

E X P E C T T H E
unexpected

BLESSING FOR A NEEDFUL HEART

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 NLT: Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.

LIFE GROUP / PERSONAL STUDY:

As we conclude this year and this series, our focus once again is on how to get and maintain a healthy heart even in "Unexpected" times. We've learned that we can have joy, peace, comfort, hope, and love even when our days are filled with stress, trouble, brokenness, and emptiness, but that we must not allow our hearts to become hardened or bitter. This weekend as we look at the Principle of the Farmer, we're going to learn that a needful heart can not only receive blessings but can also give blessings to others.

1A) Compare how the physical heart - the working muscle - that pumps blood throughout our body is like a spiritual heart that needs to be receiving and giving in a continual cycle.

1B) PERSONAL: Think about the illustrations God gave the world in Israel through the Dead Sea - which is Dead - no life - no fish - nothing and the Sea of Galilee - which is filled with fish and life giving water. How does this illustration help you understand the necessity of receiving and then giving in order to have a healthy heart?

1C) PERSONAL: How do you think this principle applies to the church - which is called the body of Christ - for it to be healthy?

2A) What is the "Principle of the Farmer" according to 2 Corinthians 9:6?

2B) What does Galatians 6:7 tell us about this principle?

Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19:

3) What are the commands given in this passage and how does this confirm what Paul told the Corinthian church?

4A) PERSONAL: What and where have you been sowing and reaping - giving and receiving - during this year?

4B) PERSONAL: What new ideas of ways and places do you have about serving and giving as we go into the New Year? If you don't have any new ideas - ask God to give you some. (Consider working in the Help Out Center)

5A) What important instructions are we given in 2 Corinthians 9:7 that can help us begin the "practice" of both receiving and giving.

5B) How are the instructions found in 1 Timothy 6:18 a confirmation that we need to put this idea into practice?

5C) PERSONAL: How healthy is your spiritual heart?

How have you put the principle of the farmer into use and made a habit of regularly giving and receiving?

What blessings have you received?

6) What are the promises found in the following verses?

2 Corinthians 9:8:

2 Timothy 6:19:

Matthew 5:16:

ACT: Giving and receiving, sowing and reaping are principles that God wants us to live by. These principles need to be an important part of our daily habits. Scripture tells us that we literally: 1) Reap what we sow; 2) Reap where we sow and 3) Reap more than we sow - we cannot out give God. Take some time and write down all the ways that God has blessed you this year - even in these most "unexpected" times. Then write a prayer of thanksgiving, praise, and renewed commitment to serve and give to Him and to others in this upcoming year so that your heart can truly be healthy.

Daily Devotional: It always helps to look at the context of the passage. Then try to answer the following questions about the passage. Who is involved? What is going on? Where is the action taking place? When? How can this concept apply to my life? Why is it important? Also look for Commands, Warnings, and Examples to follow or not to follow.

- This week let's explore passages that describe how God wants us to give generously and how He blesses.

Monday:

Deuteronomy 15:7-10 NLT

But if there are any poor Israelites in your towns when you arrive in the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tightfisted toward them. Instead, be generous and lend them whatever they need. Do not be mean-spirited and refuse someone a loan because the year for canceling debts is close at hand. If you refuse to make the loan and the needy person cries out to the Lord, you will be considered guilty of sin. Give generously to the poor, not grudgingly, for the Lord your God will bless you in everything you do.

Tuesday:

2 Chronicles 31:5 NLT

When the people of Israel heard these requirements, they responded generously by bringing the first share of their grain, new wine, olive oil, honey, and all the produce of their fields. They brought a large quantity—a tithe of all they produced.

Wednesday:

Psalms 37:21-26 NLT

The wicked borrow and never repay, but the godly are generous givers. Those the Lord blesses will possess the land, but those he curses will die. The Lord directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives. Though they stumble, they will never fall, for the Lord holds them by the hand. Once I was young, and now I am old. Yet I have never seen the godly abandoned or their children begging for bread. The godly always give generous loans to others, and their children are a blessing.

Thursday:

Psalms 112:4-9 NLT

Light shines in the darkness for the godly. They are generous, compassionate, and righteous. Good comes to those who lend money generously and conduct their business fairly. Such people will not be overcome by evil. Those who are righteous will be long remembered. They do not fear bad news; they confidently trust the Lord to care for them. They are confident and fearless and can face their foes triumphantly. They share freely and give generously to those in need. Their good deeds will be remembered forever. They will have influence and honor.

Friday:

Proverbs 22:9 NLT

Blessed are those who are generous, because they feed the poor.

Saturday:

Isaiah 32:8 NLT

But generous people plan to do what is generous, and they stand firm in their generosity.

Sunday:

2 Corinthians 8:11-12 NLT

Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have. Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have.

