

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:10-15

Thanks Means Giving

2 Corinthians 9:11

You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Caleb loved his yellow Labrador dog so much—no dog could compare to his Skipper! He would sleep at Caleb's feet and lick his nose to say hello. He especially loved to sit intently and wait for a treat. The minute Caleb gave him one, Skipper would gulp it down and go back to slobbering and panting and wanting more!

Can you imagine Skipper biting a treat given him in half, and with his paw nudge it back in Caleb's direction? Of course not, he's a dog! Can showing thanks be just as rare among humans? Do we imagine that we have shown God thanks if we take what he's given, run behind a corner, and enjoy it all just for ourselves?

Today's devotion encourages the kind of thanks that *gives back*. Some early Christians had this opportunity. They had so much. But some fellow Christians had very little. The encouragement? Each person should give to help. A gift from the heart. Not because they had to. Not thinking, "I'll help you now, if you help me later." God loves a giver who has a huge smile on his face! And God is powerful. He is able to give to you generously and over and above, with this purpose: so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you can give over and above in every way.

Because isn't that how Jesus gave to us? He was poor, but he used every moment, every breath, every thought, and every drop of his blood for one thing: to bring good to us; to obey the commandments; to love his neighbor as himself; to love his God with all his heart and soul and mind until it was all finished. So that you are now free—a forgiven, freed child of God who can now be rich in the kind of thanks that *gives!*

Something wonderful happens when we nudge a little something back to help someone who needs our help. The person we help is led to give thanks to God. Gifts given in the name of Jesus result in words of thanks flying from lips on earth to God in heaven. When you give an offering that shares Jesus, words of thanks fly from lips in your church and in your community. When they see what you're doing out of love for Jesus, *more people praise God!*

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Pretend that someone knocks on your door looking for help. They are shivering and cold. What do you have in your bedroom that you could give them?
- Describe how you feel at the thought of giving to someone who really needs your help. Why do you feel that way?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- *Agree or disagree.* God gives to us so that we might give to others.
- Giving doesn't have to always be about money. Think of a two other areas of life you can be a more generous giver to others. (*Examples: forgiving, kind words, encouragement, helping, etc.*)

Questions for Middle School and Above

- *Evaluate yourself.* Are you a natural "giver" or "taker"? What is the motivation behind each of them?
- Discuss what would need to happen for you to grow in the grace of giving.

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you for giving so generously to me. Give me a generous heart that finds joy in giving to others. Amen.