

# Count Your Blessings

## A pathway to more joyful and generous giving and living

A number of years ago, I discovered a wonderful verse in I Corinthians 16:2, “On the first day of each week let each of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper.”

At first, I didn’t understand how the verse could apply to my life. But my wife and I began a Sunday evening practice of “looking back and writing down” how God provided for us in the previous seven days. Each week, we discovered there were many ways that God provided for us outside of our normal income. We began giving 10% of my main income to our local church and we then started a “Blessings Fund” that represented 10% or more of the myriad of blessings God creatively brought into our life week by week.

At the end of the first year, even though my main income only brought in \$15,000, I discovered we had given \$1500 to our local church and an additional \$2500 out of our “Blessings Fund” to other Christian causes. This meant that God had blessed us with \$25,000 of blessings during the past year.

We did this for several more years and discovered that every year God doubled and tripled what we were able and willing to give to the Lord’s work because we counted our blessings. Here are the lessons we learned and practiced that helped us live a more joyful and generous life:

- 1) Plan a time each week where you will begin to write down God’s provisions from the previous week in a “Blessings Notebook.”
- 2) When you meet together, think back over the following areas and write down anything that comes to your remembrance:
  - ❖ **MAIN INCOME?** If you were paid during the week, write down that amount. For us, we then gave 10% of this amount to our local church.
  - ❖ **ADDITIONAL INCOME OR UNEXPECTED CASH?** Write down any cash gifts, overtime pay, bonuses, second salary, moonlighting, investment returns, sale of any possession, refunds, inheritance, etc.

- ❖ **PEOPLE’S HOSPITALITY?** Meals, lodging, entertainments that others gave to you or paid the cost.
- ❖ **SPECIAL HELP OR ASSISTANCE?** Help with car – house - equipment repairs, free babysitting, etc.
- ❖ **DISCOUNT OR SALE ITEMS?** Any money saved on discounted clothing or household items, garage sale/thrift shop savings, discounts on recreational activities, etc.
- ❖ **PURCHASE OF NEW POSSESSIONS?** When my wife and I were buying a major item or a luxury item, we sometimes included the cost of these items in our blessings fund and in order to give an additional 10% or more to the Lord’s work.

- 1) Write down the financial value for each item OR (very important) write down the amount you “WOULD HAVE BEEN WILLING TO SPEND” for the item. For example: A family member gave me a \$1000 radial arm saw. I would have never been able or willing to afford a \$1000 tool like this, but I might have “been willing to spend” \$200 on a used radial arm saw at a garage sale. So, in this example, I put down the value of the blessing at \$200 (not \$1000). Therefore I ended up giving an extra \$20 to the Lord’s work, not an extra \$100.
- 2) Add up the value of the total number of blessing items for the week and take 10% or more of the total and decide where to give it OR set aside the week’s amount in your notebook or put the money in a special place or account and consider this your “BLESSINGS FUND”.
- 3) Faithfully give your church 10% or more of your main income. Then begin to joyfully and generously use your “Blessings Fund” to help support missions, missionaries, special projects and needs, building programs, the needy, and Christian workers and organizations.

**4-WEEK CHALLENGE:** *I am confident that the Lord has been “blessing” most people’s lives week by week. But most of us don’t “see” the blessings because we don’t take time each week to “look back over the last 7 days to see what God has done to provide for us.” Because of this, I challenge you to try this for at least 4 weeks to “see” what God is doing for you! I believe it will truly lead you to a more joyful and generous life!*