattractive.
 - 3. Just as a stream brings life giving water so we are born again to be streams of living water (John 7:37-39).

Sample 2: (New Testament)

“Living Water”

John 4:11

I. Jesus offer of living water (vs.10)

- A. The figure was that of living water in contrast to the water collected in Jacob's well which was merely the gatherings of the surrounding hills—land water, not spring water.
- B. His grace is like water from a springing well.
 - 1. It is the best and most refreshing kind.
 - 2. It is living and ministers life.
 - 3. It is powerful, and finds its own way.
 - 4. It is abiding, and is never dried up.
 - 5. It is abounding, and free to all comers.
- C. Jesus intimated to the woman that—
 - 1. He had it. There was no need of a bucket to draw with.
 - 2. He had it to give.
 - 3. He would have given it for the asking.
 - 4. He alone could give it. It would be found in no earthly well.

II. The Woman's question (vs.11)

- 1. His power to save arises from His divine nature, allied with perfect humanity.
- 2. His power to save arises from the purposes and appointment of God.
- 3. His power to save arises from the anointing of the Holy Spirit.
- 4. His power to save arises from his redeeming work, which operated from good even before its actual accomplishment, and which is in full operation now.
- 5. His power to save arises from his intercession at the Father's hand.
- 6. His power to save arises from the authority given to him by the Father (Matthew 28:18).

III. Our assurance

- 1. He is still able to bless. Since he has this living water only from his unchanging self, he therefore has it now as fully as ever.
- 2. He needs nothing from us. He is himself the one sole fountain, full and all-sufficient for ever.
- 3. We need not fear exhausting his fullness.
- 4. We may at all times come to him, and we need never fear that he will deny us.

Second Sunday

Theme for the week: We give the seven gifts of Christ

Topics for the week:

1. We bring Christ's presence to people as we pray with them and teach them how they can converse with Him in prayer.
2. As Christians we are royal (ruling) priests with the power and authority of Jesus' name to set people free.
3. We can enjoy and share Christ's "I am" provisions.
4. We can enjoy and share the good news that through Christ we are not only forgiven, but we are given his perfection.
5. The wonderful hope and belief of Christ's resurrection is to be enjoyed and shared as we tell others about our eternal assurance.
6. We can share the comfort of knowing Christ reigns through our victorious giving.
7. We give the gift of eternal life filled with constant, faith, hope and love.

Sermon outlines:

Sample 1: (Old Testament)

"David's Spoils"

I Samuel 30:20

- I. All the good that we enjoy comes to us through Jesus.
 1. We see in David a type of the Lord Jesus, in his conflicts and victories. Isaiah the prophet says of Jesus: "I will divide him a portion with the great; and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." Is.53:12. By our own efforts we can never gain what we have lost. Our great leader has made us share the spoil.
 2. It was under David's leadership that they won the battle.
 - a. Even Jesus is the Captain of our salvation (Heb.2:10)
 - b. Jesus has overcome the strong man, taken from him all his armor and divided the spoils (Luke 11:22)

- c. We had lost all by sin, but Jesus restored it (Ps. 69:4).
- d. Our very selves were captive; he has set us free just as David rescued his family and all of his spoils (vss. 18,19)
- e. Our eternal heritage was forfeited; he has redeemed it (Eph. 1:14)
- f. Our enemies have been made to enrich us, and to glorify his name (Col.2:15)

II. That which is over and above what we lost by sin comes by Jesus

- 1. David took all the cattle, besides his own (vs.20).
- 2. As Jesus has made us more safe than we were before the fall, so has he made us more rich.
 - a. The exaltation of humanity to kinship with God. Election, sonship, heirship, spiritual life, union to Christ, espousal to Jesus, fellowship with God, and the glory of the future wedding-feast—all these are choice spoils.
 - b. The fact that we are redeemed creatures, for whom the Creator suffered, is an honor belonging to none but men, and not to men except through Jesus (I Cor. 6:19,20; Heb.2:16)
 - c. Our singular condition as creatures who have known sin and have been delivered from it, comes by the Lord Jesus Christ. Our perfection will be that of voluntary agents, who will forever abhor the evil from which they have been saved, and love the good unto which they have been wedded by the grace of God. This belongs not to the angels.
 - d. Our resurrection, which is a gem not found in the crown of seraphs comes by our risen Lord (II Cor. 4:14)
 - e. Our relation to God, and yet to materialism, is another rare gift of Jesus. We are kings and priests unto God on behalf of the universe; the sanctification of mind and matter is consummated in our favored persons.
 - f. Our manifestation of the full glory of the Lord. Our experience will declare to all intelligent beings the choicest wisdom, love, power and faithfulness of God (Eph. 3:10)

III. That which we willingly give to Jesus may be called his spoils

- 1. Our hearts are his alone forever. Hence, all that we have and are belongs to him (I John 4:19)
- 2. Our special gifts. Our tithes and dedicated things are for him (Gen.14:20, Mal. 3:10)

Sample 2: (New Testament)

“Jesus met them”

Matthew 28: 9,10

- I. In the way of service, Jesus meets us.
 - A. As they went to tell his disciples, behold Jesus met them.
 - B. Jesus may come at other times, as he did to those who visited the tomb, to those walking out to Emmaus, to others fishing, and to the eleven assembled for mutual consolation.
 - C. Jesus is likely to come and commune with us as we are doing his work, since—
 1. We are then most awake
 2. We are then in special need of him
 3. We are then the most accord with him
 - D. But come when Jesus may, it will be a blessed visitation, worthy to be prefaced by a “Behold!”

