

Each year, this practice of counting our blessings weekly and laying aside extra giving money in a Blessings Fund is enabling us to cheerfully double and triple what we normally would have given to the Lord's work.

Many times it seemed foolish to keep giving like this, yet we were so grateful for the many savings, blessings, and extra money the Lord was providing for us that we joyfully and cheerfully gave a portion back to Him. We gave not because we had to, but because we wanted to. Some people say that we should "give to get," but the Lord was showing us that the best way to give was to clearly see what He's given us -- and then to generously, joyfully, and cheerfully set aside a portion to give back to Him!

AN OLD HYMN

The familiar words of the hymn, "Count Your Blessings" come to mind: "Count your blessings, name them one by one. Count your blessings and see what God has done." How liberating and exciting this can be for anyone who truly begins to practice this truth according to I Cor. 16:2. It's my prayer that you would begin to COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS EACH WEEK AND START A "BLESSINGS FUND" TO HELP YOU BE MORE JOYFUL AND GENEROUS IN YOUR GIVING TO THE LORD'S WORK.

There's no telling the wonderful things that may begin to occur in your life, your church, and the people and ministries you'll be able to support through this exciting practice.

RECOMMENDED STEPS FOR "COUNTING YOUR BLESSINGS"

Here are some important things I've learned to help identify the Lord's tangible provisions and blessings in your life each week:

#1 Try to count your blessings as a family, couple, or individual at a similar time each week with a pen and paper (or notebook) in hand. My wife and I look back over the week every Sunday night before going to bed and now have a notebook full of hundreds of entries of how God has cared for us over the past several years over-and-above our normal income.

#2 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 the amount. We always use my income here and put any second income or extra income in our blessings fund. We then give 10% of my regular income to our local church.
- **ADDITIONAL OR UNEXPECTED CASH?** Gifts, overtime, bonuses, 2nd salary, investment returns, sale of any item, refunds, inheritance, etc..
- **PEOPLE'S HOSPITALITY?** Meals, lodging, entertainment, etc.
- **SPECIAL HELP OR ASSISTANCE?** - Help with car or house repairs, emergencies, use of equipment, free babysitting, etc.
- **DISCOUNT AND SALE ITEMS?** Clothing, household items, garage sales/thrift shop savings, car items, tools, furnishings, recreation, etc.

PURCHASE OF NEW POSSESSIONS?

When my wife and I buy something that's a major item or a luxury item, we sometimes include the cost of these items in our blessings fund and give an extra 10% to the Lord's work.

#3 Write down a financial value for each item OR

Luke 6:38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

(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 they no longer needed. I would never have been able to afford a \$1000 saw, but I might have "been willing to spend" \$200 on a used radial arm saw. So, in this case, I put down the value of this blessing at \$200 (not \$1000). Therefore, I ended up giving an extra \$20 to the Lord's work -- not an extra \$100.

#4 Add up the value of the total number of blessings for each week and take 10% or more of the total and decide where to give it OR set the week's amount aside by writing it in your notebook or putting the money in a special place or account that you will consider your "BLESSINGS FUND."

#5 Faithfully give your local church 10% of your main income. Then begin to joyfully and generously use your "Blessings Fund" to help support missions, special projects and needs, and Christian workers and organizations.

I believe that IF you begin to "count your blessings" each week, you will be amazed how generous God is and how creative He is in providing for you. As you count and give according to God's blessings in your life, you will be able to be more generous to your church, God's work, and others more than you've ever dreamed possible!

Check out and check off additional Scripture verses on provision & generosity: Dt 16:17; 2 Cor 8-9; Gen 28:16-22; Pr 3:9-10; Mal 3:7-15; Mt 23:23; Lu 6:38; Dt 14:23; Dt 16:17; Mt 6:19-34; Ecc 5:10; Lu 12:16-21; 1 Tim 6:6-10,17-19; Hag 2:8; 1 Kgs 17; Hag 1:4-11; Dt 28; Heb 6:10; Ex 35-36; Lev 26:30; 1 Chr 29:11-18

THE GRACE OF GIVING



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GIVING TO GOD AND WATCHING HIM WORK

Based on An Article
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Can you relate to any of the following?

Have you ever felt you didn't have enough income to make ends meet?

Have you ever been frustrated or wearied by the number of appeal letters you've received in the mail?

Have you ever been confused about how much money you should give to the Lord's work?

