

- In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus admits his faithful stewards in to His joy (Matthew 25)
- When God puts grace in the heart, He puts gladness in the heart; inward, solid, substantial joy.

How do we express our joy?

- Songs of praise
- Behaving as God desires
- Giving generously
- Living with an attitude of gratitude
- Thanking God
- Being in worship

Thoughts on “joy” from Rev. Charles Swindoll’s book *Laugh Again: Experience Outrageous Joy*:

- Joy is a beautiful word. Maybe because it’s so simple. Simple to spell. Simple to say. Simple to define because it’s the emotion evoked by well-being.
- Jesus is the source of all joy. Our joy is not dependent on others
- True joy transcends life’s circumstances.
- Joy is the result of God’s grace toward believers.
- Worldly joy never satisfies.
- We can be confident and joyful because of God’s unfailing love.
- Confidence in God leads to joy.
- When Christ is our primary focus, we find contentment instead of insecurity, peace instead of anxiety, and joy instead of fear.



Discussion Questions:

1. What does God give you and all people for which you should be most thankful? (John 3:16; Romans 10:17; Ephesians 1:7; 2 Corinthians 9:8).
2. Read Matthew 7:11. God wants to give you _____ .
3. The world lacks any true understanding of God. Read 1 Corinthians 2:12-16. By His grace, what does God do for believers?
4. Read Philippians 1:1-3. How do you attain or maintain joy? How can you have joy despite difficult circumstances?
5. Read Philippians 1:6. What key thought regarding joy does the Apostle Paul discuss?

“The world asks, ‘What does a man own?’ Christ asks, ‘How does he use it?’ ” (Andrew Murray)
6. Read 1 Chronicles 29:1-19. What made King David joyful? What do these verses say to you?
7. All that you are and have you have received from God. Read the following verses and identify what blessings and gifts they are referencing:
 - Genesis 1:27
 - Psalm 90:12

- Romans 12:6
- Ephesians 1:7
- Hebrews 12:2; Romans 10:17
- 1 John 4:19

“We must not only give what we have; we must give what we are.” (Cardinal Mercier)

8. Read Genesis 49:28: What do you learn from this verse?
9. Read Ecclesiastes 5:18-19. What gift does God want you to have?
10. Webster’s dictionary defines joy as: “very glad feeling, happiness, delight.” What would you add as a Christian to this definition?
11. God gives His people their blessings at the right time or season. Read Psalm 104:27 and Psalm 145:15. How could blessings received at the wrong time be a curse?
12. What does Philippians 4:19 tell you?
13. Read Habakkuk 3:17-19. Where does Habakkuk’s primary joy come from?
14. How would you define blessings?
15. Read Acts 5:41; Hebrews 12:7-10. Can blessings hurt, like suffering or discipline? Why?

Closing Prayer:

Joy is not the ephemeral happiness that worldly pleasures bring, but the deep and abiding joy of being loved by God through Jesus Christ. It is an emotional appreciation for good things received. A result of God’s grace toward believers.”
(The Lutheran Study Bible)

Bible Study 2

“The Joy of Managing God’s Blessings”

Opening Prayer:

Introduction:

In the previous study, we discussed the joy of receiving God’s blessings. In this session, we will focus on our high calling to manage the blessings God has so generously entrusted to us. God gives us blessings for our good, for others, and to extend His kingdom. Our blessings, to mention a few, involve our time, abilities, families, vocations, and relationships. While we receive both spiritual and physical blessings, this study will focus on the material blessings God gives.



God calls us and honors us with the privilege of being His stewards. This privilege is not something we have earned, but it is a special honor given to us by God’s grace. Whether we have little or lots of material wealth, we are to manage all that has been entrusted to us faithfully. Through the study of God’s Word, we come to realize how undeserving we are to receive the blessings God gives so freely and generously. God never stops giving. When the Holy Spirit opens our eyes so we can acknowledge God as the owner and giver of all things, we joyfully go

“Make as much as you can,
save as much as you can,
and give as much as you can.”
(Rev. John Wesley)

about managing His resources according to His will and guidance. It is not only the envelope we put into the offering plate on Sunday that concerns Jesus; the choices we make regarding money we spend on groceries, gas, clothes, entertainment and so forth are both spiritual and financial decisions. There are some who have the attitude that, once we’ve given our church contributions, we can do with the rest of the money exactly as we please. On the contrary, since God has made it possible for us to have our resources, we are accountable to Him. As we seek to follow His will, our relationship with God is strengthened. He becomes the Lord of our lives and money.

