



April 2013

Dear friends,

This week I received the following letter from a friend and with her permission we share it with you...

Sofa with a sleeper. Smart phones. Matching Nightstands. Patio table with chairs for homeschooling lunches and messy science projects. Additional bookcase for schoolroom. A flat-screen for living room. Violin lessons and/or piano lessons for kids. Annual trip to Guatemala. This has been my focus in the recent months (and years). In January and February, we were just waiting for tax money/bonus to come in so we would not be living so tight and I hoped to possibly get some things off my wish list.

The tax return unexpectedly went to an old debt of mine and we did not pay off the car like we had planned. (Anyone else think Jesus would come back before paying off their student loans???) Paul got his bonus and we sighed with relief.... we spent some on miscellaneous, Paul's parent's 50th anniversary, new sheets for us and much needed running/fitness shoes for Paul and Sue. In my journal from early March, I confessed my sin of materialism and He revealed to me my sin of wanting more... thought I knew all my issues but this one surprised me.

*Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have,
because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*

Hebrews 13:5

Last Monday night, Paul and I had a heart to heart, somewhat productive conversation about money, tone of voice, respect, attitude, etc... I felt like he was being selfish with his/our money and he thought that I did not respect him as a provider... both lies from the enemy. Paul also said that "we actually are more unified when we have nothing or very little extra." We decided to stand back-to-back as we approached a crazy week with the 50th anniversary tea, family, additional kids, and agreed to resume our talk later.

Wednesday rolls around and we are doing okay.... then Jane texts me that she wants us to pray about giving \$5k to Africa. I thought "say what? Doesn't she know we are barely making it? Doesn't she know Paul's car is 12 years old? Not to mention needs/wants like smart phones, kid's tuition and Guatemala mission trip... I WANT x,y,z?" said in my best spoiled 3-year old voice.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

1 John 2:15, 16

I sent Jane's text to Paul... he and I both felt punched in the gut and distracted for the rest of the day. We did not say "no way," we were not even surprised that God would direct us to give His money away, we were trying to accept the fact that we are called to radically sacrifice, not radically want or radically save. I even said "why did He not call us to give it to our friend's adoption or another ministry we love??" Would it be easier if we personally knew the people who would hold the check and spend the money? Wanting to get over myself, I pulled up one of our pastor's sermons and he just so happened to mention Africa like a dozen times... as he likes to say, God's got this whole thing rigged.

Today, I had the privilege to write a check from our family to purchase 1/4 of a bus for a ministry in South Africa. Are we a Pharisee who announces "our" sacrificial gift? Hope not, but we need your prayer so I am sharing our journey. He directed us, and only in His strength are we able to be obedient and mostly cheerful. I ask that you pray because we have a lot of joy but also some fears. What if we don't make enough money this year? What if Paul's car passes away? What if I continue to struggle with materialism or dissatisfaction of our blessings? On the other hand, what if 2 or 10 or 20 men and women in Africa accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior? What if God uses that bus to declare His glory to the nations? What if we get over ourselves and only live and spend for His kingdom?? What if Paul and I are forever like-minded with finances from here on? What if, indeed.

Please pray that we will be more cheerful than fearful and trust Him in all things. We thank you for being part of our community....the good, the bad, the grateful and the sinful. Mucho love and appreciation!

*Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give,
not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
2 Corinthians 9: 7*

What about you? What about me? Are we cheerful givers, obeying God for His best for us? Or are we selfish, consumed with our wants, when in most cases, we have all that we need? Today consider the heart of a fellow sister and the trust journey God is taking her family on. Ponder their obedience. Praise God for their faith. Ask God what He has for you. He has more, more than we can imagine. All we need is the faith of a mustard seed.

Listen to the still small voice of our loving Father and choose to obey Him, no matter what it costs.

All for Jesus,

Hebrews 13:16 "And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."