- II. When Jesus meets us, He has ever a good word for us.
 - A. Greetings, or All Hail—a greeting of. . .
 1. Salutation—He is not ashamed to call us his friends
 2. Benediction—He wishes us well
 3. Congratulation—He was glad to see them
 - B. Be not afraid!

- III. When Jesus meets us, it becomes us to arouse ourselves.
 - A. All alive with hopeful energy—They came in eager haste and drew near to him.
 - B. All aglow with happy excitement—They held him by the feet, enraptured by the sight of him.
 - C. All ardent with reverent fear—They worshipped him.
 - D. All amazed at his glory—They fell at his feet
 - E. All afraid lest they should lost their bliss—They grasped him, and held him by his feet.

- IV. When Jesus meets us, such a meeting should go on a further errand.
 - A. We must not be spiritual self-absorbed, but we must go at our Lord’s bidding.

- B. We must seek the good of others because of their relation to our Lord.
He says, “Go and tell my brothers!”
- C. We must communicate what our Lord has imparted, “Go and tell. . .”
- D. We must encourage our brethren by the assurance that joy similar to ours awaits them—“there shall they see me.”
1. Let us go to holy work hoping to meet Jesus as we go.
 2. Let us go to more holy work when we have met him.
 3. Let us labor to “abide in him”, looking for his promised appearing and teaching others to do the same.

Third Sunday

Theme for the week: Our giving is God's opportunity to give

Topics for the week:

1. God uses our sacrificial gifts as an opportunity to pour out His continuing resources. (I Kings 17:13-15)
2. The failure to measure life's challenges in the light of God's power and resources is the primary reason for our weakness. (I Samuel 17:48-50)
3. God is the force that will turn our enemies back, not our wealth or power. It is the way our gift is given that unleashes God's infinite giving. (Judges 7:2)
4. Giving requires that we take the first step in faith and obedience relying upon His resources and power. If we view challenges in terms of what we can do, we will fall. When we trust in Him, others see God's amazing resources and open doors. (Joshua 3)
5. When the needs seem so overwhelming that it seems hopeless, we face great opportunities to see God's resources flow through our meager gifts. He not only multiplies the results of our giving, He also multiplies our resources so we are able to give more. (Mark 6:41-44)
6. God will not usually bless giving motivated by personal gain. When we give to others by praying for them, we are giving them Christ's power which always brings glory to Him. (Acts 3:3-7)
7. The gift that costs the most is the most pleasing to God. It is not the amount, for God is the one who multiplies; it is the price we pay to give. (Luke 21:1-4)

Sermon outlines:

Sample 1: (Old Testament)

“Is anything too difficult for the Lord?”

Genesis 18:14

- I. The promises we are to depend on.
 - A. The Promises of what God will do. What did God promise Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3? There are six “I will’s” in this promise. There are six definite promises from the Lord that “He is going to do something.”
 - B. The promise of being a blessing to millions of people. We too are children of Abraham and share in this blessing as Christians (John 8:39).
 - C. The promise that our life will have significance. God promised not only a nation but also a name to Abraham: “I will make your name great.” Christ says to us today that if all you are interested in is the name that others are giving to you and you have no interest in the name that God has given you, such conduct is a certain indication that you are not saved (John 5:44). The way to a permanent eternal name or significance in life is not through your own effort but through trusting God to work in you and through you.
 - D. The promise of blessing. The word blessing means to give to someone a favored or honored position. God also promises to bless us if we are dependent upon him.
 - E. The promise of God’s protection. God told Abraham that He would bless those who blessed Abraham but that He would also curse those who cursed Abraham. God told Abraham not to fear on many occasions. That promise was not limited to just Abraham. . .it is for us today too (Philippians 4:7).
 - F. The promise that all people will be blessed. God specifically says that “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” This promise points to Jesus and to his body who will eventually reach out to every people group in the world.

- II. The pain caused when we fail to depend upon God’s promises (Gen.16)
 - A. For Sarah
 - B. For Hagar
 - C. For Abraham
 - D. For us

III. The provisions for those who depend on God's promises (Gen.18:14)

A. Nothing is too hard for God.

1. Sarah's laughter
2. God wanted Abraham and Sarah to be so aware of their weakness and inability to bear a child that they would know beyond any doubt that Isaac was a miracle from the Lord.

B. God can do immeasurably more.

1. Not only is nothing too hard for God, but we also know that when He acts, He does things that are immeasurably greater than anything we could ever ask or imagine
2. When we do everything on the basis of plans and common sense, then people will look at our lives and say what smart people we are. When we do everything on the basis of prayer and fasting, on the basis of believing in His promises, then people will look at our lives and say, "What an amazing God!"

C. I can do all in God's strength

1. If we depend on God, trusting in His promises, we can do all things through Him who gives us the strength (Philippians 4:13). If we depend upon our own strength and resources, we will fail miserably.
2. Pride is looking at life without God. It is saying we can make a name for ourselves, independent of God.
3. Dependence upon God, even in times of weakness, showcases His grace (II Cor.12:9).

