

Hey everyone-

Today we are in the final week of our series in the book of Deuteronomy. We are looking at Deuteronomy 12 and the idea that giving freely leads to rest.

If my message had a title it would be worry is work, but giving freely leads to rest.

Work and rest are opposites. God's desire for us is to rest. We can do this only through the power of God in us.

Over the last three weeks Jeff been sharing with us from the book of Deuteronomy. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy more than any other book in the Bible. Jesus also spoke about money more than he spoke about any other thing besides than the kingdom of God.

As Jeff spoke on chapters for five and six-we see what God intended for His kingdom. In Deuteronomy chapter 4 we saw who God has revealed himself to be.

This matters because we desire to be a church that helps people find their way back to God

-so we want to understand who God is.  
Throughout Scripture we see that God is who  
he says he is. Creator- Father -King of Kings.

In the last 2 weeks-Jeff also spoke on  
Deuteronomy chapter five and six

Chapter 5 showed us as we looked at the 10  
commandments that we live fully when we  
recognize that God's law is a confirmation of  
his great love for us not a condition of our  
relationship with him.

Chapter 6 reminded us that we love deeply  
because God so deeply loves us

Today we look at the final part of the three  
phrases that we say so often at Harbor; Live  
fully, Love deeply and Give freely.

We will be looking at Deuteronomy 12 and  
what scripture says about giving freely. If  
you don't have a Bible- we would love to give  
you one as a gift. They are in the back of the  
worship area, feel free to take one . We will  
also be showing the scripture on the screen.

## Deuteronomy 12

**1** These are the decrees and laws you must be careful to follow in the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has given you to possess—as long as you live in the land.

**4** You must not worship the Lord your God in their way. **5** But you are to seek the place the Lord your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go;

Seek the place of worship where his name is honored. That's one of the reasons I love Harbor, the name of the Lord is honored here.

**6** there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks.

If you call Harbor your home, this is the first place we should bring our Tithe and our offerings, and our gifts of resources like our time, talents and abilities.

7 There, in the presence of the Lord your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the Lord your God has blessed you.

Moses is telling the people be careful & obey. Scripture is a blueprint of how life works best. God's law does not condemn us, but it confirms God's love for us. God wants us to know the very best way to use the resources he's given us. So that we can rest, and not work by worrying all the time about how we provide for ourselves. God is Father and he provides. Verse 7 reminds us not to covet, but to have hearts of gratitude...we eat and have joy in this life because the Lord.. God has blessed (us).

Moses throughout Deuteronomy points to people of Israel back to God- who has provided for them. Those same words speak to us today.

Chapter 12 of Deuteronomy, and the end of chapter 6 of Deuteronomy, speak to the what Jesus would later speak of. God wants us to give freely . We are able to give freely when we realize every good and perfect gift comes down from the father

Why would God want us to give freely? He is Creator of the Universe and Lord of all. He does not need my money.

He is for my joy.

And he knows that when we give freely it leads to joy .

Several years back I spent over two years walking slowly through the book of Deuteronomy using the book the “Deuteronomy project” as a guide.

It was written by Richard Couser- a lawyer from New Hampshire who spent many years studying the book of Deuteronomy in order to bring it to life in a narrative form. He died shortly after the book heaven published. It is a book that has helped me understand the heart of God.

One thing jumped out at me at the end of Deuteronomy chapter 6. Life is full of blessings that are not the result anything I did. Deuteronomy uses words like I “drink from” wells I did not dig and “Vineyards I did not plant”.

In today’s language, we might realize that we have been given opportunities simply because we are live in a time and a place where we’re able to grow into healthy adults simply because we live in homes that keep us warm during cold winters and we can drink water that flows out of faucets instead of rivers that we need to walk miles to each day.

Last month I found myself sick for almost 3 weeks. Knowing that I was going to write this message , I often thought about how blessed I was.

I had a warm bed and access to juice and soup, the ability to go to a doctor and get medicine.

We have been given many gifts from our good and loving Father.

My encouragement today is to invest those resources in the only thing that has eternal value. The kingdom of God!  
The thing Jesus spoke of the most!  
The kingdom of God .. the only thing that has eternal value.

One of the resources we have been given is our time. As the Lord of all, the one who knows what's best, God commands us to rest- knowing that the best way to use the resources of time and strength is to take one day week as a day of rest.

When we rest, we allow ourselves to be filled. We are then able to serve and give out of an abundance of the joy in our hearts.

Even though I have made it a spiritual practice to spend one day week resting, there are days when I still sometimes struggle with guilt. I know that the Sabbath is a gift from God but sometimes I forget that

I'm a child of God not because of what I do but because of who he is, and how he has calls me His loved child.

Our lives works best when we honor the Sabbath and rest- but it is hard to believe that resting one day is ok.

It is hard to believe that we can give our first 10% and trust it is enough.

But Jesus said we can ask Him.

Matthew 6:9-13 New Living Translation (NLT)

**We use such a formal term- but Abba means Daddy**

**9** Pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,  
may your name be kept holy.

**10**

May your Kingdom come soon.  
May your will be done on earth,  
as it is in heaven.

