

Devotion – March 6, 2018
by Diane Stewart

In last our small group we talked about Billy Graham and his life. It brought back childhood memories of going to a Billy Graham event with my mom, and how moving a speaker he was. And then Dennis Burgart shared a number of quotes attributed to Billy Graham. One quote stuck in my mind:

“I used to read five psalms every day - that teaches me how to get along with God. Then I read a chapter of Proverbs every day and that teaches me how to get along with my fellow man.”

I found myself compelled to read the Psalms and Proverbs, and as I was reading I found myself searching for guidance on giving and generosity. This had been weighing on my mind for several weeks; which is not surprising, since we are all being asked to make our pledges to the Capital Campaign.

The challenge for me in committing a pledge to the Capital Campaign is it taps into one of my greatest fears, the fear of not having enough, as in money, and not doing enough, either not giving generously of my money or of my time. I fret a lot about not having enough resources to sustain me in my old age. My father was a banker, my mom an accountant – so good financial habits were modeled growing up. So I have always saved money, but I worry since 3 of my grandparents lived well into their 90s, that I should assume I may reach 100! So that fear of not having enough lurks in the back of my mind a lot.

But then God on occasion has reminded a long life may not be my fate, having given me the opportunity to survive cancer three times. And instead, I need to remember God has placed me here and now, because this is where he needs me right now. And I need to trust that he is leading me to give generously of all I have, and not just money. As Billy Graham also said – “God has given us two hands - one to receive with and the other to give with.”

So as I filled in my pledge card, I was lead to several passages from Psalms and Proverbs:

Psalm 112:6

“Good (being defined in my Bible as well-being and prosperity) will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice.”

Proverbs 11:25, 22:9

“A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.”

“A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.”

And searching further on generosity, I was lead to 2 Corinthians, Chapter 8 and 9; where Paul speaks about the generosity of the Macedonian churches and how this generosity led to the churches being blessed with the grace of God. I would like to read 2 Corinthians, Chapter 9, verses 6 through 15, as it in particular touched me as I signed my pledge.

2 Corinthians 9:6-9

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under

compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written:

'He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.'

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift."

As I close I hope these verses touch you as well as you pray about your pledge. Remember to this quote from Billy Graham – *"Give me five minutes with a person's checkbook, and I will tell you where their heart is."*