Sample 2: (New Testament)

"More and More"

James 4:6

I. Observe the text in its connection

- A. It presents a contrast. Two potent contrasts are confronted—"The spirit that dwells in us lusts and envies." On God's part this is met by—"he giveth more grace."
- B. It suggests a note of admiration. What a wonder that when sin abounds, grace abounds even more!
- C. It hints at a direction for spiritual warfare. We learn to obtain the weapons of our warfare; we must look to him who gives grace.
- D. It encourages us in continuing the conflict. As long as there is one passion in the believing soul that dares to rise, God will give grace to struggle with it.

E. It plainly indicates victory. God will not give up on us. He will give us more grace.

II. Observe the general truth of the text.

A. God is ever on the giving hand. The text speaks of it as the Lord's way and habit; "He giveth more grace!"

1. He giveth new supplies of grace.
2. He giveth larger supplies of grace.
3. He giveth higher orders of grace.
4. He giveth more largely as the old nature works powerfully.
5. This should—
 - *Be a truth of daily use for ourselves
 - *Be a promise daily pleaded for others
 - *Be a stimulus in the contemplation of higher or sterner duties
 - *Be a solace under forebodings of deeper trouble in common life.

B. Seeing it is the nature of God to give more and more grace, let us have growing confidence in him.

III. Bring it home by special appropriation

A. My spiritual poverty, then, is my own fault for the Lord giveth more grace to all who believe for it.

B. My spiritual growth will be to his glory, for I can only grow because he gives more grace.

C. What a good God I have to go to! Since the further I go the more grace shall I know, let me proceed with dauntless courage.

D. Let us trust the liberality of God, try it by prayer, prove it by faith, bear witness to it with zeal, and praise it with grateful joy.

Fourth Sunday

Theme for the week: We give because our giving enables others to give

Topics for the week:

1. As rivers of life flow from us we must be certain that we dignify others by having new rivers of life spring up from those who receive our gifts.
2. Many of the presentations of the gospel are little more than spiritual parasitism. Making disciples means enabling, motivating and teaching people to give.
3. We must not give based upon emotions, but on careful consideration of how Christ's Great Commission is being carried out through our giving.
4. Little gifts can have a great impact beyond our imaginations.
5. God can use our relatively small gifts to transform families and entire neighborhoods.
6. Our giving can set in motion a tremendous river of giving that keeps on giving fulfilling the Isaiah 61 prophecy.
7. The experience of God's marvelous multiplication is one of the most profound lessons we can teach our children.

Sermon outlines:

Sample 1: (Old Testament)

"Mealtime in the corn fields"

Ruth 2:14

*In this message, Spurgeon compares Ruth to a new Christian

I. God's reapers have their mealtimes

- A. God has ordained certain meal times for his reapers.
 1. When we gather together to worship and listen to God's Word.
 2. When we set aside time for our own private devotions and meditation upon his Word.
 3. The Lord's Supper.
 4. Serendipitous times when the Lord surprises us as we live our lives. He awakens us in the morning with sweet thoughts as just one example.

- B. There are certain seasons of life when we can expect them.
 - 1. As the reapers would find shelter in the heat of the day, so too, our souls look to him for strength in seasons or times of trial.
 - 2. The Lord feeds us before trials or major battles in life. Elijah spent time under the juniper tree before his 40-day march to the mountain.

II. To these meals, the gleaners are affectionately invited

- A. The poor, the strangers, the physical needy are invited to the meal time.
 - 1. Invited to come join the Lord in His presence.
 - 2. Invited to eat from the Word.
 - 3. Invited to dip the bread into the sweet relish of personal application of the Word wrought through the Holy Spirit.
- B. There should be no doubting the invitation to come or the supplies of God's grace to demonstrate mercy. Indeed, Jesus loves you, as Boaz loved Ruth and intended to marry her.

III. Boaz shares with Ruth

- A. As Ruth sits beside Boaz and communes with him while he feeds her with his grain and she ate her fill.
- B. The Lord Jesus feeds us through His Spirit.

IV. Ruth shares with Naomi

- A. Ruth leaves satisfied like many new Christians who are fed by the bread of heaven—
 - 1. Jesus fills our conscience until it is at perfect peace.
 - 2. Jesus fill our judgement until you know the certainty of his teachings
 - 3. Jesus fills our memories with recollections of what he did and taught
 - 4. Jesus fills our imaginations with the prospects of what he is yet to do
- B. Ruth leaves with some of the food and gives it to her mother in-law Naomi (vs.18)
 - 1. New believers must learn to “pocket” some of the good teachings and share it with their family and friends back home.
 - 2. Notice how Boaz invited her to go out on the fields to glean more so she could provide for her family.

