

Stop Giving!

Scripture Text: Exodus 35:4-8

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- **Moses is on Mt Sinai with God for 40 days/nights**
 - God tells him that trouble is down in the camp.
 - Moses finds the people worshiping the golden calf.
 - He destroys it and makes the people drink the golden cool-aid.
 - Pleads with them to repent.
 - Then he offers to go and make atonement for the people.
- **Moses goes back up to Mt Sinai for another 40 days/nights**
 - He takes two stones up with Him.
 - On the mountain, he pleads with God for forgiveness.
 - God writes the 10 commandments on new tablets, and a new covenant is established with Israel .
 - In addition to all of this, the directions are given to build the tabernacle.
 - On top of all that, we are told that he doesn't eat or drink for all that time.
 - What a life-changing three months!
 - At the end of this time, Moses returns to camp and his face is shining! He had been in the presence of God and everyone knew it!
- **Moses gathers all the people together and shares with them all the commands of the Lord. He also tells them about the directions for the tabernacle.**
 - He says to them in **Exodus 35:4-8** - "This is the thing which the Lord commanded, saying: 'Take from among you an offering to the Lord. Whoever *is* of a willing heart, let him bring it as an offering to the Lord: gold, silver, and bronze; blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, fine linen, and goats' hair; ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; oil for the light, and spices for the

anointing oil and for the sweet incense; onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate."

- Wow, what a list of needs! It makes our list of items for VBS look pretty simple, right?
 - Moses holds nothing back but lets the people know what is needed to build the house of the Lord according to God's directions!

➤ **We see here a principle in what Moses says to the people that's important for us today as well.**

- I remember as a boy, my brother seemed to always get stuff that I didn't. When I complained to my parents, because that's what kids do, they would say, "He got it because he ASKED!"
- This is an excellent principle, isn't it? Ask for what you need. Make the need known. It's a biblical principle!
- Many of us are fiercely independent, and don't want to admit that we need anything.

➤ **Jesus tells us in Matthew 7:7, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."**

- We must ask for those things that we need. We can't just assume others know our needs.
- God knows all of our needs, but He still wants us to ask Him for what we need.
- He wants us to recognize our need

➤ **Moses made known to the people all the things that were needed for the tabernacle. So, what happened next?**

- The people left!
- Exodus 35:20 tells us that the people all departed from the presence of Moses.
- This would be a bit discouraging, right?
- It would be like any ministry telling about an upcoming event, asking for help, and then everyone walking right past them on their way home. Pretty discouraging!
- But, there was no need for discouragement for Moses.
- You and I don't need to be discouraged, either, when things don't look good!

➤ **Moses wrote for us in Exodus 35:21, "*Then everyone came whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and they brought the Lord's offering for the work of the tabernacle of meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments.*"**

- Yes, the people departed from the presence of Moses, but they returned! And they didn't return empty handed!
- The need was made known and the people responded!
- Scripture tells us that men and women who had willing hearts went out and collected what they had, and brought it as an offering to Moses.

➤ **Notice, the people responded with a willing spirit!**

- They didn't respond out of duty, compulsion, or any kind of pressure.
- The people responded with a heart that was stirred! Scripture tells us that this is how we should give to the Lord.
- **Second Corinthians 9:7** says, – *"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."*
- I enjoy it when I ask my children to go get me something and they respond, "OK, Dad," and they run off to get it. It's so much better than when I ask them to do something and they hang their heads and drag their feet as they go to do what I've asked. It makes all the difference in the world!
- So it is with God. He doesn't want us to give our time, talent, tithes, offerings, and/or special gifts out of compulsion or pressure, He wants us to give out of the joy of our hearts!
- I read a post on the Internet recently. It read: "I awoke this morning in my comfortable bed, in a quiet, safe home, knowing I had food in the kitchen, a few dollars in my bank account, a decent car in my garage. I wasn't hungry, homeless, abused, friendless, mistreated, in danger. And I was overcome with gratitude, but more than that, why was I so blessed? My life is not more valuable than others, like those fleeing their war torn country for something better. Yes, I have worked hard for what I have, but so have others. This life I have just IS. I am blessed. That may change, but I hope I am always a bit amazed, and more than grateful for what I have. Thank you, God."
- Doesn't this sound like a heart-felt note of appreciation to God? It wasn't forced, demanded or required. It is a simple expression from the heart; a heart that was stirred!
- This is how Israel responded to Moses request. They brought what they had willingly and with joy!
 - Rings, earrings, necklaces, nose rings, all jewelry of gold.
 - Blue, purple, and scarlet thread.
 - Skins that were needed as a covering for the tabernacle.
 - Silver and bronze, acacia wood, yarn, and even precious stones.
 - The people gave sacrificially from all that they had.