Personal Financial Questions to Ponder:

- Are you managing your money as if it belongs to God?
- Do you have a spending plan?
- Do you have a saving plan?
- Do you have a giving plan?
- Are you living a God-pleasing lifestyle?
- Are you controlling your debt?
- Are you content?
- Are you seeking financial counsel?
- Are you investing wisely?

- Is God receiving the first portion of your income, and are you giving intentionally, regularly, proportionately, and generously?
- Are you asking the question, “When do I have enough?”
- Do you know that you are accountable to God for how you manage your money (Matthew 25)?

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is the condition of the heart so important in the faithful management of God’s blessings?
2. God blesses you with time. How do you waste or misuse your time? What would God want you to do with your time that you aren’t doing now?
3. What counsel does the Apostle Paul provide in Ephesians 5:15-17?
4. What does 1 Peter 4:10 say about the use of your talents?
5. Read Psalm 24:1; Haggai 2:8. Why should you be a responsible manager? How are you able to be a trustworthy and responsible manager?
6. Read Matthew 24:45-51. What are the faithful and wise servants doing? What will happen to those servants who are neglecting their responsibility?
7. Read 1 Timothy 5:8. What management expectations are placed on fathers or heads of households?
8. How does your relationship with God shape your view about money?
9. God wants you to use your blessings to further His kingdom and to serve others. How can a person who has managed his/her money responsibly and builds up a surplus be useful to God?
10. Which has a greater potential impact on faith—lots of money or a little money (Proverbs 30:8-9; Matthew 19:23-24; 1 Timothy 6:6-10)?
11. Why do you have joy as you manage your money and time faithfully and responsibly so God is honored?
12. Read the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30). Who is the Master and who are the servants? What is the relationship between the master and each of the three servants? Why were the servants given different amount of talents? In managing the money, what



did the servants think was expected of them? What did the master say to the servants and why?

13. Read Luke 12:15. What wisdom does this verse provide?

14. What is the purpose of the management of your money? What is the bigger purpose?

15. Why can it be said that the way you manage or handle your money is one of the most accurate reflections of your relationship with the Lord?

“Can a man be poor if he is free from want, if he does not covet the belongings of others, if he is rich in the possessions of God? Rather, he is poor who possesses much but still craves for more” (Tertullian)

16. Read Matthew 6:33. What wisdom and guidance do you receive from this verse?

17. According to 2 Corinthians 9:13, what is the ultimate result of your service?

Closing Prayer;

Bible Study 3

"The Joy of Sharing God's Blessings"

Opening Prayer:

Introduction:

This study will help us understand that faithfulness in giving is a part of a Christ-like character. In our giving, we emulate Jesus Who showed us what it means to love and to give. *"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13). Jesus gave us the greatest and the most perfect gift by offering Himself on the Cross. With hearts filled with love for what He did for us, we become "givers" rather than "takers." Giving expresses our love for the Lord. In light of what God has done for us through His Son, how can we not give freely to Him? As we give, God fills us with even greater joy and fulfillment.

"A committed giver is an incurably happy person, a secure person, a satisfied person ..." (Eric Butterworth)



When a worldly spirit is in control, giving generously seems foolish. Without faith and trust in the Lord, there is a much greater focus on taking and hoarding than giving. However, mature Christians who are under the control of the Holy Spirit understand the importance of giving and do so cheerfully. The Apostle Paul exhorts us, *"Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is"* (Ephesians 5:17). God's will is to *"contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality"* (Romans 12:13). In order to reach the lost, we are to give to support evangelism efforts locally and throughout the world.

As our faith matures, we turn from love of self to love of God. We live lives in thanksgiving and gratitude because of Who God is and what He has done for us. *"...He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him Who for their sake died and was raised"* (2 Corinthians 5:15). We use our time, talents, and treasures responsibly because we know that God gives us all things, and we want to use what He gives us to glorify and serve Him. By grace, we live for God. Paul put it succinctly, *"You were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body"* (1 Corinthians 6:20).

