

Devotion 4
Matter of the Heart

Wednesday, Week 1

For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. . . . And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. (2 Corinthians 8:3, 5)

A man known as “Hib” was a doctor—a kidney specialist. He always told his family to drink lots of water. He was also a very kind, gentle, and Christian man.

The story goes that Hib’s two oldest sons—Pete and Jim—who, by this time were also young doctors, came to him wanting to borrow some money to make and market a hospital bed they had developed for the burn victims they treated. Hib, believing in his sons and in the project, without hesitation loaned them all the money they had requested. However, the project did not get going as quickly as planned, and about 10 months later, they again approached their father for another loan. What they found out was that Hib had not only used his savings to help them, but also had quietly cashed in his retirement accounts, as well as taking a second loan on his home. Quite simply, he had no more to give them because he had already given them beyond what he could afford! His sons were amazed, but, thank God, the new amount of money they needed was not great, and they were able somehow to get it. Today, because of the generosity of their father and his willingness to give beyond what he was able, his sons are multi-millionaires and many thousands of burn victims have been helped by a bed that would never have been developed.

Proportionate, percentage giving—the Bible talks about it a lot. The Christian is told to give as God has blessed him with the Old Testament tithe (10%) held up as a starting point (not a law) for our consideration as we determine how the Lord is leading us to give. That’s what makes this text so profound. “They gave as much as they were able *and even beyond what they were able.*” Apparently this grace—this gift from God—of giving manifested itself in this way. The Macedonian Christians gave more than they were able. I don’t know about you, but this can be down right scary; do you know what I mean? Yet, have you ever been there? With a child? A spouse? A sibling? A friend? A great need of anyone who was hurting?

Have you ever been in that place where you gave more than you were able? How did it feel? Was there a freedom to it? A joy? How were you able to do it? With the Corinthian Christians, the Bible tells us “*they gave themselves first to the Lord.*” That is, it was only through their living relationship with God through Jesus Christ that they could “give beyond their means.” Was it the same with you? Was the power to give beyond your means based in a relationship?

Through Hib’s ability to give beyond his means out of the love relationship he had with his sons, great things, the extent of which was totally unforeseen, occurred. Through our ability to give beyond our means out of the love relationship we have in Jesus, great things, the extent of which is also totally unforeseen right now, can and will occur. May God, the Holy Spirit, work just such a faith relationship in Jesus in each of us!

Prayer: Dear Jesus, help me to see in Your great sacrifice on the cross the greatest proof that great good can come as You empower us to live in joyful sacrifice. Amen!