

The Gift of Giving

Celebrating our Journey in Faith

#bmcjubileeyear

THE GIFT OF GIVING

2 Corinthians 9:8 (NRSV)

⁸And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.

Malachi 3:10 (NRSV)

¹⁰Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.



Over the next three weeks we hope to re-discover the gift of giving. We give because of God's Grace given to us. It is our loving response to His love and blessings. The Bible teaches us what it means to have such a heart. When we live in stewardship to God it has a dramatic effect on the Church and its members. *"Stewardship, of which giving money is a major part, is as important a Christian activity as worship, prayer, social service or evangelism"* (The Gift of Giving - George Trimble 2003). When we are faithful in our giving, God promises to bless us; it might not be material blessings, but greater love, peace and joy in our lives. Have we introduced our monthly budgets to God's Grace? Do we trust God enough to provide for us?

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& Nadja Atkinson

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WEEK 1: Giving in the Past



In the Old Testament the tithe was an obligatory offering requiring ten percent of an Israelite's first fruits. Because God provided the harvest, this first part was returned to Him. **It was a reminder to Israel that all things were God's and it showed thankfulness for God's provision.** It provided for the Levitical priesthood, festivals, and the needy. **In this way giving became a significant spiritual experience – not an economic one!** We give without expecting anything in return, with a loving heart full of gratitude to God who gives and blesses us. Abram is one of the first examples of giving in response to God's blessing in the Bible.

Genesis 14:19-20 (NRSV)

¹⁹ *He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth;*
²⁰ *and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything.*

Abram had just returned from rescuing his nephew Lot, when he is met by a priest named Melchizedek. The priest attributes Abram's victory to God ("possessor of heaven and earth") and he blesses Abram. In gratitude to God's authority and blessing, Abram gives Melchizedek a tenth of his possessions. **He doesn't do it to invoke God's blessing; he does it in response to God's blessing.** When we give in response to God's love, it is with

ABRAM /ABRAHAM

Abram's story plays a central role in our story of faith. Abram was called to leave his home (everything he knew) and go to the land God promised (Genesis 12:1-4). He was 75 when he left Haran with his wife Sarai. God said He will make him a great nation, but waited another 24 years before God blessed him and Sarai with a son and he became the father of many nations. As he travelled on his life journey he encountered obstacles like we do. Sometimes by wanting things to happen in his time not God's (Genesis 16:1-4) and other times by lying to protect his family (Genesis 12:10-20). But he continued to grow in Faith: seeing God's will and blessing in his life to such an extent that he trusted God when He asked him to sacrifice his own son. He just knew that God would provide. He learnt that God keeps His promises, even if it isn't always in the way we expect Him to. When we live in God's will we take our place in history, blossoming into the person He created us to be.

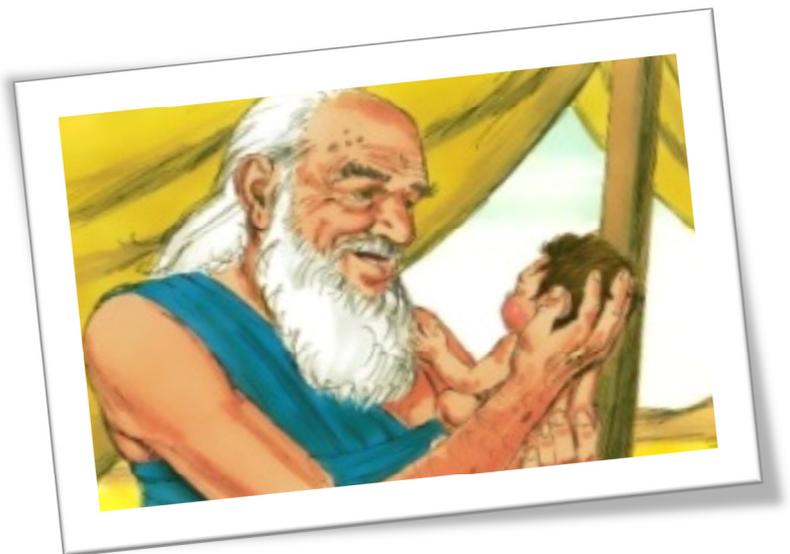
a joyful loving heart and thus pleasing to God. Blessing others! For this reason Abram's name is changed from "great father" to Abraham – the "father of many". No longer is he exalted as a 'noble' father, instead he will be remembered as a blessing to many multitudes (Exodus 17:5-8). Abraham finds his faith tested when he is asked to offer his son to God – and has his son returned to him accompanied by many more blessings:

