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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1645 ~ Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

A teacher was telling his class about the Bible story of the rich man and Lazarus. At the end, the teacher asked his boys, “Now which would you rather be, the rich man or Lazarus?” One boy answered, “I would rather be the rich man while I live and Lazarus when I die.” This answer reminded the teacher that our next life is an extension of this life. If we don’t train ourselves to live for God in this life, we can’t expect to be any use to Him in the next.

The story was told the conversion of a wealthy farmer in New York. The man was a noted miser. Soon after his conversion, a poor man who’d lost everything in a fire went to the wealthy man to ask for help. The farmer thought he would be liberal and give the poor man a ham from his smokehouse. On the way there, Satan whispered to the farmer, “Give him the smallest one you have.”

Then and there he had a struggle whether he would give the poor man a small one or a large one. Finally he took down the largest ham he could find. “You are a fool!” the devil screamed. The converted farmer replied, “If you don’t keep quiet, I’ll give him every ham I have in the smokehouse!”

Needless to say, the converted miser won his first battle with our adversary. Yet how often people without any miserly reputation may be taken unawares by Satan in just these same situations. One doesn’t need to be rich to become miserly. A miser is simply a person who withholds more than is right and for that reason, is always tending towards poverty himself.

A woman served for many years as a house parent for missionaries' children in the Philippines. She loved books. Some she lent out gladly but her favourite ones she kept in a box at the end of the bed for herself only to read. One night she heard a faint gnawing sound. She searched around and discovered the sound was coming from her beloved box of books. When she opened it, she found paper fragments everywhere. All the books she had kept for herself had been lost to termite ants. What she give away, she kept but what she hoarded, she lost.

In 2 Corinthians, Chapter 9, it says: "God loves a cheerful giver." He wants us to be generous with other people in all that we do. In today's Bible Adventure, a small boy was willing to give all his lunch to the Lord Jesus so that everyone might be fed. The Lord Jesus had been teaching the people out in a desert place all day and it was coming on towards evening. Everyone was tired and hungry. The disciples urged Jesus to send the people away, so they could care for their own needs.

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This miracle of feeding rhe 5,000 is the only one of the thirty-five miracles recorded in all four Gospels. It is found in Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9 and John 6. In the Jewish system of that time, only men were counted to make up that number. If we add all the women and children who attended that event too, it would have been a far larger crowd than the recorded 5,000, so what a great miracle it was!

In the Old Testament, the Israeli people were encouraged to care for one another. The Law of Moses told farmers to leave the corners of their fields after harvest for the poor people to gather up grains for food. In Proverbs, Chapter 11, it says: “Be generous, and you will be prosperous. Help others, and you will be helped.” At some stage of life, we all need a helping hand from others so it makes sense to be helpful when we see others in need.

The New Testament has many verses to encourage us to be givers and not just be people who expect others to take care of us. God gives generously and graciously to all. He makes His sun to shine on the bad and good people alike, and gives rain to those who do good as well as to those who do evil. More than this, God the Father sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world. God demonstrated His own love for us in this: While we were still unworthy sinners, Christ died for us.

In 1 Corinthians, Chapter 13, the Apostle Paul speaks about giving without loving. He said: “I may have all the faith needed to move mountains – but if I have no love, I am nothing. I may give away everything I have, and even give up my body to be burned – but if I have no love, this does me no good.”

At a wedding, the father of the bridegroom publicly gave the newly married couple a cheque for \$10,000. Everyone thought how generous the father was! But later after the meal was over, the father whispered to his son not to attempt to cash it! The father’s motive in giving the cheque was all for self promotion and not a genuine expression of love for the newlyweds at all.

We all need to examine our motives in giving. A new zoo was being built and one couple had promised to pay half the cost. However, they discovered that the plaque with their names on it for recognising their gift would be mounted beside another plaque. This other plaque had been made to honour a couple who, 36 years before, had donated only a sixth as much as what the couple were planning to give. So the couple wanted the old plaque removed and only their names be shown at the entrance way. When officials refused to do their wishes, the couple withdrew their promise of financial support. It's different when we give to God. Those who want rewards in heaven should seek no plaques of recognition here on earth at all.

It's important to give in the right way. In Matthew, Chapter 6, the Lord Jesus taught that people should not perform their charitable deeds in public so that other people will see what they do. He said, "If you do these things publicly, you will not have any reward from your Father in heaven."

"But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly."