- **Exodus 35:29 tells us, "The children of Israel brought a freewill offering to the Lord, all the men and women whose hearts were willing to bring material for all kinds of work which the Lord, by the hand of Moses, had commanded to be done."**
 - This was a freewill offering.
 - There was no arm twisting, no pleading by Moses to the people.
 - There weren't yard sales, horse grooming events, bake sales, no lotteries or raffle events.
 - The people were made aware of the need and they provided!
- When was the last time that you gave up those things that were precious to you for the good of someone/something else?
 - Would you be willing to give up that daily run to Starbucks, or that weekly trip to Asiago's?
 - Would you be willing to give up that annual vacation to Hawaii, or that timeshare on the coast?
 - Would you be willing to sell the motorcycles or the camper?
 - Would you be willing to sell the extra car or downsize your home for the benefit of others?
- The children of Israel were willing to give of what they had—even their precious stones and gold.
 - What an amazing example!
 - They realized what was of utmost worth: It wasn't the stuff that they had, but rather it was what they had inside, that was valuable.
- **Moses describes the craftsmen whom the Lord has blessed to use their talents for Him.**
 - Many people in our congregation are gifted and are using those gifts for the blessing of our church family and, ultimately, the Lord!
 - This church is what it is today because many of you have given of your time, talents, and treasure to make it a beautiful place to worship God.
 - So those in Israel who were called to do the work came.
- **Exodus 36:3 tells us, "So they continued bringing to him freewill offerings every morning."**
 - Amazing, the gifts kept pouring in—on a daily basis!
 - When we make an appeal, we pray that things will keep pouring in, but are happy if we get something once a week!
 - But a problem arose. Actually, one that nearly any one of us would be thrilled to have! (There aren't a whole lot of problems like that, are there?)

- **Exodus 36:4-5 - "Then all the craftsmen who were doing all the work of the sanctuary came, each from the work he was doing, and they spoke to Moses, saying, 'The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded us to do.'"**
 - The craftsmen came to Moses and said STOP! We have all that we need. We don't need anymore!"
 - Can you imagine? When was the last time you had so much that you had to say, "Stop giving!"?
 - The people were so moved and were giving so much that there was simply too much. Talk about an abundance!
- **God tells us about that same kind of abundance in Malachi 3:10 - "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,' says the Lord of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."**
 - God says you will have to say STOP because I will bless you more than you can handle!
 - Yet, when was the last time that you asked God, "Please stop blessing me."
 - When was the last time you had to say to God, "Please stop! I can't handle all the blessings you are giving."
 - When was the last time you told God, "Stop giving me so much! I don't know what to do with it!"
- **Finally, we read in Exodus 26:6-7 - "So Moses gave a commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, 'Let neither man nor woman do any more work for the offering of the sanctuary.' And the people were restrained from bringing, for the material they had was sufficient for all the work to be done—indeed too much."**
 - Moses came to the people with the plan from God for the tabernacle.
 - He told them what was needed to build this place for God to dwell in their midst. He asked them to provide for those needs. And the people did!
- **Have you ever asked God to stop blessing you?**
 - Have you recognized the blessings that God has given?
 - Have you really taken account for what God has given?
 - Have you identified those things in your life that are more than you need, more than you deserve, more than you want?
 - Do you have peace, patience, joy, love?

- If you haven't taken the time, or you are missing these blessings? I challenge you to take time and take account of what you have today!

- **If you recognize that the blessings seem to be lacking, I encourage you to evaluate your relationship with the Giver of those good gifts!**
 - Are you spending the time with Him that you would with your best friend?
 - Are you doing what He has asked you to do?
 - Are you faithfully returning to Him your tithe?
 - Are you joyfully giving offerings?

- **I want to encourage you this morning to commit this week to give more!**
 - Give more of your time.
 - It may be the kids at the school, your neighbor who needs the lawn mown, maybe the young person next door whose parents are splitting up.
 - Spend some time volunteering, using the gifts that God has given you to bless others.
 - Maybe teaching computer skills to refugees, teaching financial principles to those struggling with their finances, helping a young person who is challenged with reading, math or science over the summer.
 - Give more of your talent.
 - Commit to a ministry of the church: VBS, children's Sabbath School classes, health ministries, etc.
 - Give more of your treasure.
 - Pay for the person behind you at Taco Bell, McDonalds, Starbucks, or whatever drive-thru you use.
 - Donate to community services so they can acquire the food that they need to bless our community.

- **Friends, the bottom line is that we need to look for ways to bless others with what God has given to us.**
 - As Jesus said in **Acts 20:35** - "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
 - Friends, may this be our battle cry as we go out to fulfill the commission of Jesus this week.
 - May we respond God's call to give as the children of Israel did.
 - Let us continue to bring our gifts to the Lord until He says, "STOP GIVING!"