

Day 1

April 27



Pray | Thank God for the times you've been blessed by someone's generosity

PAY IT FORWARD*

Most, if not all of us, have at some point been blessed by acts of kindness. Some of those acts have come during a really low time in our lives. They essentially saved us because some of them came when we were depressed, broken, fearful, or anxious. Maybe when you were in a hurry to get home to your sick kiddo, the person in line ahead of you let you go first. Maybe when the child support wasn't coming in, someone left a grocery gift card in your mailbox. Maybe your friend passed your name to a hiring manager resulting in a job after a period of unemployment. Maybe your family intervened and saved your life when they found you a treatment facility. Maybe your church was able to pay your rent so you wouldn't be evicted when your business was forced to close. Or, maybe a friend answered the phone when you needed them to and listened as you poured out your heart. All of these are blessings we've been given directly from God. God is in our times of pain and scarcity.



Read | Proverbs 15:30, James 1:17



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

Make a list of times someone blessed you in your need. How does it feel to be the recipient of these blessings? Consider if these acts of kindness and generosity had never happened and how that would have affected your day, your life, or the world. How would God have you perpetuate generosity now?

In times of economic scarcity, like we are in now, the needs of those less fortunate typically increase, but sometimes our giving decreases. How would God have you be a blessing this week to someone in need? Use some of the ideas below as a jumping off point:

- Donate financially to a charity
- Make gift baskets or "chalk cards" for your neighbors
- Get involved with Five Oaks Kids
- Put up a cheery sign outside where an isolated neighbor can see it
- Call someone who is isolated
- Join a virtual prayer group
- Donate your talents to make masks, ventilators, etc.
- Help someone navigate online grocery shopping
- Pick up pet supplies for someone isolated at home
- Give blood
- Deliver meals
- Donate supplies to kids underequipped to learn at home
- See this website for ways you can help in various ways:
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/03/21/how-you-can-help-during-coronavirus/?arc404=true>

* <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0223897/>

Day 2

April 28



Pray | Ask God to help you find joy in giving

GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER

Sometimes it's really fun to give and brighten someone's day! We have fun making creative cards, or gifts, or signs. We enjoy playfully teasing our loved ones before Christmas with ideas of what we may have gotten them. We get a sense of joy donating to a children's fund that has touched our hearts or dropping food off at a food shelf. We gather our friends and serve together, deepening our relationships and knowing we've followed God's call to serve. It fills our souls! And this is what God wants. He wants to fill our souls as we give. He wants us to give joyfully.

God doesn't want us to give out of guilt or with a heavy weight of "should" on our back. And when we sacrifice for something valuable to us, it doesn't feel like a sacrifice necessarily—we're happy to do it because it's something dear to us. We know we love something when we continue to sacrifice for it even when times are tougher.



Read | Ephesians 3:20, Corinthians 9:6-9



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

When has giving been fun for you? What has made it fun?

Sometimes giving can be difficult. Do you find it more difficult to give your time, your energy, or your finances? Why do you think that is? Ask God to make that more joyful for you.

How can you trust God in a hard time, like we're going through now as a country, and continue to find joy in giving?

How has God changed your heart over the years so that you enjoy giving? What has made that change, and how do you think God wants to continue to change you so that you give more and more and enjoy it more and more?

Day 3

April 29



Pray | Ask God to help you give sacrificially

SACRIFICIAL GIVING

It's important to give, and it's important to give joyfully. But what about when it's hard to give? What about when it's hard to part with our stuff?

The parable of the widow in the New Testament ascribes great worth to the relatively small gift that the widow brought to the temple treasury. We must remember it's not about how much we give, but where our hearts are at. In the Old Testament, the Israelites were instructed to give of their first fruits—not whatever was left at the end of the month after they had paid their bills and spent some fun money. Giving back to God should have enough effect on us that we have to adjust our lives accordingly. Maybe that means a smaller mortgage payment or car payment. Maybe fewer vacations or concerts and events. But sometimes we're not willing to make those adjustments. If every gift and talent and blessing we have that enables us to live the lifestyle we live is a gift from God, why would we ever give him our leftovers?



