

Giving^{as} WORSHIP

BY MICHAEL J. DOWLING

What do you think of when you hear the word “worship”?

Do you visualize a church service with hymns and songs of praise? That’s an accurate picture, but incomplete.

Mark 14:3-9 and John 12:1-7 tell us about another kind of service of worship that occurred shortly after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. As our Lord was dining in the home of Simon the Leper, Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, took a jar of expensive perfume, poured it on Jesus’ feet, and wiped His feet with her hair.

Talk about extravagant giving! That perfume was worth about a year’s wages. But even more impressive than the pouring of the perfume was the way Mary poured out her heart. What an amazing demonstration of reverence and love!

Is your giving, like Mary’s, an act of worship?

We serve a God who gives lavishly. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son . . .” (John 3:16 NIV). The more we appreciate the magnitude of God’s generosity to us, the more we will want to spontaneously worship Him with our giving.

Mary’s gift was a jar of expensive perfume. What do you have to give? Let’s consider some possibilities:

Your Body

In Romans 12:1 the Apostle Paul writes, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship” (NIV). How can you offer your body to God in worship?

One way is to care for it. Eat wholesome foods. Ingest pure thoughts, especially Scripture. Get plenty of sleep and exercise.

Another way is to make your body available for God’s Kingdom purposes. Put it in places that are pleasing to him, and keep it—including your eyes—away from situations that aren’t. Use the members of your body—your hands, your feet, your mind, your eyes—in service to God on behalf of others.

Your Money

Judas scolded Mary: “Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” But Jesus in rebuke said, “Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for me” (Mark 14:4-6 NKJV).

The last two words in the preceding sentence—“for me”—are key. Do you give your money first to the Lord before giving it to your church, parachurch ministries, individuals, secular charities, scholarships, and other worthwhile needs? In 2 Corinthians 8:5 Paul

commended the Macedonian churches because they “*first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God*” (NKJV). That’s the right priority for all giving.

Your Time

Many people—especially financially successful people—find it more difficult to part with their time than with their money. