

It's more
blessed to *Receive* than to give.



Um, your title . . . ?

Yes, I know, please bear with me here. This may be going somewhere.

Not everybody receives gifts well, you know. Have you ever given a gift that seemed to not be appreciated? The one that — the very moment it was received — you could tell there was disappointment?

I wonder at times how many good gifts God has offered us that were received poorly, if at all?

Really, if you think about it, it seems that the entire story of God is about what an extravagant Father offers His children, *and how little they (we) have valued those gifts.*

Beginning with a glorious Creation, we find God giving good gifts to His children. He makes multitudes of promises to those who are His, only to find that their joy is short-lived . . . and the disappointment sets in. This scenario is repeated through the narrative *ad nauseum*. At last, in Isaiah 9:6, there is a monumental promise, and this will be the answer humanity has waited and hoped for — *“A son will be given.”* These are the words that would echo through time and come to rest in the little town of Bethlehem.

The promise was staggering. A gift was coming that would change everything.

“And His name will be called, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Finally, Jesus would arrive, speaking words of life, but heard by many as words of condemnation. Some would follow Him — others would become indignant, rejecting His words and ultimately rejecting Jesus Himself. They were disappointed. *He certainly wasn't what they wanted, but He was what they needed.* They could neither see nor appreciate the gift that was being offered.

“But to all who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God.”

Jesus remains as the most remarkable gift ever offered to humanity. If we believe Him and accept Him fully into our lives — putting Him completely in charge — *we become His very own children.*

My friends, if we understand the story, then this is the one gift we simply must receive. Do not regard lightly the gift of eternal life. It might not be the gift you thought you were looking for but it is the gift we need – more than anything else.

Continued . . .



As we consider our giving to others, the question should be answered, “Have you first received the greatest of gifts? The gift of eternal life?” For, once we do, we will truly know what it means to give to others. There arises in us a joy of giving unlike anything we may have experienced before. Our giving comes from a deeper place, a grateful heart. *This* is when Jesus’s words come to life in us, “*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*” In having Jesus, we have more than we will ever need and there is a new freedom in our giving. **Our best giving always flows out of our best receiving.**

On Christmas, we celebrate the greatest gift ever given to the world — Jesus Christ. Jesus has come into the world to give us what we desperately need and cannot get on our own: New life. *Eternal life.*

As we move quickly towards Christmas this year, consider a time to simply *sit with Jesus for a while.* I’m not talking about an hour — unless you want to. But, when was the last time you sat quietly with Him for even ten minutes?

“*Right! How do I find time to do that?*” I know, I ask myself that as well. The answer is, *you’ll have to fight for it.* There are a million other things screaming for our attention. But, **to sit with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords?**

Oh, it’s so worth it. In fact, the Bible tells us that *we can’t even conceive of all the good things that God has prepared for those who love Him.* (1 Corinthians 2:9)

God continues to desire to pour out good gifts to His children. When we take the time to sit with Him, we begin to sense the truth of that verse. Besides that, He’ll be waiting for you if you decide to meet with Him. He truly desires your presence.

What are the good gifts of God you need, right now? Consider this sampling:

Jesus proclaimed, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10b)
Are you living in the abundance of Jesus? In our culture today what do we even consider abundance?

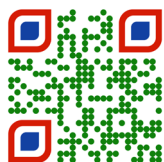
Jesus offers us His peace, “I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.” John 14:27 (NLT)
What would you give for just a little peace in the midst of all the turmoil in world today? Bring your heart to Jesus and receive His gift. He is a generous giver.

Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7

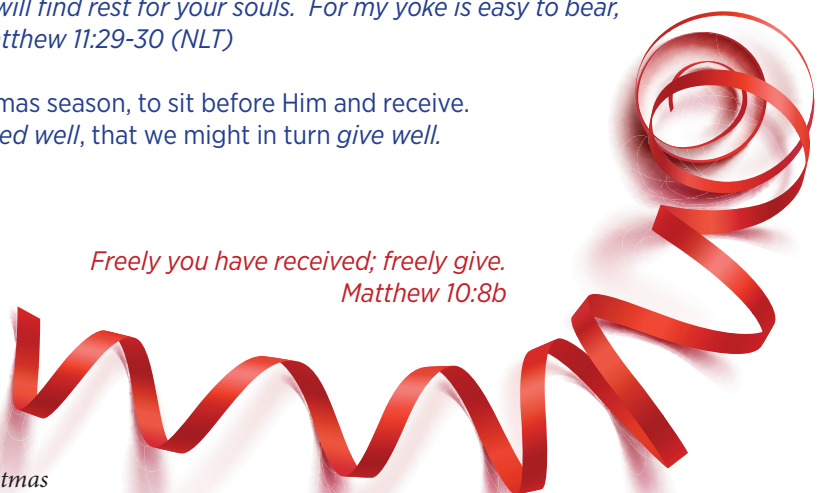
Anxiety and depression are at an all-time high in our country today. Jesus offers us a solution. Can you fix your own anxiety? Most likely if you could, you would have by now. But Jesus makes us an offer, “*Take My yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.*” Matthew 11:29-30 (NLT)

May there be a Silent Night in your Christmas season, to sit before Him and receive. Lord, help us to be those who have *received well*, that we might in turn *give well.*

Freely you have received; freely give.
Matthew 10:8b



Watch the video
version of this
Christmas reflection.
Scan or visit
PriorityOne-DelVal.org/Christmas





It is a blessing for Priority One to be a ministry of giving.

