
GRATITUDE and GENEROSITY

Daily Bible reading and prayer plan

This reading plan is designed to accompany the Gratitude and Generosity Programme.

For each day of the programme you will find suggested Bible readings. There is also a key verse for each day, and some prayer prompts. It is hoped that these will shape your personal prayers without being too prescriptive or putting words in your mouth.

All Bible verses quoted are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version*.



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Key Verses



Suggested Reading



Daily Reading



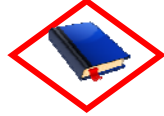
Prayer Prompts

DAY 1 Everything Belongs to God



The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and all who live in it;'

Psalm 24:1



- **Genesis 1 or Psalm 24**
- **John 1: 1-5**



There seems to be an increased awareness in today's world of our responsibility to look after creation. The emphasis is often on saving the planet for future generations. As Christians we take this responsibility seriously as we recognise that we are only custodians of creation. Has a neighbour ever asked you to look after a pet, or water their house plants while they are away? What a responsibility! Do you find that you take better care of things if they don't belong to you?

Ask yourself 'What is the source of my material possessions?' You may say that they are the product of your own hard work or maybe they have been passed on to you from others. If you think about this further would you agree that God is the source of all that you have?

Further to this do you feel that you actually own anything or do you prefer to think that you are just looking after it for the time being?

Before we can even start to consider what we can give to God it's good to be reminded that everything belongs to him in the first place. He created the world and continues to preserve and govern it.



- **Thank God for his creation**
- **Make a list of some of the things he has given you, and give thanks for them**

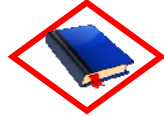
Generous : Engaged : Open

DAY 2 Firstfruits



'As soon as the word spread, the people of Israel gave in abundance the first fruits of grain, wine, oil and honey and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything.'

2 Chronicles 31:5



- Deuteronomy 26: 1-11 or Proverbs 3:9
- Romans 11: 33-36



Managing our money involves making a list of priorities. We have to decide what is essential, and then what is desirable if there is any money left after essential expenditure. The reality for many is actually a constant juggle to meet essential payments and desirables are actually no more than dreams.

Where then does giving to God come in this process of prioritisation? This is a personal question and each of us gives our own answer. There is no verse in the Bible that will tell you exactly how much money you should give to God, but the Bible does help us with the priority list.

The Israelites gave God the first fruits—in other words God was at the top of the priority list. We recognise that the social and economic conditions in which we live are totally different from that of the Israelites. However, Christians claim that Jesus is Lord — in other words he takes priority in all things. This includes the way we manage our money.



- Ask God to give you wisdom in managing your money
- How does your understanding of God affect your order of priorities?

Generous : Engaged : Open

DAY 3 Christian Stewardship



'And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.'

Luke 12:15



- Matthew 25: 14-30 or Luke 12: 13-21
- 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11



Christian stewardship concerns our response to the gifts of God — how we use all that God gives to us. It is about the whole of life, and concerns the use of our time, talent and material resources, and our care for God's creation as a whole.

As Christians, we seek God's guidance in how we use his gifts. Christian stewardship is ultimately about being the people God wants us to be, about allowing God to live in us and direct our lives.

A very important part of our Christian stewardship is how we 'steward' the gospel — how we share God's greatest gift..



- In what ways do we make the most of God's gifts?
- In what ways do we waste God's gifts?

Generous : Engaged : Open

DAY 4 Giving



"On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come."

1 Corinthians 16:2



- Deuteronomy 16:17 or Psalm 112
- 2 Corinthians 8: 1-15



Taking part in a Gratitude and Generosity programme gives everyone an opportunity to think about giving. Once again today's Bible verse gives us no help with what amount we should give. At no point in a Gratitude and Generosity programme will anyone tell you how much money you should give. This is for you to decide. But once again the key verse does give some guidance.

Paul suggests to the Corinthians that they make a habit of setting aside money on a **regular** basis. He suggests weekly but today monthly is more convenient for some people. Paul goes on to say that the amount set aside should be **proportionate** to our income. In his second letter to the Corinthians he reminds them we can only give from what we have, not what we don't have. If we are going to give a proportion of our income regularly we will need to budget with this in mind. Our giving is therefore **planned** for. In turn the church is able to plan for its part in God's mission on the basis of this regular income that is given by members in proportion to their income.



- Thank God for the privilege of giving to him
- Ask God to show you how the mission of your church will be enhanced by your giving.

Generous : Engaged : Open

DAY 5 What Can I Give?



'Jesus, looking at him, loved him. "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.'"

Mark 10:21



- Deuteronomy 8: 17-18 or Psalm 62
- Mark 10: 17-25 & Matthew 6: 19-21



Here is a story of someone who appeared to have everything. We don't know his name; we just know him as a 'Rich Man'. He was obviously used to being able to acquire whatever he wanted and now he wanted to know how he could inherit eternal life. We should give credit where it's due as we also hear that he claimed to have kept the commandments. As we have said he appeared to have everything. Jesus identified something that this rich person lacked and that was the ability to give things away, ie to recognise the value of community.

Consumerism is prevalent in our society; we are constantly encouraged to acquire more and more for our *own* happiness. Jesus calls his followers today to be counter-cultural. Concern for the poor is at the heart of the Christian lifestyle. The question we need to answer then is not how can I get but rather, what can I give?

It is worth considering how we can use everything we own — our time, skills and possessions, for the poor. It's equally worth asking ourselves if there is anything we own that we would not be prepared to give away.



- Ask God to show you how you can use everything you have for the benefit of others
- Ask God to highlight the needs of the poor in your community

Generous : Engaged : Open

DAY 6 Giving



'You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us...'

2 Corinthians 9:11



- Deuteronomy 15: 7-11 or Proverbs 11:25
- 2 Corinthians 9: 6-14



Who is the most generous person you know? They will not necessarily be the wealthiest person you know. It is possible to be generous when you have only limited means. The Christians in Corinth were commended by Paul because their confession of the gospel of Christ was accompanied by service. Their generosity resulted in the overflowing thanks to God offered by others.

It seems as if generosity has a knock-on effect. Note the language of generosity Paul uses: abound, increase, enlarge, overflowing, and surpassing grace.

By now you will be nearing the end of your Gratitude and Generosity programme. Will you be making a generous response?

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

2 Corinthians 9:7



- Thank God for people who show generosity towards you
- Ask God to increase your opportunities to be generous to others

Generous : Engaged : Open

DAY 7 God's Generosity



'Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!'

2 Corinthians 9:15



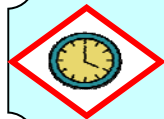
- **John 3:16 or Romans 8:32**
- **Ephesians 1: 3-14**



After much consideration about the way that we give to God, the last word is a reminder of God's generosity to us. We see evidence of this in creation and in the material provision God has given us, but mostly we see it in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

God's grace is available to all people not because we deserve it, not because we have earned it, but because he chooses, out of his great love, to lavish it on us. His grace is given to us as a free gift but it is certainly not given without a cost.

When we reflect on the magnitude of God's giving to us we realise it is indescribable. Thanks be to God!



- **Thank God for the beauty of creation**
- **Thank God for providing your daily needs**
- **Thank God for giving the ultimate gift in Jesus.**

Generous : Engaged : Open



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These reflections are adapted from the Salvation Army's 'Give to Grow' programme, and we are grateful for their kind permission to reproduce these.