Genesis 22:15-18 (NRSV)

¹⁵The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the LORD: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷I will

indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, ¹⁸and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice."

In the same way that God called our spiritual fathers and mothers to a life of faithful trust, so God continues to call us today to walk in their footsteps. We can be inspired by the faith of Abraham to step out in our own faith in God. God promises that giving is a gift and that we can test him on this. If we respond in love to His grace he will "pour out a blessing so great that you won't have enough room to take it in". Remember that God loved us first and He loves us unconditionally. Through His love and grace we are saved. Nothing that we do or don't do will change that. God gave us minds and hearts so that we could choose Him, choose to love and choose to give. Love is a choice. Choosing to love in the church is choosing to be part of the family: sharing your time, talents and treasures in order to make the family work - giving! Giving generates such love that the whole becomes bigger than its parts and God's work gets done. We as the "parts" need to learn to live together, comfort each other, and sometimes carry each other. The Church is the bride of God, created to form spiritual families so that we can look after each other: shepherd Gods sheep. When we walk in God's will – he will bless us abundantly!



Abraham is then remembered throughout history for his decision to trust God.

Hebrews 11:8-12 (NRSV)

⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹ By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old—and Sarah herself was barren—because he considered him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, “as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.”



Read About Abraham’s life in: Genesis Chapters 12-25

Having read all of the above:

Who has been your greatest hero in the past? Who inspired you to “step it up”? Why?

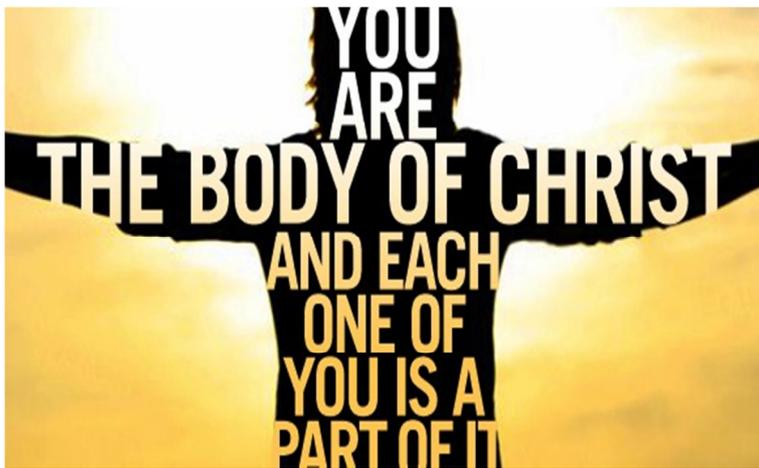


What specific part of Abraham’s faith journey inspires you the most?

What is your legacy/imprint going to be?



WEEK 2: Giving Today



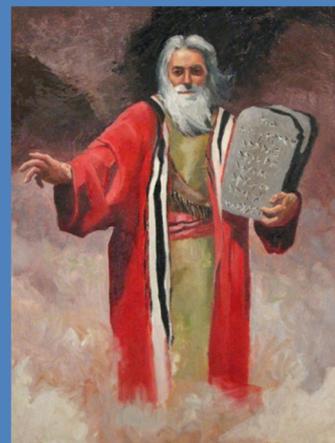
Exodus 4:10-17 (NRSV)

¹⁰ But Moses said to the LORD, “O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.” ¹¹ Then the LORD said to him, “Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? ¹² Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak.” ¹³ But he said, “O my Lord, please send someone else.” ¹⁴ Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, “What of your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he can speak fluently; even now he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you his heart will be glad. ¹⁵ You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do. ¹⁶ He indeed shall speak for you to the people; he shall serve as a mouth for you, and you shall serve as God for him. ¹⁷ Take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs.”