"Giving satisfies the soul, edifies the church, and magnifies the Lord." (Stephen Olford)

As Christians, we are in this world, but we are not of this world. We are warned not to *"love the world or the things in the world"* (1 John 2:15). We are not in love with this world because, as God's children, our love is directed toward Him rather than things in the world. We love and worship the Creator, not the creation. Through our faithful giving, we demonstrate both our love for Jesus and our ability, by His grace, to break the grip that things of this world can have on us.

Inadequate as we are, God uses us as His hands, feet, and mouth. *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10). We are His stewards. As redeemed people of God, we are called and equipped to render willingly the firstfruits of our lives and resources to Him.

Understanding Generosity

- The Apostle Paul wrote, *“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work”* (2 Corinthians 9:8).
- Jesus said, *“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”* (Acts 20:35).
- Have you ever met an unhappy generous person?
- Giving infuses life with joy. Giving is to be joyful and fulfilling.
- Grace is the action; Giving is the reaction.
- Generosity is a life overflowing with care and concern for others.
- Generosity is an essential quality of spiritual maturity and growth.
- *“Through our generosity, God can do extraordinary things. Through our giving, God changes lives, and in changing them, transforms us...The practice of generosity describes the Christians unselfish willingness to give in order to make a positive difference for the purposes of Christ.”* (Rev. Robert Schnase)
- *“People give because generosity helps them achieve God’s purpose for themselves. By giving, we develop the inner qualities of generosity. Generosity is not a spiritual attribute someone acquires apart from the practice of giving. It becomes a discernable only through visible behavior. We cannot become generous and hold on to everything we have for ourselves without letting go. The opposite of generosity is greediness and selfishness. These are not the qualities that lead to life, and so by our giving we cultivate a different nature inside ourselves.”* (Rev. Robert Schnase)
- *“The less I spent on myself and the more I gave to others, the fuller of happiness and blessings did my soul become.”* (Hudson Taylor)
- Generous people give proportionately to the way God has blessed them.
- *“Giving generously is one of the smartest, most intellectually sound and emotionally satisfying decisions you will ever make”* (Rev. Chip Ingram).
- Generosity is a spiritual gift. *“Let us use [our gifts]...the one who contributes, in generosity”* (Romans 12:8).
- Synonyms for generosity:
Goodness, largesse, unselfishness, altruism, liberality, open handedness, all heart, free-giving, charity, philanthropy.
- The mind grows by what it takes in—the heart grows by what it gives out.
- *“We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give”* (Winston Churchill).



Discussion Questions:

1. Read Matthew 28:16-20. What treasure did God entrust to His disciples? What were they to do with the treasure? What are you to do?
2. Read Matthew 25:31-40. As you serve your neighbor, what else is happening?
3. The giving of Cain and Abel is the first story about giving in the Bible (Genesis 4:2-4). What was the difference between Cain's offering and Abel's? (Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:12). Can giving provide evidence of what is in a person's heart? What does your offering reflect?
4. Firstfruits giving is giving the first portion of your income to God (Proverbs 3:9). What made firstfruits giving in the Old Testament so dependent on God's promises?
5. Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-7. How did the Macedonians give? What was the motivation for their giving?
6. Where are you on the journey toward generosity? How does God use your giving to change you? How does your giving affect your relationship with God?
7. Read 2 Corinthians 9:11. How is it, that by giving more of what you have, you receive even more to give?
8. God owns "*the world, and all who live in it*" (Psalm 50:10-12). If God doesn't need your gifts, why does He want you to give?

"To be smart, spend carefully. To be wise, save regularly. To be genius, give extravagantly."
(Rev Chip Ingram)
9. Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-17; 8:1; 9:8; How do you move from hoarding money to giving sparingly, to giving more, to being generous?
10. Rev. Chip Ingram gives four reasons generosity is important:
 1. Generosity is genius because it changes our lives. How?
 2. Generosity connects us with others. How?
 3. Generosity helps invest in what matters. How?
 4. Generosity frees our hearts. How?
11. What is the world's view of money? On the other hand, what does Scripture tell you? (Matthew 6:19-24; Luke 16:10-12; 1 Timothy 6:6-19)
12. Read Malachi 3:10-11; Proverbs 3:9-10; Proverbs 11:24-25; Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6. What special blessings does God's Word promise to those who give faithfully and generously?
13. How can there be more blessing in giving than in receiving? (Acts 20:35).

Closing Prayer: