

**Devotion 6**  
**See That You Excel . . . In This Grace of Giving**

**Friday, Week 1**

*But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us— see that you also excel in this grace of giving.*  
(2 Corinthians 8:7)

Coach Mitch. He was an assistant coach for the football team Brad Cusson played on when he was thirteen years old. Coach Mitch had played for the New York Giants. He was intense, loud, tough, demanding, unmoving, a real . . . coach. Among other things, he played offensive guard. One evening practice, Coach Mitch decided that he was going to teach the offensive line how to “pull,” a technique which enables an offensive lineman to move laterally much quicker and faster. At first, the coach began working with the entire offensive line, but soon his attention was totally on Brad. For over 30 minutes, he made Brad do the technique over and over and over again, faster and faster and faster, always demanding that he do it better, quicker, faster. Even as Brad became exhausted and frustrated to the point of tears, the coach did not let up. If anything he became more intense and demanding. As the team gathered around Coach Mitch ready to do practice-ending sprints, he had some of the better players jump in and go “live” against Brad, over and over again, for close to 30 minutes beyond when practice normally ended.

As Brad trudged off the field beyond exhausted and not a little angry, he saw that his dad had been watching the practice. He thought, “Boy, I bet my dad is really ticked off at this coach.” But the only thing his dad said to him was, “That coach must really think a lot of you.”

Our loving Heavenly Father thinks a lot of us. He thinks a lot of you. God declares that all of us who have been born again into life with God through faith in Christ are “*a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light*” (1 Peter 2:9). He declares that we are “*a kingdom and priests*” (Rev. 1:6). He declares that Jesus is the “*vine*” and we are the “*branches,*” and we are to “*bear much fruit*” (John 15:5). He declares that we “*are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*” (Eph.2: 10). He declares that “*anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these*” (John 14:12). Through faith in Jesus Christ, the very image of God is being restored in us (Col. 3:10). The Holy Spirit has made His home within us, empowering us to live in Him (Phil. 2:13; John 14). Our loving Heavenly Father thinks a lot of us. He thinks a lot of you. This is why he says to us, “*see that you excel in this grace of giving.*”

Oh, I know that this may sound scary. I know that our sinful nature would tempt us to rebel against this command. Yet, because of who we are in Christ, our Heavenly Father knows that we can do this. Indeed, it is what he has created us in Jesus Christ to do! We may experience a great struggle in our journey toward recognizing what role God has planned for us in this stewardship emphasis, but sometimes personal struggle is the only way we get beyond what we think we can accomplish to what we can accomplish in Christ. May each of us humble ourselves and receive the work of God in us during this special time!

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for thinking so much of me. Show me how You would have me “excel in this grace of giving” during our stewardship emphasis and work in me the ability and heart to do it. Amen!