Read | Deuteronomy 26:1-11, Mark 12:41-44



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

What could you give up so that you can give 10% more of your time, money, energy, or talents for a period of time?

How often do you give back to God in a way that effects how you do life? Consider how much time outside of your responsibilities you give back to God, or how you steward your financial resources and give back to God. Consider your talents and finances and where you could give thanks to God for them by giving back to him. Where would you like to grow in your sacrificial giving?

Consider Deuteronomy 1:11. God says the Levites and the aliens (those receiving the Israelites' first fruits) would be rejoicing with them. How can you adjust your giving so that it is to someone or something more personal to you? Consider things like sponsoring a child you can get to know, or volunteering in a homeless shelter and get to know the residents.

If you're struggling with the idea of letting go of your earthly "stuff", remember that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus! Take some time today to simply let God know you'd like him to change your heart and move you towards being a sacrificial giver.

Day 4

April 30



Pray | Praise God for certainty in him when nothing else is certain

CERTAINTY IN UNCERTAINTY

We've been talking about the importance of giving joyfully and sacrificially. But how can we do that when our circumstances crumble and we ourselves experience scarcity or uncertainty? We must be wise; but, sometimes out of fear, we tend to withdraw. We put fences around ourselves and the stuff that make us feel secure—like money and possessions.

When times are good and our tangible blessings are higher, or the relationships in our lives are strong, we may find it easier to praise God. But what about when the bank accounts and relationships dry up? What about when a scary virus is covering the globe in fear and uncertainty? How do we find things to praise God for? Habakkuk is telling us that when things are scarce and our circumstances look grim, we must keep our eyes fixed on truth. We must continue to give ourselves to God and continue to take care of the less fortunate. We praise God *in* our circumstances, not *because of* our circumstances; and trust him always.



Read | Habakkuk 3:17-19, Deuteronomy 26:1-11



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

Spend some time thanking God for your salvation and the promise of his unending love. If you haven't yet given your life to Christ and accepted his gift of salvation, take a moment now to tell him you'd like to experience him and give your life to him.

Habakkuk is giving us a great example to live by but it's really hard, isn't it?! It sounds easy on paper, but in reality, it can feel downright impossible. What will help you hold onto the certainty of God during this time of uncertainty?

If this is a subject you're continuing to struggle with, who can come alongside you in your journey?

Day 5

May 1



Pray | Praise God that he is still the God of the universe

PUT ON THE GARMENT OF PRAISE for the spirit of heaviness.

Many people say that if you're in a valley in your life, focusing on someone else can lift your spirits, and the Bible says that praising God lifts us up.

Sometimes we go through a period of life that leaves us feeling broken and battered, and we can barely take care of ourselves, much less consider being generous. We don't have the motivation or the passion to find creative ways to minister to someone else. We are crippled by fear and overwhelmed with sorrow. We likely don't know where to turn or how to find the words to praise God.

Know that once again, there is no condemnation, and Jesus is right here with you. The Bible is full of Psalms we can read to praise God when we can't find our own words.



Read | Psalm 100, Isaiah 61:1-3



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

The Psalms are full of praise to God. Try reading some as a prayer to him. Psalm 46, Psalm 103, or Psalm 145 are some good examples.

If music speaks to your soul, try starting with “Bless The Lord (Oh My Soul)”. Listen to the lyrics that remind us to praise God as we get up in the morning, and end the day the same way, regardless of what has come our way. Or start with “So Will I (100 Billion X)”, which reminds us of God's majesty from the beginning of time. Spend some time listening to praise and worship music and let it soak your soul.

If you're struggling to find ways to give in this uncertain or scarce time, consider those who relate with today's lesson and ask God to open a door for you to reach someone through.

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