Giving to God and giving to others go hand in hand. If a Christian begins to give God one tenth of his income, he soon realises that there are fringe benefits. He will be surprised at how much he has given to the Lord over the years and how well he has done on paying the bills with the nine tenths left over. His spiritual life will deepen and he will find it easier to increase his giving further. John Bunyan said: "A man there was, some called him mad; the more he gave, the more he had."

The habit of giving reminds us why we were sent into the world to help and bless others. This awakens our conscience to be looking for more opportunities to do good and improve society. To give is more blessed than to receive as this action imitates the way of Christ and our trust in Him that He'll provide for all of our needs.

A church member was expecting to receive a large amount of money in a will from a relative. The member said to the pastor, "If I get the money, I will give one-third to the church." The pastor replied, "How will you give one-third of this amount when you can't give one-tenth of what you now earn?" It's not what we would do if we had much money – it's what we are doing with what we now have! Do what you can. No one else might notice it but God keeps records and knows all secrets.

Some people give to the needy out of pity with no thought of personal reward for doing so. In Matthew, Chapter 25, Jesus spoke of godly people who gave Him food and drink when He was hungry and thirsty; they gave Him shelter and clothing in His time of need; they gave their time to visit Him when sick and in prison. And those holy people will one day respond: "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give you drink?" And Jesus the King will reply: "I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me!"

A British soldier was blinded in battle. He was an accomplished musician and spent much of his time in the hospital playing the piano for the wounded. He always put his heart into his playing, hoping the music would encourage the men. One day when he finished a number, someone clapped energetically. The soldier asked, "Who are you?" He was astonished when the man replied, "I am your king!" The king had come to encourage those who had been wounded for their country. Without realising it, this young man had been using his talent to entertain the king.

In 1 Peter, Chapter 4, it says: "Each one, as a good manager of God's different gifts, must use for the good of others the special gift he has received from God." When it come to the end of life the question will be: "How much have you given?" not "How much have you gathered for yourself?" If a person first gives himself or herself to the Lord, all other giving is easy. Eternal greatness is always in terms of giving and not getting.

Not only are people to give of their earnings, gifts and good deeds for others, their supreme gift is to bring their whole self to Christ as a living sacrifice each day. In Romans, Chapter 12, Paul says: “Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to His service and pleasing to Him. This is the true worship that you should offer. Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God – what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.”

The stories of missionaries’ lives often show hardship and lack of what we would consider necessities, troubles and difficulties. But their natures often show inner peace because they are fully committed to doing God’s will and giving themselves to God. In past centuries, new missionaries had problems in just getting to their mission field. Then they had hostility from the climate and environment and sometimes, the people they were to work among. Others lost their lives after only a short time while some soldiered faithfully on for many years. But all will receive their reward from God.

In Mark, Chapter 9, the Lord Jesus said that anyone who gives you a cup of water in His name, because you belong to Him, will receive a reward. In Galatians, Chapter 6, we are encouraged to do good to all as we have the opportunity to so, but especially to those who are of the household of faith. The giving of the Christian is to reflect the generous giving of God.

A prominent Bible teacher writes that the maturity of Christians can be measured by both the way and attitude with which they give to the Lord’s work. H suggests these classifications:

- ❖ Infancy is marked by non-giving, as illustrated by the man who hoarded his wealth in Luke 12.
- ❖ Kindergarten level is characterised by impulse giving, such as Zacchaeus.
- ❖ Elementary is legalistic giving, as described in Luke 11.

- ❖ Christians at a ‘secondary level’ of maturity are like those at high school and give in keeping with honest management, like the steward in Luke 16.
- ❖ Higher levels mature into love giving, as is seen in the poor widow in the Temple.
- ❖ The graduate level of giving is faith giving, based on Luke 12. These people give sacrificially, gladly and by faith, trusting God to meet their needs.

In 2 Corinthians, Chapter 9, it says: “Let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

A young guest preacher was visiting a church and during the offering, an usher came up to the platform and pushed the offering plate in front of him. In stead of pulling a one dollar note out of his wallet he only found his last 10 dollar bill. His heart sank as he saw the bulk of his financial resources disappearing into the church’s finances.

Not only that, the church treasurer failed to give him any pay for his services that day. On the way back home, the preacher lamented to his young wife about what had happened. In stead of sympathising with him, she laughed and said, “And just think – the Lord will give you credit only for the one dollar. That’s all you meant to give!”

A writer said: “If you ever give something to get something, you’re not giving, in the true sense of the word: You’re trading!”

The more God has given to us the more He expects of us. Luke Chapter 12, Verse 48b, says: “Much is required from the person to whom much is given.”

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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