

# *The Joy of Receiving God's Blessings*

## **Receiving, Then Giving**

In the words of Rev. Billy Graham, "God has given us two hands, one to give with and the other to receive with." Most stewardship educational efforts focus primarily on helping God's people grow in the grace of giving and serving. Little time, if any, is devoted to the importance of receiving God's blessings faithfully and joyfully.

How often, during the course of the day, do we think about what we are receiving from God every moment? That next breath you inhale – who manufactured that? The warmth of the sun that sustains our beings and every living thing – did you hang that sun in the sky? As God asked Job, "*Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?*" (Job 38:4).



Everything we receive comes from God's hand, and we can never run out of things for which to thank him. Receiving is an essential part of our relationship with God. God is the giver; we are the receivers. Receiving can be difficult because we don't like to "owe" anything to anyone. If someone invites us for dinner, we must plan an even more elaborate meal for them. If someone does us a favor, we must reciprocate in an equal manner. This attitude creeps into our relationship with our Lord.

It's hard for us to comprehend that, along with all the physical and material gifts he gives us, God also offers us spiritual gifts: forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation through his Son. We who pride ourselves on our independence, on our self-sufficiency, find that these once presumed positive traits keep us from knowing God, from relying on him, and from joyfully, freely receiving all he wants to give us. But this is God's plan: God joyfully gives us all we need to support this body and life and Heaven besides.

Many have thought they must "do" something to earn these gifts, but God says, "No." "*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God...*" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

As we hear his Word and participate in his Sacraments, the Holy Spirit is at work, creating and nurturing faith until at last we get it! We come to the realization, as Martin Luther did, that we are all "beggars before God." But we don't acknowledge this with a sigh of resignation. No, with joy we eagerly receive all God has to give us.

Only after we have found joy in receiving are we able to respond by giving back freely and with proper motivation. We love others because God first loved us (1 John 4:19). We give whatever we can because God gave even his own Son to die for us (John 3:16).

Day by day, by the Spirit's sanctifying work in us, we come to rejoice in our role as God's stewards, managers of the many and great blessings God gives us daily.

## King David's Prayer

Reading about King David in the Old Testament, we are made aware of how much he trusted God and how he gave God the glory and honor he, as a powerful ruler, could have ascribed to himself. One of his greatest achievements was the amassing of all the materials Solomon would need to build the temple. Perhaps he had enough resources so he could have provided everything necessary out of his own wealth, but he involved the people who gave from their resources as well. When all is ready, he prays a prayer commending the whole project to the Lord. He prays, *"For all things come from you and of your own have we given you"* (1 Chronicles 29:14).

## Showing our Gratitude

God gives us his love, goodness, and mercy daily. He has given us victory over sin and death through his Son. Christ has given us the blessings of forgiveness of sins, justification, a new life, and an eternal hope. Because of his bountiful blessings, we should be compelled to show our gratitude. Do we? Could we, at times, be taking all that we receive for granted?

If Christ were to come into our homes in physical form, certainly we would express our thanks in tangible ways. We would make him comfortable, run errands for him, offer him our best food, and give him our time and attention. Since we don't have that opportunity, we show our gratitude in other ways.

One way that we express our gratitude is to give thanks throughout the day. When we see life and its blessings as gifts, we are prepared to offer our thanks. Our thanksgiving is demonstrated when we use the faith God has given us to live in obedience to his Word. God hears and sees our gratitude through the lives we live. When we generously share our time and money with others in Christian love, we show our thanksgiving for our gifts. Our giving reflects Christ's love in us. We express our thanks to our heavenly Father when we joyfully receive his gifts in private and corporate worship.

As stewards, we find that gratitude to God opens our hearts to receive more of God's love which enables us, in turn, to be more faithful with our time, talents, and treasures. In response to God's love and grace, we give ourselves and our resources. When we acknowledge God as the creator and owner of all, we will serve the Lord faithfully out of gratitude for all his gifts to us. Our gratefulness to God will enable us to experience joy in him even during bad times because God promises to comfort and sustain us in all things.