The church is God's and we need to honour it. We are part of the body of Christ and we need to look after the different body parts. God uses people like Moses and you and me to free people from slavery feed the hungry and

MOSES:

Moses was born into slavery. With God's intervention he escaped death and grew up in the Egyptian palace. His life was changed when he killed an Egyptian for murdering a Hebrew slave. He fled to the desert and lived as a shepherd for four decades. Then God called him to lead His people from slavery. Moses didn't feel that he was the right person for the job, but God knew him and what he was capable of. He heard his concerns and sent him a helper in Aaron and also gave him the gift of miracles. God equips the called and he sends people on our path to help us overcome our challenges. God created the church so that we can uplift and encourage each other in our journeys. Only then does the whole become bigger than the parts.



heal the sick. The invitation is for us all to play a part in our church. Do you realize that **YOU** are part of **the faith history of the world?**

Jesus came into our world and echoed the same call of God to lead people out of darkness into the light: He had this to say to his disciples:

Matthew 6:33 (NRSV)

³³ But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.



Matthew 28:18-20 (NRSV)

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The disciples heard the call of Jesus and followed him. After the death and resurrection of Jesus they were blessed with the Spirit of God to begin the Church:

Acts 2:44-47 (NRSV)

⁴⁴ All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

The New Testament mentions money and our accountability often. This means there needs to be some action on our part. Like Moses, and the disciples we too need to be involved! Go out there! We can't do this if we are not in a relationship with God. Once in relationship with God it is nearly impossible not to give of our time, talents or money as we realize how blessed we are!

John Wesley was very clear on what to do with our money: not only are we to "gain all you can, save all you can" but we are to "give all you can". We give as we can, knowing that it is for the greater good of the community. We become one – knowing and trusting that we are there for each other in the good times and the bad. If we give, we unleash blessings on others that always come back to us maybe not in the same way that we gave, but in other ways.

What does the bible say about money and possessions?

Psalm 41:1 (NRSV)

¹ *Happy are those who consider the poor; the LORD delivers them in the day of trouble.*

Haggai 2:8 (NRSV)

⁸ *The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the LORD of hosts.*

2 Corinthians 9:7 (NRSV)

⁷ *Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

We need to **decide what we can give** with peace in our souls. This is between you and God. He knows your schedule, your bank account balance, your gifts and your heart. **It is a practical action done with a joyful heart showing our trust and faith in God.**

Money should serve us so that we can use it to the benefit of God's kingdom.

How do we determine what to give?

- Soak yourself in the bible and relevant verses. Hear what God is saying to you.
- Pray over your budget: your uses of money. Pray to be clear on what you need. How much is enough? What to give away? Give proportionally and be disciplined in doing so.
- Pray over your time: people are always more important than money. What we spend time on shows what we value.
- Pray for God to highlight your talents and to show you a way to use them.

Pledging is a definite stated commitment that helps the church to draw up their budgets and is a form of self-discipline.

God will provide! God says if we do as He asks faithfully, He will bless us abundantly! We don't know the form of blessing – it could be material or an increase in love, joy, peace, or deeper compassion. He knows our every need and he provides according to that.

We need to break the hold of money on our lives. Most people have enough money to live a simple and balanced life. **He wants us to focus on Him as our source of security.**

We need to give in order to experience the gift of giving!

Matthew 25:29 (NRSV)

²⁹ *For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.*

In the same way we need to look at our diaries and establish how much time we spend with God, our church family and our own. Does it reflect the value you have in God and those

close to you? Do we bury our talents? Do you live out your spiritual gifts? Do we avoid God's calling on our life because we fear rejection or failure? What would have happened to the Israelites if Moses didn't follow God's call?



