

Formative Practice Guide: Give

Read 1 John 3:16-18

Most of us live in a culture that values hard work and a fair reward. While those are both good things, the human pursuit of those values has often created individuals and cultures full of entitlement, self-promotion, and bitterness. The gospel, however, reshapes our identities to be first about the abundance of God. Because of God's abundant grace, we are motivated to labor for God's glory, recognizing that all earthly resources are given to us to be faithfully stewarded. The practice of giving helps us understand and embrace our true identity in the kingdom of God, with all its blessings and resources.

Spiritual Exercises:

Plan time in your upcoming schedule to include the following exercises in your routine.

Be generous with your resources. Your resources include your time, strengths, profession, finances, housing, and more. Find a person or organization (a non-profit, local church, small group, etc.) in your community that has a need in an area related to the resources you've been given. Reach out to that person or organization to ask how you can give.

Be generous with your life. Christ spent his life in giving his time, wisdom, gifts, and ultimately his very life for the sake of providing renewed relationships with God and creation. Take an inventory of the kinds of things that you spend your time doing. How do these things line up with the things that you should be valuing most? If your personal investment in a particular area has room for growth (for instance, if your time spent in Christian community does not align with your identity as a redeemed follower of Christ), commit to giving faithfully in that area.

Be generous with your budget. Faithful giving, whether it be financial or otherwise, takes planning. How does your budget reflect generosity? Set aside certain resources for next month which can be given away (e.g. a day, a certain amount of money, use of your vehicle, etc.). After deciding which resources you want to give, pray that God would show you a specific way to give of those resources. If you don't feel compelled in any particular direction, have an option in advance that you can give to (such as your child's school, or a missions partner linked to your local church).

Guided Reflection:

Reflect on these concepts throughout your day. Feel free to also set aside some distraction-free time for more intentional reflection.

If someone saw your practices of giving (monetarily, physically, emotionally, etc.), what would those practices say about your priorities? Ask God to help you understand how you can reshape your priorities through the formative practice of giving.

Are you more willing to be generous to your local church or to a friend/neighbor? How can you press into giving to an area of need, whether within your local church or to a friend/neighbor?

Does your pattern of giving reflect healthy habits and rhythms in your life? How do your habits of generosity reflect faithful stewardship of the resources God has entrusted to you?

Connecting the Practices

Giving can be formative for worship, befriending, blessing, serving, and receiving. When we give — truly *give*, rather than merely initiate an exchange — we are also blessing another with the ability to receive. As Christians, we must practice both giving *and* receiving, or else we risk the potential to be shaped by economics rather than faith in Christ.