

New Life Family Matters

November 2007

Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits – who forgives... heals... redeems... and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. Ps 103:2-5 NIV

A Season of Giving: Thanks-living & the New Life Family

Every year as the weather turns colder and the leaves begin their brilliantly colorful declaration that their time of service is finished; I am reminded to take stock of the graces that the Lord has blessed my life with during the past year. As a Christ-follower, reflecting and acknowledging His graces is the act of worship called, thanksgiving –the act of acknowledging the graces/gifts of God and the inability to repay –except to say, “thank you”. Our relationship with God our Father is based on the fact that He is a Giver. Every good thing we experience in life can be traced back as having come from His goodness and grace –He is The Giver (John 3:16; 2 Peter 1:3-4). Take a moment before you continue reading this article and read the scriptures I just mentioned, and then do an inventory of the blessings of His gracious heart. For me what quickly comes to mind is a warm home, food on the table, clean, safe drinking water, clothes, health, eyes that see, ears that hear, etc, etc, etc... a loving relationship with our Creator; His mercies and His love, His peace and His hope, and the amazing love of family and friends. I have much to be grateful for and you do too.

Giving thanks to God for His many, many graces is one of the purest forms of worship, but as we worship Him in this way, I've found that this same “Spirit of Giving” that is found in the heart of our God and lives within us; moves us to give to others. This is love in action. A parent refrains from eating the last –whatever, because their spouse or their kids “really love” that kind of food.

Being grateful expresses itself toward the Father and by passing on the graces of God on to others –this is at the heart of our Season of Giving.

Our heavenly Father has called the New Life family to live as Neighbors –people who involve themselves in the lives of others because of all He has done for us. The Good Samaritan is the Biblical example of our calling in how we want to live out our lives in order to fulfill our mission to reach our neighbors for Christ.

A Season of Giving is a name I've given to the four different opportunities for us to give during the holiday season. We will continue the tradition of giving shoe boxes filled with toys and essentials to Operation Christmas Boxes through Samaritan's Purse. The second area of giving is to our Youth Department by supporting their holiday trip to California for a national youth event called NextGen. This will be a time of equipping our youth and our leadership for

outreach to our community and beyond. The third opportunity to give focuses upon Thanksgiving by helping a needy local family have a great meal on Thanksgiving Day. We have teamed up with a local school to help these families. The last opportunity to give is in the support of the men and women serving in the military from Maryland. Details on these different venues of giving is in the weekly packet of information given out on Sundays and also in the Information Center located in the foyer of the sanctuary building. I believe that there will be at least one of these four opportunities to give during the holiday season that tugs at your heart. Please remember that I am not asking any of us to give to all four (you can do this, if you sense that you'd like to), but only to the one that the Lord uses to tug at your heart.

To close this article, I just want to encourage you to consider all that our gracious Master has blessed you with this past year. Giving to others is also a wonderfully freeing act of worship to the One who said that He set us free in order to serve Him without fear. Giving is a way of saying thank you to our Provider and it is also a declaration that we will not put our trust in our riches, but we will trust only Him. The spirit of our world is to hold-on-to, the Spirit of God is to give. Let's set our hearts to give in response to His grace in our lives, for He has purposed that we would serve Him with a heart of joy, hope, and peace. He has promised that just as He began the good work in us –He has promised to see us through till the day of His return.

Pastor Dave