

GROWING IN GRACE

“...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” John 10:10 (NIV)

IN ALL YOUR GIVING, DON'T FORGET TO GIVE THEM YOURSELF

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December 18th, 2011

A This Christmas season can be one of the best ever if we will embrace a key truth: The greatest gift that we can give is ourselves.

B. The Apostle Paul's life was an example that allowed others to experience God's purposes and intervention.

1 Timothy 4:16 (NIV) Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

2 Timothy 3:10-14 (NIV) 10 You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, 11 persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. 12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13 while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it.

C. Let's look at how to give ourselves away to others:

I. GIVE THEM THE GIFT OF CHOICES IN INTEGRITY

A. Integrity can be defined for the believer as the ability to hear God's voice, define it with clarity and embrace it practically into our lifestyle.

B. In the parable of the sower and seed, Jesus warned that those who lacked the integrity to define what God has said and embrace it, would never experience His intervention.

Luke 8:11-12 (NIV) 11 “This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. 12 Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

II. GIVE THEM THE GIFT OF MEEKNESS WHEN SUFFERING

- A. For some, you are still suffering a time of loss related to money, a loved one, a hurting relationship, or a deep personal failure.
- B. In the parable of the sower and seed, Jesus warned that those who could not overcome seasons of suffering would lose God's blessing over their lives.

Luke 8:13 (NIV) Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.

- C. Meekness is the Christian quality that allows the season of suffering to be turned into a season of God's richest blessing.

Matthew 5:5 (NIV) Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Psalm 126 (NIV) 1 When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. 2 Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." 3 The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. 4 Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like streams in the Negev. 5 Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. 6 He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

III. GIVE THEM THE GIFT OF SIMPLICITY IN OUR LIFESTYLE

- A. Jesus warned us that when our lives become overly complicated with worries, riches and pleasures, we will miss His purposes and blessings.

Luke 8:14 (NIV) The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.

APPLICATION:

- A. The ability to give the examples of integrity, suffering and simplicity comes from God.

Hebrews 4:15-16 (NIV) 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.