**11**

Give us today the food we need, [a]

**12**

and forgive us our sins,  
as we have forgiven those who sin against



us.

**13**

And don't let us yield to temptation,[b]  
but rescue us from the evil one.[c]

If I ask God for His wisdom- on how to use the resources He has entrusted to me-the kingdom of God advances. Because I am His hands and feet- so are you.

We can ask Him for strength and wisdom , to say no to things we do not need. We can ask for help to make wise choices with the resources He has put in our care.

God has provided enough, but my natural sin filled self always wants more. I think that's true for most of us. We may have different things we want more of, but there's usually a part of us that says "just one more and I'll be happy".

For some of us you want more clothes or more shoes than we can use. Some prefer cars.

I prefer vacuum cleaners

I constantly want a newer version- I will watch any infomercial out there if there is a vacuum cleaner in it.

I think it's because I believe the clean house of my dreams is one vacuum cleaner away.

And so I find it funny that one of the clearest examples I have in my life of using my resources as a Steward- involves a vacuum cleaner

I had see many commercials for certain brand. I finally decided I was going to buy one. The TV offer said I could pay \$40 a month for many months.

When I got the vacuum cleaner it was as light and easy to move as a commercial promised, but it was really loud and it did not work very well.

That same month an opportunity came to sponsor a child through World Vision. I began to sponsor a child by sending them \$40 dollars a month to have clean water and go to school and hear of the love of Christ.

In that year my heart began to change when I saw \$40 dollars a month spent on something I did not need- I already had 2...and \$40 a month being sent somewhere to change a life.

I believe with all of who I am, that giving freely brings joy. It changes our heart to value the things that have eternal value instead of things that will one day be thrown away, or eaten by moths – destroyed by rust or stolen.

Tithing has been a part of my life from the time I was a very small child. And I love that Malachi 3 is the place where God says test me.

### Malachi 3:10 NLT

10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, “I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!

I grew up with Buddy barrel as a part of my Sunday school lessons. We were encouraged for every dollar we earned to bring in \$.10.

There was no amount too small. All the children in the Assemblies of God put their money together and then it was used once a year to buy cars and bikes for missionaries overseas.

Once year they would show us the video-and we would see that when we gave freely , God will multiplying our resources for his kingdom. That is what He does!

That's what he does. The laws of math are true. Anything times zero is zero...God can't multiply zero. But like the widow who gave 2 mites and Jesus pointed her out for her faithfulness in The New Testament, no gift is too small .

The message for Malachi 3 is that we must bring our tithes and offerings into the storehouse. Today- we are able to give freely because God first gave us Jesus Christ. God gave freely. It is his power in us that changes us. God's love moves us from the desire for things that have no eternal value to desiring the very mission of the church.

I know some of us hearing these words- especially the word tithe- but even the thought of Giving Freely leads to anxiety.

I ask you to spend time in God's word looking at what he says about using the resources we've been given.

All of Scripture is like a roadmap.

There was a time when I used to have a giant map in between the two front seats of my car. I would confidently drive alone, from Massachusetts to Pennsylvania knowing that if I got lost. The way home was written out for me in the map.

That is what Scripture is – it tells us how God has created universe, how it runs, how it works. I know it does not seem to make sense that resting means the rest of our work can be multiplied. We live in joy.

When we give our resources, when we give freely, God begins to open up our hands to release things that hold us captive.

Perhaps you've heard the story of how monkeys are trapped. You put some nuts in a box with a hole is at the top. The Monkey can reach its hands down through the hole to grab the nuts. If it would let go of the nuts it's hand would come out of the hole and it would be free.

But once it holds those nuts it is held captive by little box because it would rather stay there holding those nuts that it cannot eat then release them and be free.

Giving freely allows us to release the things that we need to release. Deut 12:6-, bring your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, allows us to release the things we need to release. There is not enough money to protect us from this world.

Jesus it reminded us while he was here that in this world we will have trouble but take heart, Jesus said- I've overcome the world.

In the last 10, 20 , 30 years we've seen the value of money go up and down. We have seen wealthy men like Steve Jobs show us that wealth offers no protection form death.

Scripture says only the word of the Lord stands forever.

**Is 40:8**

The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever."

We can invest our resources in to the Kingdom of God where they can multiply 30 60 even 100 times

That's what I hope we leave here today understanding.

God's desire is for us to have His power in us because we were created for good works plans long ago.

**Ephesians 2:10** New Living Translation (NLT)

10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Harbor- we have been given a called as a church to go to the city of Lowell and stay in North Chelmsford so that we can live out the mission of helping people find their way back to God

Our vision also speaks to our desire that we would grow in our understanding of God's great love so that we can Live fully, Love deeply and Give freely.

I know that is hard to give freely when we are afraid we won't have enough.... when there is financial pressure coming from every side.

So today I'm asking you to ask God what Generosity Looks like for you.

I heard a Great sermon by Bo Chancey, who is the pastor of Manchester Christian church. He talked about percentage based giving; I had never heard it spoken this way. And said we all give away percent of our income.

Everyone gives a percent... some give zero; some give one %, three % ...10 % or more.