Sample 2 (New Testament)

“The Agape Way”

I John 4:7-21

Message by Dr. Terry Slachter

I. The Guanxi (gwan-shee) Way

- A. Missionaries working in China must learn not only the language, but the Chinese culture—this includes the Chinese Guanxi way of life.
 - 1. A simple definition for Guanxi is a network of relationships formed in a person’s life and how those relationships can be used to get something in the future. In other words, “When a person is in my Guanxi, then I can prevail upon that person for a favor.”
 - 2. When two Chinese people meet for the first time, their conversation will be centered around the potential each person has for what they need or may need in the future.
 - 3. A missionary couple illustrated the reality of this way of life with an actual experience in their first months of living in China. A woman fell from her bike on an icy road one day and she obviously needed help. No one bothered to help her at all until the missionary couple stepped in and provided relief. Why didn’t anyone bother to help her the missionaries asked? No one from her Guanxi network was around to help her. The people who walked past her felt no responsibility for her at all.
- B. What if God practiced Guanxi? Where would human civilization be if God only demonstrated His mercy if we in some way, could be called upon by Him for some future need.
- C. Why would God even begin a relationship with any one of us? We have absolutely nothing to give God. God has no needs.
 - 1. God doesn’t need companionship or the fellowship of man—He already has a perfect relationship and communion within the Trinity.
 - 2. God doesn’t need man’s help to maintain the universe with its 100, billion galaxies. We can’t even comprehend the vastness of His creation.
 - 3. God doesn’t need man to boost His self-image. He is fully aware of His own being. He has nothing to prove to anyone. He is perfect in all things.
 - 4. In fact, mankind has so abused all that God has already given, there is no way we could ever bring anything to the table that could repay what He has already given to us.
- D. That brings us to an astounding question. Why then, would God want to pursue a relationship with mankind?

II. The Agape Way

- A. What is “agape” and the “agape way of life”? And how is it different than Guanxi?
 1. A simple definition of agape love is: A consuming passion manifested in self-sacrificing actions for the benefit of those who do not deserve it, and are totally unable to reciprocate in kind.
 2. The greatest demonstration of agape love is seen on the cross. . .
 3. John writes this letter to help believers gain assurance that they have eternal life. There were many false teachers and teachings who plagued the churches calling into question the agape love of God demonstrated on the cross. Some of them taught that Jesus wasn't really an actual man who suffered and died. They even claimed that Christ's death wasn't necessary.

- B. The assurance that we truly have eternal life can be known based upon whether or not we are living the agape way of life. John gives two signs of assurance in this passage.
 1. Agape love is a gift that must be personally received and experienced in our lives.
 - *A gift that is best received as a very dependent child.
 - *A gift that is received knowing that our greatest need is a Savior
 - *A gift that is continually received as you continue to live your life as His children in a growing relationship of love and trust—not as orphans.

 2. Agape love is a gift that keeps on giving and giving, even at time when there is little gratitude or reciprocation.
 - *As a Christian, His agape love is flowing through us to others like.
 - *The Lord gives us both the ability and the desire to live and love the agape way of life.
 - *We must allow others in the church to minister to us through that love.
 - *The church must equip and utilize the gifts of all members, so that their love and joy may be complete.

Fifth Sunday

Theme for the week: Biblical giving results in joy

Topics for the week:

1. The joy of giving comes from being like Christ. Made in His likeness, we have a choice to either give or live selfishly.
2. The joy of giving starts in sympathy with others.
3. The joy of giving is in discovering infinite resources.
4. The joy of giving comes from within.
5. The joy of giving comes from Christ's example.
6. The joy of giving comes from motivating others to give.
7. God's grace produces giving and giving produces joy.

Sermon outlines:

Sample 1: (Old Testament)

“The Joy of the Lord”

Nehemiah 8:10; 11:43

- I. There is a joy of divine origin
 - A. It rejoices in God himself, his doings, his commands and all that makes up his glory.
 - B. It possesses a deep sense of reconciliation, acceptance, adoption and union with Christ.
 - C. It enjoys assurance of future perseverance, victory and perfection by reason of the finished work of Christ.
 - D. It is exalted by the present personal fellowship with God out of which it springs.
 - E. It is full of hope for the future.
- II. That joy is a source of strength
 - A. It arises from considerations which strengthen. The same truths that make us glad also make us strong.
 - B. It is sustained by a life which is strong, even in the life of Christ within us, maintained by the Holy Spirit.
 - C. It fortifies against temptation, or persecution, or affliction and so it proves a present strength in the time of need.
 - D. It fits for abounding service. He who is joyous of heart himself will seek the good of others.

- E. It forbids all fear by giving a sense of ability to face every enemy

III. That strength which comes of holy joy leads to practical results

- A. Praise. (8:6)
- B. Sacrifices of joy. “They sacrificed great sacrifices and rejoiced.”
- C. Expressions of joy. “God had made them rejoice with great joy.”
- D. Family happiness. “The wives and the children also rejoiced.”
- E. This joy ensured the notice of the neighbors. “So that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.”

IV. That joy is within reach

- A. It was God’s gift, but it came by—
 - 1. Hearing attentively God’s word (8:3)
 - 2. Worshipping devoutly (8:6)
 - 3. Mourning penitently (8:9)
 - 4. Understanding clearly (8:12)
 - 5. Obeying earnestly (8:17)
- B. Let us seek after joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received atonement; for this is a true, safe, and sanctifying joy.

