Basics of Spiritual Growth
Lesson 2 "The Power of Giving"

I. Introduction - Every new year, people ask honest questions such as, "How do I change an area of my life that keeps holding me back" or "How do I grow spiritually?"

A. Last week, we established a simple but biblical premise: **Spiritual growth doesn't happen by accident—it happens through God-ordained practices.**

1. In the early church in ***Acts***, we don't find a gimmick that produced growth. We find God ordained patterns that shaped believers and produced a thriving church.
2. The four practices from ***Acts 2:42–47*** are gathering regularly, meeting in small groups, giving of their lives and possessions, and going to reach the lost.

B. These practices aren't a magic formula—but they help expose immaturity, wrong beliefs, and priorities that are out of order. **When those things are confronted, growth follows—personally and corporately.**

II. The Power of Giving - It Grows Us and God's Church!

A. The Early Church: A Picture of Formed Hearts

1. **Acts 2:44–45.** The early believers shared what they had so needs were met (They were living for God and others).
2. **Acts 4:32–35** They were described as being **one heart and one soul**.
    a. No one claimed ownership over possessions. Resources flowed freely to meet needs. This was the fruit of transformed hearts.
    b. ***Verse 33*** Out of this heart to giving (more than money, their lives) **"great grace"**—literally *mega grace*—was upon them all.
        i. Grace empowers growth and produces maturity!
        ii. The Apostles were freed up to be able to minister instead of having to work jobs. **Acts 5:12-17, 28.**
        iii. As people gave, they grew and the church grew—both spiritually and numerically.

B. How Giving Can Shape Our Heart? **Matthew 6:21** This is one of the most fascinating verses in the Bible.

1. Notice what Jesus **doesn't** say. He doesn't say our treasure follows our heart. He says our heart will follow our treasure.
2. Our affections are not just revealed by what we value—they are **formed** by what we invest in. Ex: What would happen to your heart if you bought $10,000 of Apple stock? Even if you don't care a thing about Apple right now, if you invest that much money, you will care. If there stock price goes up so will your heart. If there stock price goes down, so will your heart because Apple now has a

piece of your heart because our hearts follow our treasure. Think about it. You may not care anything about Apple Inc., but if you invested $10,000 in Apple stock, suddenly Apple would have a piece of your heart.
3. If this is true about natural things, how much more true is it about spiritual things? Giving is not just something we do. Giving **does something to us**.

C. Giving Is About Heart Formation, Not Just Obedience

1. Many people say, *"I'll give whatever God puts on my heart to give."*
2. While we should always obey the Holy Spirit, the Bible teaches that we can **posture our hearts** to be more receptive to God. Ex: **2 Corinthians 9:7**
    a. Paul emphasizes intention. This verse doesn't even mention God telling them an amount.
    b. While God certainly can lead us to give specific amounts, He is after something deeper. **God wants us to have a heart to give!** Ex: Success
    c. Giving $200 a month out for a debt destruction campaign did something on the inside of us. It came at a time where the economy wasn't good and I was trying to save money to go to Colorado. God increased our finances, which increased our faith and grew Ashley and I spiritually.

D. Giving Is More Than Money - While giving should include our money, there are at least two other biblical ways to give:

1. **Time** – our availability. **Ephesians 5:15-16** God wants us to buy back time, not so we heep it up, but so we can use it for Him and for people. Ex: Spend time and money example. God wants us to steward it well.
2. **Talents** – our gifts and service. **Romans 12:1, 4-8**
    a. When we use our God given gifts it grows us. Ex: me serving in children's ministry at 25 developed my teaching gift.
    b. Everyone serving grows the church. **Ephesians 4:16** If we had an 80 percent serve rate, we'd see more people saved and our church grow. And just as important, those serving would be more like Jesus.

III. Conclusion

A. Giving grows the kingdom of God in our hearts and minds. Giving reshapes our priorities, strengthens our faith, enlarges our hearts, and causes the kingdom of God to grow within us as our heart follows our treasure.

1. If we want to grow, giving must be part of our discipleship. If some of what I said tugged on your heart today, purpose in your heart to be an intentional giver with your finances so we can reach more people and/or sign up for sone of our teams online or at the table under the breezeway. This will help you grow and the church grow.
2. Alter Call based on **John 3:16**