Maybe the goal today is to give 10%  
If today you already give 10% maybe being generous is giving more than 10%...



I am encouraging you to Give because it is a spiritual discipline. Maybe you were currently working on physical discipline. I'm still working on becoming the strongest version of myself.

I have been going to the gym regularly for 18 months. I still do not like going, always glad when I am done though. I loved a post I saw last week on Facebook. It reminded me going to the gym does not get easier but I am getting stronger.

It is never easy to make discipline part of our lives. We practice them over and over until they become a normal part of who we are. We become people who pray, serve and give freely.

Spiritual disciplines need to be practiced  
We can practice being generous and having compassion.

I am asking you today... what does it look like to give freely?

If Harbor is your home what percentage of your time and treasure do you give here...Is God calling you to give freely?

This year giving freely will result a whole week of what we have called Love Lowell. We are expanding this year and calling this year's event Love week.

We will ask without reservation for you to give your time talent and treasure because we believe we all need to practice generosity.

Giving freely is not just about money. It is a new way of thinking and living. If you want to join me in KH- you will see that you never have to go to a toddler or preschool class and teach small children the word of "mine"... Never!!! But we do have to help them learn to share

It is the power of the Holy Spirit that allows us to be people who gives freely because God gives freely. And He gave us Jesus.

I love the heart behind what ever happens in the training of the people who work at chick fil-A

No matter what the request. the answer always is “my pleasure”.

That is what giving freely looks like- it is my pleasure to be God’s hands and feet...ministering in His name, because I know how loved I am by Him.

When I came to Harbor four years ago I was blown away by the commitment of the teams of volunteers who serve our community and care for others. I had never been part of a community that gives so freely.

If we want to continue to be a church that multiplies and Gives Freely, I think we need some practical ways we can rest in the love and provision of God... given with limits. He says this is enough...rather than lives filled with the work of worry?

This summer I read a wonderful book by Bill Hybels, a Pastor in Chicago. Three points

from his book simplify I want to leave with you.

One- Believe that all I have comes from God. He alone allows us to be content and thankful. Maybe you go home and start to journal blessings God has given you. Wells you did not dig and vineyards you did not plant. But we get to enjoy the fruit of them. Or you begin to sing songs of praise. Start each day with a focus on God who provides...Jehovah Jireh.

Two- Believe we can live within God's current provision

Philippians 4 I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength

I've learned what it is to be in need  
I have learned what it is to have plenty  
I've learned the secret of being content

I know some of us enjoy camping and others enjoy going to a hotel...Maybe part of what we enjoy is we are not surrounded by thousands of things

Things take our time to keep them clean and orderly  
And they take our resources to repair and store them

Scripture says

Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven  
where moth and  
rust will not destroy  
And where thieves Will not Break in and  
steal where your treasure is there your  
heart will be also

3-Honor God with the first 10%  
Haven't before ever given a tithe I encourage  
you to go to Malachi 3 because God says an  
incredible thing- He says test me in this

those of you who grew up like I did – give  
10% and we are good- No- ask God – what  
does Generous look like for me?

I am going to make the big ask because we  
can't multiply without resources. Test God-

Give Freely...God will provide the resources  
...I am asking because I want you to be part  
of this .

To see your resources be used in bringing  
people back to God.

Bill Hybels- says this requires faith

When we set aside 10% we need to commit to  
living beneath his provision.

When we are spiritually and financially  
reconciled to God we get to watch God use  
our resources for his kingdom.  
It is exciting stuff!!

We cannot do this in our own strength.  
But we can ask God, by the power of the Holy  
Spirit to help us.

At Harbor- we like to talk about “Next  
steps”...it is on the bottom of your program –  
the back of the connection card.

For some of the – our next step is to Pray.  
Our prayer might begin by first asking Jesus  
Christ to be the Lord of our life.

If you would like to talk with someone on staff about that- let us know with your connection care, or come up to speak to one of us after the service.

For others...we sit here today knowing that for years now we have spent more than God has provided....and now find ourselves in a place of debt...today we might ask God to help us know understand we have enough and need to say no to things we do not need.

Tithing is not an investment plan- I give to God and He gives more back..

I think what tithing does is it changes our heart.

It helps us focus our time, our talents and our resources on things that have eternal value.

A simple prayer is -Lord with your love and forgiveness will you cleanse me and help me desire what you desire.

Will you break my heart for what breaks yours?

Finally – we can become people who give  
Freely because worry is work and Giving  
freely leads to rest.

When we Give freely - Ministry in these walls  
and outside these walls can happen.

In a few moments we will hear from Laurie  
Richards as she shares what she has done  
with the resources God is giving her

Her time and her treasure are used to help  
the people of Haiti

And as the years have passed parts of her  
ministry have changed.

Her story reminds all of us to hold on tightly  
to God -but to hold on to every resource he's  
given us with open hands.

Finally-Her story is not here to make us feel  
guilty that we are not in Haiti- it is a  
reminder that each of us were created by  
God to do this thing works he planned for us  
to do.



Harbor- leave today knowing we love you.  
God loves you. His desire is that we become  
people who give freely and use our gifts for  
His kingdom.

Here is Laurie