Sample 2 (New Testament)

“Rest, Rest”

Mathew 11:28-30

I. The first rest—getting rid of the old yoke

- A. The person invited to receive the first rest:
 - 1. “All” that labor—the good news is to be preached to everyone
 - 2. The description of the person:
 - *Labor- an active work of man trying to carry a load
 - *Heavy Laden-a passive form—burdens placed upon others
- B. The precept here given:
 - 1. “Come” (right now)
 - 2. “Unto me”
- C. The promise spoken—“I will give you rest.”

II. The second rest—putting on the new yoke

- A. Yokes are essential to produce rest. (Spurgeon uses the following illustration)
A little stream flowed through a manufacturing town; an unhappy little stream it was, for it was forced to turn huge wheels and heavy machinery, and it wound its miserable way through factories where it was

dyed black and blue, until it became a foul and filthy ditch, and loathed itself. It felt the tyranny which polluted its very existence. Now, there came a deliverer who looked upon the streamlet and said, "I will set thee free and give thee rest." So he stopped up the water-course, and said, "Abide in they place thou shalt no more flow where thou art enslaved and defiled." In a very few days the brooklet found that it had but exchanged one evil for another. Its waters were stagnating, they were gathering into a great pool, and desiring to find a channel. It was in its very nature to flow on, and it foamed and swelled and pressed against the dam which stayed it. Every hour it grew more inwardly restless, it threatened to break the barrier, and it made all who saw its angry look tremble for the mischief it would do ere long. It never found rest until it was permitted to pursue an active course along a channel which had been prepared for it among the meadows and corn fields. Then, when it watered the plains and made glad the villages, it was a happy streamlet, perfectly at rest. So our souls are made for activity, and when our souls are set free from the activities of self-righteousness and the slavery of our sin, we must do something, and we shall never rest until we find that something to do.

- B. It is a rest after restlessness- "You shall find rest." No more searching after it.
- C. It is a rest in service. "Take my yoke, my burden is light." He who is a Christian will not find rest in being idle. There is no greater unrest than that of the sluggard. If you would rest, take Christ's yoke, be actively engaged in his service.
- D. It is rest through learning. "Learn of me for I am meek and lowly of heart." In order to have peace of mind.
 - 1. Learn from his meekness—inexperienced animals were always yoked with a more experienced animal to learn and be prepared for useful service.
 - 2. Learn from a lowly heart—Christ suffered following the will of the Father for the glory of God the Father.
 - 3. "For I am gentle and I will give you rest for your souls." This is a rest that grows entirely out of our spirits being conformed to the Spirit of Christ. This is a rest that has little to do with outside circumstances. It is a rest and contentment that comes from above.

Why Give? as part of a “Lenten” Series

The following Lenten series based upon Why Give? comes from Seymour Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. As part of their special series during the Lenten season, the church sanctuary reflected the Biblical imagery of rivers and trees through visual art. Various Sunday school classes created leaves which were added weekly to the “trees of blessing” located in the church’s sanctuary.

Each family/member was given a Why Give? book two weeks prior to the beginning of the first Sunday of Lent. A special mid-week “Ash-Wednesday” service introduced the theme of giving. Following the morning service, an adult/youth fellowship time featured a discussion of the morning sermon and the weekly devotions from Why Give? An evening fellowship time was also offered for members to gather and share their personal responses of the Why Give? book and to spend time praying and thanking the Lord for His generous gift of salvation through Jesus.

Series theme: “Giving in the flow of God’s River”

Ash Wednesday

Text: Philippians 4:14-20

Title: “Giving in response to a giving God”

Theme: The meditation was an introduction to the Lenten theme of giving focusing on verse 18 of Philippians 4: “My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” True repentance recognizes that our greatest need is cleansing from sin and atonement all provided through the greatest and richest gift God could give—the gift of His Son.

1st Sunday of Lent

Text: Ezekiel 47:1-12

Title: “Giving in the flow of God’s river”

Theme: River imagery is often used in the Scriptures to symbolize the abundance of God’s gifts. The message emphasized how, once we enter the flow of God’s good gifts to us, we too, begin to naturally give.

2nd Sunday of Lent

Text: John 3:16-21

Title: “Giving forward the gift of God’s Christ”

Theme: The greatest gift that we have to give is the presence and power of Jesus Christ. Since we have received this gift, we too want to pass it on. The John 3 passage is famous for its beautiful expression of the love of God in giving Christ to the world. The sermon stressed our responsibility to be “givers of the Christ” in the sense that we pass on God’s gift of calling others to faith and obedience.

3rd Sunday of Lent

Text: Malachi 3:6-12

Title: “Giving as the faucets of God’s gifts”

Theme: The Malachi passage is powerful in its promise, God will open the floodgates of blessing to those who believe and respond with giving of their own. The amazing thing is that people have the power to function as faucets of God’s blessing. If they fail to respond to God’s grace, then the flow of God’s grace terminates. The sermon challenged the church to open the faucets so that God’s gifts of grace would freely flow through their fellowship.

4th Sunday of Lent

Text: John 6:1-15

Title: “Giving as God’s stimulus package”

Theme: There is a multiplication principle built into the economics of God. When we step forward in faith, the little that we bring can be powerfully used by God. This is illustrated in the multiplication found in the text of John 6. The sermon invited the congregation to bring whatever they could to God and trust that it was wonderfully used for the advance of the Kingdom.