Read About Moses's life in: Exodus 2-20

Having read all of the above:



1. What stops you from contributing financially to our spiritual family?

Please discuss the examples relevant to you:

*** We cannot afford to give 10%.**

*** We do not trust that the church will use the money wisely.**

*** We do not think the church supports the right ministries.**

*** We know our budget and what we can afford – does God really know that kind of detail?**

*** We do not trust that God can provide all our needs.**

2. Do you believe that your heart reflects God's love and grace in your life specifically in your time, talents and treasures towards the Church? What can you do to change that? How can we encourage each other (like Aaron did Moses) more?

3. We have looked at spiritual gifting in our groups in the past. Please have a look at the ministries BMC supports or other volunteer opportunities. Discuss the options with your group. Where can you commit an hour a week of your time (as an individual or a group)? Please e-mail mandiea@bmc.org.za to confirm your time tithing.

WEEK 3: Dreaming for the Future

John 21:17 (NRSV)

¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."



Peter was challenged by Jesus to spend his life “feeding sheep”. This led him to offer his energy, time and material possessions to the work of Jesus. He dreamed for, lived and died in the service of Jesus.

We have established that giving is a gift to ourselves and God. Once we’ve made this choice and get it in our hearts, we need to decide how our money, time and talents are going to be “God’s hands and feet” as we have affirmed that **it is God’s church!**

When we become Christians we are born again into our spiritual family – the church. We are now one body with different parts. We have different gifts and means, but we still work together as one body. If one member suffers – so do we!

The church needs to be a place that you can trust with who you are and all you bring! We need to entrust our Church, talents, money and time to God, working together in fulfilling the great commandment and great commission.

PETER:

Peter was a fisherman when he was chosen as one of Jesus’s disciples. Although he had a front row seat to Jesus’ life he still struggled with his faith - denied Him three times. He wasn’t perfect, yet he was always willing to take risks for God - he got out of the boat and tried to walk on water. He never stopped dreaming for God. He became the “rock” the church was built upon. He grew in his faith so much so, that he was crucified for it. Can the life of Peter inspire us to be willing to risk for God? Like Peter we can step out of the boat with confidence.

2 Corinthians 9:8 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

⁸And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.



Read About Peter's life in: Acts 2-4, 1 Peter, 2 Peter.

Many of us are regular tithers of our talents, treasures and time and we thank you for your contribution to the family and would urge you to share with the rest of your group how doing that has blessed you. *We hope that the past three weeks affirmed your choice of giving.*

May all of us live out God's dream for our lives, stepping out in faith to live in His will and loving embrace. This is God's church! We want you to dream with us of a hope-filled future and commit to this dream with all you are and have!



Having read all of the above:

On a personal level – what are you willing to risk for the future?

What is your dream for BMC?



- 1. What is BMC's main purpose?**
- 2. Give 5 words that you think describe BMC.**
- 3. What causes should BMC support (education, aids, poverty, others)?**
- 4. What can BMC do to help you connect better with the church?**
- 5. What can BMC do to facilitate your individual growth?**
- 6. Any other dreams and comments are welcomed!**

Please send your "dreams" to info@bmc.org.za

RESOURCES



Material loosely based on the book by George W. Trimble:

The Gift of Giving.

Bible Gateway - New King James Version (NKJV)

www.echurchgiving.com

Google Images

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Sunday 29 May: 2 Corinthians 9:8

Monday 30 May: Malachi 3:10

Tuesday 31 May: Genesis 14:19-20

Wednesday 1 June: Philippians 4:18

Thursday 2 June: Exodus 25:1-2

Friday 3 June: Genesis 28:20-22

Saturday 4 June: Ephesians 1:7-8

Sunday 5 June: John 21:16

Monday 6 June: 1 Chronicles 29:11

Tuesday 7 June: Matthew 16:18

Wednesday 8 June: Acts 9:31

Thursday 9 June: Acts 12:5

Friday 10 June: Matthew 28:18-20

Saturday 11 June: 2 Corinthians 9:7

Sunday 12 June: John 21:17

Monday 13 June: Colossians 2:23

Tuesday 14 June: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Wednesday 15 June: Matthew 25:29

Thursday 16 June: Mark 12:41-44

Friday 17 June: Psalm 41:1

Saturday 18 June: 2 Corinthians 9:8