At Priority One, we are men who have received help, and as a result feel grateful and compelled to help others. Our hearts beat to help men. We are grateful men whom God has helped and continues to help to walk in freedom and strength. We offer to men, the ministry of “getting unstuck.”

Here are some of the ways we are currently helping and encouraging men:

- **We offer recovery groups for men struggling with addictive sexual behaviors.** The alarming statistic is that 75% of men in churches are struggling with pornography. 50 – 58% of pastors are likewise struggling, as are 30-35% of women. Clearly the need is overwhelming. We are doing our best to reach into churches and the community to help the men who will come. There are currently 15 men meeting in three groups. We are looking to start 3-4 new groups this coming February.
- **We facilitate the Wild at Heart Basic experience two times a year.** 2022 was our best year yet, hosting a total of over 70 men between two weekends. This is a four-day journey of exploration into your heart. The weekend is life changing as God re-orientates a man's heart toward the larger story in which he finds himself. Many participants can testify to the power of this weekend.
- **We offer counseling and mentoring.** This year Tom counseled and or mentored over 90 different men. Most men have no one to simply listen to them. The ministry of presence is powerful and the counseling schedule is quite full.
- **We host the “Freedom Fire” every second Friday of the month.** This is a non-structured event simply to promote fellowship among men. We enjoy the warmth and glow of a fire, roast some brats and get to know each other. Attendance this year has ranged from 6-25 men per month.
- **Finally, our ministry is largely focused around Freedom House** – a historic facility in the heart of Thornton that we rent for the sole purpose of doing men's ministry. Counseling, addiction recovery groups and Bible studies are featured here. This house is regularly prayed over as deep and intense ministry happens there frequently. Often, I've been told of the feeling of peace and God's presence that resides there.

THE VOICES OF MEN

Here is one man's experience from Freedom House:

A couple months ago I was convicted by the Holy Spirit to confess my sins to another human being. Not the kind of sins you easily spill from your heart. Rather the ones that you would rather keep between you and God. In order to bear a heavy heart filled with shameful secrets you need an understanding brother and a safe place. My friend recommended we meet at the Freedom house. On a rainy night I met my friend there for this God ordained confession time.

As I walked into the Freedom House I felt peace and grace. I realized I was in a sanctuary where God's presence was ready to minister to me. I was surprised at how easy it was confessing my sins there and with each admission I felt a little closer to God.

James 5:16 commands us to confess our sins to one another. By doing so our hearts are healed by His grace. Confessing our sins can be intimidating but with a loving brother and the right place it can be a freeing experience. I am truly thankful for the Freedom house!

Another, from Wild at Heart Weekend:

In the weeks/days leading up to the WAH weekend, I was stoked and beyond excited. You see, I had been leading men's groups dealing with sexual addiction for over 6 years and was burnt out. At the advice of my counselor, I needed something to get my heart back in tune with what God wanted for my life. The day came to drive out, it was cold, rainy and I was under brutal attack by the enemy. I felt depressed, unmotivated, and I no longer wanted to go and was ready to turn around. Upon check-in, I made an unsightly first impression (sorry Larry), walked out and texted my wife that I was ready to come home and forget the whole weekend. She replied, "You need to push through the enemy's attacks, I'm praying for you." I stayed, and it was the most impactful weekend of my life! While driving home, I hit record on my phone and talked to God. This was my prayer:

"Father God, thank you for revealing yourself to me this weekend. You allowed me to invite your presence into my heart, mind, body, and soul. You have exceeded abundantly above all that I could ask or could think. You have provided hope that I didn't even know existed. You knew I needed to find my heart and turn it back toward You. I found the answer to that longing and emptiness in my heart. You filled a void that I desperately needed. You revealed your thoughts and truths to me in sometimes nearly audible ways. As I journaled my thoughts, I couldn't write fast enough. You came and met me in a place I didn't even know existed, gave me peace where I didn't even know I needed it, and showed me what a Heavenly Father is all about. You knew how much I needed this weekend and how I would meet you there in ways beyond my imagination. Thank you for the men around me that stood beside me and prayed alongside me, demonstrating what Godly friendship is all about. Thank you for teaching me that my heart needs to always point toward you, allowing everything else to fall into place behind it. Thank you for showing me how to be on fire for You and giving me the desire to start each day with You by my side, guiding me, teaching me. I can hear that still small voice, 'this is the way, walk in it.' Thank you, Father God, thank you for everything, thank You for Wild at Heart Weekend." — Chad

I am so very grateful for your continued support.

This has been a difficult and challenging time for our country — socially, economically and spiritually. I know the sacrifice it is to continue to support various ministries in such times. We who continue to support do it by faith. Thank you for standing with us, fighting for the hearts of men. **I believe when we can help anchor a man's heart in a deep relationship with Jesus, we get a better man.** *A man more equipped to lead in his family, his church, his place of employment and in his community. I am deeply committed to this ministry and believe that it is the most important calling I have ever had.*

Thank you for joining hands and hearts for this mission.

We won't have a better country simply as a result of government decrees. We will have a better country when we unite in prayer. We will have a better country when we reach out to help one another in the name of Jesus. Thank you for helping us reach out.

January will begin our sixth year with Priority One and I am honored to be here. I am honored to have you with me. **Let's continue to stand together that we might experience the greatest revival yet to occur in the hearts of men all over the Delaware Valley!**

Grace, Peace, and Merry Christmas.



Secure, online giving is available at PriorityOne-DelVal.org or by using the enclosed envelope. Thank you!