5th Sunday of Lent

Text: II Corinthians 8:1-7

Title: “Giving with the Harvest of Joy”

Theme: When it comes to authentic joy, giving is the means to getting. When we are motivated to give out of our relationship with Christ, then giving is always cheerful—even when we have to sacrifice to give. The sermon illustrated joyful giving from the example of the Macedonian Church.

Songs about giving/stewardship

1. All Of Me- Tre Sheppard *Thankyou Music*
2. All To You- Jordan Filip, Donna Lasit *Maranatha! Music/City Bible Music*
3. Breathing The Breath- Matt Redman *Thankyou Music*
4. Everything- Jesse Reeves, Chris Tomlin *worshiptogether.com songs/sixsteps Music*
5. Give Love- Mac Powell, Tai Anderson, Brad Avery, David Carr, Mark Lee *Consuming Fire Music*
6. Giving It All to You- Michael Gungor, Lisa Gungor *worshiptogether.com songs*
7. God Of Justice- Tim Huges *Thankyou Music*
8. God Of The Universe- Daniel Shuker *Citipointe Music*
9. I Bow My Knee- Bonnie Deuschle *Integrity's Hosanna! Music*
10. I Will Offer Up My Life- Matt Redman *Thankyou Music*
11. Lord Of All- Jonathan Hunt *Planet Shakers Ministries Int. Inc.*
12. When I Survey The Wondrous Cross- Isaac Watts, Lowell Mason *Public Domain*
13. All You Have Given- David Willersdorf *WORSHIP.COM.AU*
14. Breathing The Breath- Matt Redman *Thankyou Music*
15. Everything To You- Jeremy Scott *Maranatha! Music/City Bible Music*
16. Gift To The World- Robin Mann *Mann, Robin*
17. Giving It All To You- Geraldine Latty *Thankyou Music*
18. Greatest Gift- Matt Redman, Peter Wilson *Hillsong Music Publishing/Thankyou Music*
19. Hands And Knees- Handt Hanson, Paul Murakami *Changing Church Forum, Inc.*

20. He Owns The Cattle On A Thousand Hills- John W. Peterson *John W. Peterson Music Company*
21. High And Lifted Up- Michael Battersby *Smart Productions*
22. I Am- Tery Wilkins, Gina White *Hopper Brothers & Connie Publishing/Chris White Music*
23. I Would Die For You- Bart Millard *Simpleville Music*
24. If Your Output- Richard Hubbard *Thankyou Music*
25. In The Blink Of An Eye- Bart Millard, Nathan Cochran, Mike Scheuchzer, Jim Bryson, Robby Shaffer, Barry Graul, Pete Kipley *Simpleville Music/Songs From The Indigo Room/Wet As A Fish Music/Wordspring Music, LLC*
26. In Thy Presence- Jim Cernero *Tennessee Music & Printing Company*
27. Jesus Is A Giver- Bonnie Low *Manna Music, Inc./C.A. Music*
28. Lift- Ben McFall *Hillsong Music Publishing*
29. May The Lord Give You Increase- Dale Garratt *Scripture In Song*
30. My Love For You- Jeremy Riddle *Mercy/Vineyard Publishing*
31. Please Only You- Steven Curtis Chapman *Primary Wave Brian (Chapman Sp Acct)/Sparrow Song*
32. Running Over- Joseph Pace II *Integrity's Praise! Music/Pace's Vision Music*
33. So Many Books- Michael Card *Birdwing Music*
34. Songs Of Offering- Brent Chambers *Scripture In Song*
35. Thank You- Ray Boltz *Gaither Music Company*
36. The Best Present Of All- Robert C. Evans *Integrity's Hosanna! Music*
37. The Greatest Gift- Vicky Beeching *Thankyou Music*
38. There's No Lack In All You've Given- Simon Brading, Jordan Dillon *Thankyou Music*
39. This Love- Matt Redman *Thankyou Music*

40. What Can I Give Him- Don Cason, Christina G. Rossetti *Word Music, LLC*
41. What If I Give All- Ray Boltz, Mark Pay *Screaming Toad Music/Shepherd Boy Music*
42. What Now- Steven Curtis Chapman *Primary Wave Brian (Chapman Sp Acct)/Sparrow Song*
43. You Are Good To Me- Stuart Townend *Thankyou Music*
44. All That We Need- Mark Altrogge *Dayspring Music, LLC/Sovereign Grace Praise*
45. Amazing- Brian Platt *Parachute Music/Integrity's Praise! Music*
46. Ask Seek Knock- Dale Garratt *Scripture In Song*
47. Bring The Rain- Bart Millard, Jim Bryson, Nathan Cochran, Barry Graul, Mike Scheuchzer, Robby Shaffer *Simpleville Music/Wet As A Fish Music*
48. Calvary- Bruce Bremner *Scripture In Song*
49. God Alone Is Enough- Tom Booth *spiritandsong.com*
50. God Will Make A Way- Don Moen *Integrity's Hosanna! Music*
51. Grace Along- Scott Wesley Brown, Jeff Nelson *Maranatha! Music*
52. I Need A Touch- Geron Davis *New Spring/DaviShop*
53. Lord's Prayer- Lowell Mason *Public Domain*
54. More Than Enough- Gary Oliver *Revalo/Integrity's Hosanna! Music*
55. Shout For Joy And Sing- David Fellingham *Thankyou Music*
56. Spirit Of The Sovereign Lord- Andy Park *Mercy/Vineyard Publishing/Vineyard Songs Canada*
57. The Gift Of Love- Hal. H. Hopson *Hope Publishing Company*
58. Wonderful God- Godfrey Birtill *Thankyou Music*
59. Your Grace Is Sufficient- Martin Nystrom *Integrity's Hosanna! Music*

Illustrations and Testimonies

FOUND TREASURE TESTIMONIES

Submitted by an inner-city church in Michigan

Using the Why Give? Journals, members of this congregation waited upon the Lord to provide unexpected income and opportunities for service. During the five-week series, the pastor invited members to share during the morning worship time. The following testimonies come from this prayer-share time.

