

Back to the Books – Season 2 – **Week 5**
Give – for giving is living.... Matthew verses

Over the last month or more, we have focused on the Beatitudes with the theme **Blessed to be a Blessing**. I know, for me, it has been very helpful to just say the word 'Blessed...' and then a whole series of verses come to mind...mostly in order.. but some are more pronounced than others in my memory. It has reminded me (again), just how truly Blessed we, as a nation, as a people, and as a church have been blessed.... **So, now what?** For some, they not only count their every blessing, they put them in boxes, bags, banks, or vaults to make sure they don't lose a single one of them. They get the 'blessed' part but they miss the 'to be a blessing' which is the greater emphasis and which is the most fun. Next we are going to focus on the word GIVE (and its variations). So the theme is **"Give – for giving is living."**

When I did the Bible search (in the RSV), there were more than 1500 verses or references to the word 'give'. While I did not read each one of them, I did review many from the Old and New Testaments. Then, I realized that we could learn a lot about Giving right there in Matthew, starting only a few verses beyond where we left off in Matthew 5:

Let's start our journey into giving in Matthew 5:16 **"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."** (RSV)

We have discussed in recent Bible Studies some of the current people who are making headlines... famous people...people in the media who others may look up to or who may even idolize, to some degree, who have been and are making terrible personal choices on habits, behaviors, and lifestyles which in prior generations in our culture would not have been tolerated...at their level or positions. Now, it seems to be just another story... like so many others... that we don't even pay much attention to it. Contrast that with this verse from Matt 5:16. 3 simple phrases in one sentence... (repeat the verse)...

**16 "Let your light so shine before men,
that they may see your good works and
give glory to your Father who is in heaven."**

As we read in the first sentence of **The Purpose Driven Life** by Rick Warren..."It's not about you." We quickly come to realize that our "light" is only a reflection of what Jesus has done and is doing in our lives. He is the Light of the World. Our "good works" are only the outcome of his outpouring of love, mercy, grace and forgiveness so that we can be free to be... to be a blessing to others. And if we do that, those simple but oh so difficult tasks, people will notice.. they will be amazed... they will realize that our lives are not our own.. that we belong to something and someone MUCH bigger than what is happening here and now... and they will GIVE glory to God and thanks for His hand that placed us,

near them, at this time and in this place. Your giving, of yourselves, will result in true living.. and it will show.

Next, let's read together, Matthew 5:42 **"Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you."** (RSV)

With all of the recent bail-outs in banking, finance, autos, and more.... This could be tomorrow's headline... but I am sure they would omit the reference to Matthew. In context, it is Jesus talking about just how far we are to go to respond to someone who is in need... verse 40 says.. "if they take your coat, give him the cloak as well".... Verse 41 says, "if compelled to go 1 mile, go 2 miles." Then there is our verse 42: (repeat it). **"Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you."** Verse 5:43 repeats what most people then and even today still believe and live by...as Jesus characterizes what our world teaches to "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." All of which sets up the verse which turns our world upside down in verse 44... where he tells the people to 'love your enemy,' 'bless them that curse you'....'pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you'..... In our culture, the media would say (and is saying)... that's just "crazy talk." But that's because they really don't understand **giving**... they know taking.. they know holding... they know hoarding...etc... but not giving. Jesus voluntarily gave his Life for us...so that we might live. So, use Matthew 5:42 to bring to mind the whole story... and then baffle the world by doing what God asks.. "give to him who begs from you." You may never see the returns in this life... but the rewards will be eternal.

And the final verse for today comes from Matthew 6:11... which you all have memorized and which you say every week.. **"Give us this day our daily bread;"** It is right there in the middle of the Lord's prayer. Such a short sentence that we breeze right past it... we are generally in a hurry to get to the "forgiveness" part of the prayer... that's what we know we need... forgiveness, and we do. But let's not overlook that simple request...our need for sustenance and nourishment, each and every day. Our need is there whether we seek His forgiveness or not. Without that generous gift of food, we would die. When I began searching for the word 'give', there were many references in Genesis of ALL the things which God had given to mankind...God is a giving God....or we would not be here today. But in His giving, I believe that He is setting that model and standard by which we should judge our actions. Do we give as freely as He does? Or do we give only with an expectation on getting something?

What started as an occasional gift of the \$1 presidential coins has now become a habit for me... and at times, it is a social experiment as well. I find that there is a lot of suspicion about the gift, as some will ask, "what's the catch, what's the gimmick, what do I need to do for it." When I say there is none and I explain the nature of a souvenir...'a memento of a person, place or event. Something special, something to remember.' It is then that I get a small glimpse of the

problem of the Gospel...the problem is that it is **free.. a free gift from God through His Son, Jesus...** but you must accept it as a gift... you can't buy it, earn it, work for it, inherit it, etc. It is a personal gift which lasts a lifetime and beyond. Giving is in the character of God, but the world has trouble with that concept....that's why we need to demonstrate it to them in word and in action.

So, at 6:11, just as you are beginning your evening dinner, pause an extra minute to remember how good God is in providing you with your daily bread... as we know it to be... and that is Jesus, the Bread of Life. So as you can see from God-- that giving is living. I hope that you will use this set of cards to help remind you of that fact and with that focus day-by-day, hour-by-hour and even minute-by-minute as you **Take Time For God's Word** this week in your life.

Thank you.

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Time	Book	Verse
5:16	Matthew	Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (RSV)
5:42	Matthew	Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you. (RSV)
6:11	Matthew	Give us this day our daily bread; (RSV)
7:02	Matthew	² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.
7:11	Matthew	¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!
10:08	Matthew	⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying, give without pay.
10:42	Matthew	⁴² And whoever gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."
13:12	Matthew	¹² For to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.
16:19	Matthew	¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Prior Memory Verse

7:07	Matthew	Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you will find; knock and it shall be opened unto
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		you."
11:28	Matthew	²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.