

MAY 2004 – *Growing Through Giving*

What is your attitude toward giving your money to the work of God and to the needs of others? Like many of us, C.S. Lewis experienced some struggles in this area: “I’m a panic-y person about money myself (which is a most shameful confession and a thing dead against our Lord’s words) and poverty frightens me more than anything else, except large spiders and the tops of cliffs...”¹ Yet Lewis also realized that his fears were a hindrance to faith. “For many of us the great obstacle to charity lies not in our luxurious living or desire for more money; but in our fear – fear of insecurity. This must often be recognized as a temptation.”²

The temptation to which Lewis refers is that of trusting in ourselves and our material resources for security in life, instead of trusting God. This is a perennial temptation for our human nature. The problem, of course, is not what we have, but what has us. And, our attitude toward giving is a very good barometer of what has us – where our trust really lies. Thus, for the sake of our souls we need to give. Not only for the advancement of God’s work and the good of needy people, but also for our own spiritual health.

This is exactly how C.S. Lewis dealt with the matter in his life. Though few people know it, Lewis lived a very modest life and spent very little on himself. He gave away the royalties from his books to a foundation set up for this purpose. Again and again, needy students at Oxford would find anonymous gifts of money slipped under their doors.

How much should we give? Lewis suggested it is better to consider the manner in which we should give: “I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc., is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them. I am speaking now of ‘charities’ in the common way.”³

Giving can be a great joy and an exciting adventure if we will follow the teaching of Jesus and the example of C.S. Lewis. And, it will help us grow deeper in a living faith in God.

*Give, and it will be given to you.
A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be put into your lap.
For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.*

Luke 6:38 NIV

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Letters to an American Lady*, Edited by Clyde S. Kilby (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), p. 21.

² C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, a division of Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 82.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 82.