Jessica: At the beginning of November, Pastor Dave shared a story about a young man who asked God for twenty dollars to give back to the church. I was thinking about it really hard that night, and decided that I would try to do the same thing. So I prayed about it and asked God to provide thirty dollars for me to give to the treasure chest.

I was confident that God would provide the money, thinking it would come in small portions like five here and ten there, or perhaps I'd get some birthday money that I could use. I decided I would keep it between me and God, so I didn't tell anybody, not even tell my parents!

Well, about a week later I was laying on the couch when the phone rang. I had woke up shortly before and was a little annoyed to find that both of my parents were out running errands and that I had to answer the call. I answered the call which ended up being an opportunity to serve.

I was expecting to help as a service project or perhaps for a little money, maybe ten or twenty dollars. When I'd finished working and about to leave, I was shocked when I was handed thirty dollars. I knew God had answered my prayer for the thirty dollars, so I set it aside until church and joyfully placed it into the treasure chest.

Wilma: Alpha members were having their weekly dinner. In preparation for the Spiritual Gifts Newsletter, I was taking photographs of them seated around the u shaped tables. Someone said a couple of times, "Who is going to take your picture?" I didn't pay any attention.

I finished taking pictures and left the group. I was in the lobby when someone got my attention. Tamra followed me out and said that she would like to take my picture. I said, "Sure" and gave her the camera. I noted immediately that she knew how to handle a camera. I thanked her sincerely and she said that as a photographer, you are always taking pictures of others and no one takes your picture. I was very pleased with the photo that Tamra took of me. Tamra gave me a gift, and what is even better, a friendship has begun!

Ann: This past month, God has blessed me with a financial treasure of \$400 plus the gift of daily meals through Meals on Wheels. God also led me to a program that will allow me to get my medication free for two months! I have been blessed to be able to go to a nursing home to visit with several people and have a time of prayer and praise. I was blessed to find someone capable to take my place when I'm not able to go. And finally, God has blessed me through the

service of others in the form of about 40 hours of working in my yard and renting a dumpster to collect and remove rubbish and overgrown brush.

Sandi: We were in Iowa for Thanksgiving and to celebrate my mother's 80th birthday. My mom ended up giving us an unexpected gift of money; we are tithing that gift.

Pamela: God blessed me with a financial treasure of \$5. He blessed me again when I gave it to my dad to help with groceries.

Connie: God blessed me by allowing me to serve as church van driver for one of our youth groups. "I had been praying for God to show me a place I could serve at the church, so I was very excited to step forward when I saw an announcement that our Middle School Youth Group was looking for someone to drive the van; I mean, I drive a school bus for a living so I am experienced in working with kids in that type of setting and I enjoy it. I feel great being able to volunteer in this way!"

Dawn: God blessed me through the service of others. One day I was experiencing very bad pain and I had a lot of work to do before I could go home, take a pain pill and rest. I had been praying for God to help me cope with the pain and focus so I could get through my day. Several times through the day the pain flared and I was unable to focus on anything else. Almost every time this happened, I would suddenly have someone stop into my office or call for no specific reason and offer to pray for me; someone sent me an email in response to a question I'd asked the day before, and after she gave her brief answer she asked if there was anything I needed prayer for; later I found out that a couple others who knew I was uncomfortable a few days earlier had prayed randomly through the day for me. I was able to finish all my work and organize things for volunteers for the next few days while I was off. I know I couldn't have made it through my work day without the prayers of so many!

Accounts from various members who wrote down what God had done: God blessed me when I found a financial treasure ...

... of \$20!

... of \$18 when I was able to pick up extra hours at work!

... of a \$2 per hour raise in pay!

... of \$11.

... when I received an unexpected financial treasure of \$25 for watching someone's car at the airport.

... of \$40!

... of \$60!

... I was blessed to have an unexpected credit on my cable bill for about \$50 which I was able to use toward a utility bill I received the same day that required about \$75 more than our normal budget amount. Praise God for His gift!

... I'd been searching for my Study Bible for quite some time and decided I would save up and purchase a new one. A few days later I was reorganizing a storage area in my house when I came across a box containing several books and important papers, including my Study Bible!

God blessed me by allowing me to serve in the following way...

...by someone giving me a ride to church.

...by allowing me to help a friend in a positive way and make good decisions.

...I was able to serve by bring several dishes for our Alpha Revival meal!

...I was able to serve by being able to make decorative flower pens.

...by allowing me to help someone with \$20 for a housing expense.

