

Enough: Discovering Joy Through Simplicity & Generosity

A Stewardship Devotional 2014

Week 3 – Cultivating Commitment and Defined by Generosity

(Some ideas are adapted from Adam Hamilton's book, some contents written by Pastor Bob)

It may be helpful to write your reflections down - on paper, computer, or electronic device. It's an opportunity to engage in the spiritual practice of journaling. For the week of Oct. 19 – Oct. 25. Do one reflection a day: either every other day or consecutively at the beginning or towards the end of the week, which ever suits your schedule. Do either individually or with another person.

Reflection 1

Scripture: Matthew 25:14-21

God has given us charge over our resources. We are called to exercise responsibility and wise management.

During the holidays our spending usually exceeds our budget and we lose control. In addition to regular bills, the usual family and household expenses, there are holiday cards, parties, presents. We spend extra on food, last minute surprises, and try to take advantage of sales.

Make a budget for the holidays as best you can. Total your anticipated income and/or revenues for the month. List normal bills and expenses. Determine how much you are giving to the church. Set a budget amount for cards, gifts, parties. Set a budget amount for surprise or unexpected expenses.

Prayer –

Prepare us O Lord for the crush of the holidays. Life can become frenetic, hectic, and chaotic. Help us to find a handle on our days, to manage our resources, and to use our time prudently. As we set up financial plans for the weeks ahead, help us to be faithful and steadfast. Let us not lose focus, but to be intentional and practical. Remind us to set limits, empower us to say no when faced with too many demands, and to seize control over our decisions. Guide us with your Spirit that we may have stability amidst the rush of the season. Amen.

Reflection 2

Scripture: Mark 12:41-44

41 He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. 42 A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. 43 Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. 44 For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

Questions:

How much have I given to God this past year?

Time, talent, money?

How regular have I attended worship?

How many church or community meetings did I attend, how many other events did I attend and participate in?

Do a general review and evaluation of the year 2014.

How am I feeling about my level of giving and the extent of my involvement and participation?

Prayer –

I give you thanks O God for what I was able to give and my level of service within the past year. Help me in the remainder of the year to continue that faithful commitment to give and serve. Move me to give a little extra, to give generously and joyfully. Inspire me to challenge myself to finish the year strong. Grant me peace of mind, contentment, and a sense of fulfillment as I approach this very busy few weeks, trusting in your grace and your mercy to get me through. Amen.

Reflection 3

Scripture: Hebrews 13:5-6

5 *Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you."* 6 *So we can say with confidence,*

"The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"

Do an assessment of the allotment of your resources from 2014.

This chart is from Hamilton's book p. 65.

This activity should be done as fun activity, not to produce guilt, judgment, or condemnation. But to use this tool as a help.

Item	Actual % in 2014	Suggested %	Plan for 2015
Housing		25-35%	
Transportation		10-15%	
Charitable Gifts		10-12%	
Food		5-15%	
Savings		5-10%	
Utilities		5-10%	
Medical/Health		5-10%	
Debt		5-10%	
Clothing		2-7%	
Miscellaneous		12-23%	

Prayer:

Loving God, we know that you know us intimately. Nothing is hidden from you. You know our habits, our inclinations, and tendencies. Help me to learn from this process as I prepare to ponder what I can commit to you and your church next year. Grant me discernment, wisdom, guidance. Help me to see that giving is a spiritual act and that you call us to give and receive. Make clear to me how much I should set aside for you next year and help me to abide by it. Amen.

Reflection 4

Scripture – Genesis 28:20-22

20 *Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, 21 so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, 22 and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that you give me I will surely give one-tenth to you."*

Proverbs 3:9

Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce;

2 Corinthians 9:7

Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Giving to God and giving to ministries is a way to honor God. Giving is an act of faith and trust. Giving is a belief in God's goodness and having hope in God's plans for our future. We may not be able to commit 10% as Jacob did, but it is important to try to establish an amount.

Discuss with your family members what you feel called to give in 2015. Commit to an amount.

Prayer –

I am no longer my own, but thine.
 Put me to what thou wilt,
 rank me with whom thou wilt;
 Put me to doing, put me to suffering;
 Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee,
 Exalted for thee or brought low for thee;
 Let me be full, let me be empty;
 Let me have all things, let me have nothing;
 I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.. Amen.

("A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition," in *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989, p. 607)