Have you ever felt guilty that you weren't able to give fully and faithfully to your local church because of other financial commitments made to individual missionaries, Christian workers, organizations, or special projects?

If you are married, do you wish you and your spouse agreed more on how much, when, and where to give your money to the Lord's work?

Do you wish you had extra funds to give to special needs?

Several years ago, I was feeling many of the frustrations mentioned above when I came across the following portion of scripture: 1 Corinthians 16:2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

I will never forget the Sunday after I found this verse. I asked my wife Sandi to sit down with me so that we could "count our blessings" She gave me a puzzled look and asked, "What do you mean, 'count our blessings?'" I told her I wasn't sure what I meant, but that I Cor. 16:2 implied that as Christians God wants us to take time on the first day of each week and look back over the last seven days to see how He has provided for us then gratefully lay aside funds that



we can give to His work.

So, with pencil and paper in hand, we sat down and began to reflect back on the previous seven days. Obviously, the first item and amount we wrote down was our salary check from the Christian organization where we were on staff.

UNCOVERED BLESSINGS

We remembered we had gone to dinner with friends and they picked up the tab; we had received a birthday gift of cash; and I had received an honorarium from a speaking engagement. We wrote all these items down one by one. As we thought more, I remembered I had been looking to buy a used 5-speed bike. My secretary's family had one they no longer used and they decided to give it to me at no cost.

After writing all of these items down, we were surprised to find we had a list of tangible provisions in addition to my salary. We thanked the Lord for these "blessings" and decided to go back and assign a dollar value to each item: \$50 for what I had been willing to spend on a bike, \$15 for the birthday gift of cash, \$20 in savings when the other couple bought our dinner, \$25 speaking honorarium, and \$40 for some other items.



We totaled these items up and discovered that these "blessings" amounted to \$150! So we decided to take 10% of the \$150 in blessings and send it as our monthly support for one of the missionaries we supported for \$15 a month. We then we started to tithe the full 10% of my normal salary to our local church.

THE LIST CONTINUED TO GROW

The next Sunday we again sat down to count our blessings. At first we didn't think anything had happened and were ready to give up. Then we recalled a few items Sandi had bought on sale and some items I received free from work. When we added up the amounts, we found \$120 in unnoticed blessings had occurred. So we took \$12 (10% of our "blessings") and started a BLESSINGS FUND. Each week we began to set aside money according to what happened during the previous week. Then when we had missionaries or special needs we wanted to support, we were able to use our Blessings Fund monies.

EVEN BIG THINGS HAPPENED

Occasionally there were even some big things that occurred. One time we needed to buy a car and some friends of ours sold us a car they had for \$2000 instead of the \$3000 they could have gotten for it! Because of this \$1000 savings, we were able to give an extra \$100 to the Lord's work through our Blessings Fund. We normally would have never noticed these "blessings" (and certainly not acknowledged them in extra giving) if we had not applied the verse in I Cor. 16:2 and sat down together each Sunday to consciously look back over the previous week.

Through "counting our blessings" we found we were able to give a full 10% of my salary to our local church and still have plenty of additional funds to give to missionaries, people in need, and to Christian causes and organizations.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY

While working on our income tax reports, I found that my salary for the year had been \$15,000. When looking over our list of contributions, I found we had given \$1500 to our local church.



Then, when I added up the additional monies we gave from our "Blessings Fund", my calculator showed that we had given another \$2500 to missions, special needs, and church things. I thought, "That can't be right; there must be something wrong with my calculator!" But when I went through our weekly blessings list from the year's 52 Sundays, I was astounded to discover that the "blessings" we had written down (beyond our normal salary) added up to \$25,000! We really had given an extra \$2,500 to the Lord's work in addition to the \$1,500 to our local church! I was amazed to think that we gave \$4000 to the Lord's work on a \$15,000 salary! We went into the year wondering how we would even be able to make ends meet. But by "counting our blessings" Sunday by Sunday our eyes were opened to the many ways the Lord was caring for us. It was from this spirit of gratefulness that we gladly and joyfully passed along 10% of these blessings, savings, unexpected income, and cash to the Lord's work. As we thought about it, we also realized that God had actually given us a \$40,000 a year lifestyle on a \$15,000 salary!

The next year we continued the practice of "counting our blessings" each week. At the end of the year my salary had been \$17,000, we had given \$1700 to our local church, and had given another \$5000 to other Christian causes! The following year we gave an extra \$6000 to the Lord's work over and above giving 10% of my salary to our local church.