...by allowing me to serve at the monthly Mobile Food Truck where over 87 families were blessed with fresh food.

... by giving me the opportunity to clean a bed-ridden/hospitalized former church member's house.

... by allowing us to witness to and love the mother of our new grand-daughter who is asking good spiritual questions and now going to a church!

... by allowing me to help someone with a new winter coat. Through this act of service we have become friends!

God blessed me by someone able to serve or assist me in the following way...

...through my friend who was able to help me after surgery.

...through the service of two others who gave donations for our church's Thanksgiving Dinner which I was organizing.

...by someone able to assist me with gift cards from Groupon to help get coats for my grandchildren. We are now working on getting boots!

...by my sister-in-law coming twice to clean my house while I've been caring for my dying father.

...when several people helped my family move into our new home.

The \$20 Challenge

The following stories come from a church near Chicago. The pastor challenged members to pray for an extra \$20 for a mission project during the five-week series.

1. I was at a car auction looking at cars that I would like to bid on and I opened up the console on this one particular car and inside was a roll of singles in a rubber band. \$25 worth of singles! I took it and am donating it today.
2. Every Christmas our children don't know what to get us because we have everything that we need, so we tell them to make a donation to a charity of our choice. When we heard this challenge, we decided to choose *Missions for India* as our charity of choice.
3. I had some employees that I had to lay off earlier in the year (hoping to re-hire them soon). When this happens, sometimes they get other jobs before I can hire them back which is what happened in this case. Out of the blue, these former employees called me to tell me that they owed me some hours!
4. I found a can of coins in a closet that I was cleaning out. They were old and from my mother who passed away 25 years ago, so I took them to a "BUY YOUR GOLD" store and found out that they were worth \$80!
5. The office that I work at was offering bonuses to those who met their quota and worked full time. My department met their quota/bonus, but, since I was a part time employee, I was not eligible to receive a part of that bonus. Later after the bonuses were awarded, my boss told me that my co-workers felt that the company rule of only full-time employees being eligible to receive bonuses was not fair, and they wanted to share their bonus with me.
6. I installed some cabinets in my house and I realized that I needed some more parts to complete the installation. I called the company to order them and they told me that they were \$20 each (I needed 2) and that she would give them to me at 50 percent off. But after talking to me and realizing that I had placed previous orders with her, she said that she would give them to me for free!
7. I went out to lunch at a very busy restaurant. I wasn't waited on for about 30 minutes and my order was mixed up. So when I received the bill, the manager said that I did not have to pay to thank me for my patience with them. The bill was for \$20.89.
8. Last fall, Justin fractured his thumb and we went to many doctors' offices and made many co-payments. The week of the challenge I received a note from one of those doctor's offices saying that we had paid one too many co-payments and we received one of our checks back.

9. I took some money out of my savings account to pay some bills and there was an excess of exactly \$20 left over!
10. I received a \$20 gift certificate for a restaurant unexpectedly and I received \$20 for snow blowing the neighbor's driveway.
11. After my daughter broke her leg, she couldn't walk and needed a wheel chair. We looked into renting one and were blessed with a wheelchair that was donated to us. So therefore, we are donating the money that we would have spent renting a wheelchair.
12. The day after Christmas I needed to tackle cleaning my desk at home. I had a wallet that I received as a gift sitting on top of the desk. I knew \$100 would be in it because the person who gave it to me always put \$100 in a new wallet. What I wasn't expecting to find were the two \$20 bills that were in it. Then I went into my drawer and found 30 single dollar bills from our 30th wedding anniversary that I had forgotten about. I found a \$20 in the middle of all the singles! Over the years I may have used one or two single dollars, so I knew that all the 30 singles weren't there but when I counted them, there were exactly 20 single dollar bills!
13. I've been cleaning out my mom & dad's house and found a big coffee can of coins that turned into \$80. I wasn't thinking about Mission India and I thought yea me...extra \$80! At church Sunday when the collection plate came around, I put my \$20 in thinking "God must have given me \$20 from somewhere..." Later that week, I was helping a friend move and realized that my friend needed a bed for his daughter and offered one of mine. Normally we just give away what we don't need to anyone that could use it. He came the next day and asked me what I wanted for it. Well, I didn't know what to say but I said \$40 and that's what he gave me. I got to thinking about it and realized that not only did God give me \$20 to give to Mission India, but God also gave me my \$20 back that I put in the collection plate last week because he doesn't need me to get things done.
14. I found \$20 on the ground when I was preparing my truck for a delivery!
15. I received two sets of screwdrivers for Christmas. I returned one and the return value was \$20.29.
16. I received \$250 from my parents at Christmas that I wasn't expecting. I received a \$15 gift card for Kmart from one of my customers as a Christmas gift. I found an extra \$10 in my jacket pocket as well.
17. At a Christmas party I received a monetary gift from my aunt and uncle. It was exactly \$20 more than I expected!
18. Our next door neighbor travels a lot so we help take care of her property while she is gone. Normally we don't receive anything in return for it...not even a thank-you. This past time when she came back, she came to our house and said thank you and gave us a check for \$50!
19. As a teacher, we share miracle stories one day a week. As I was sharing someone else's miracle story, the kids were just amazed! So praise God for the opportunity to share his amazing works!

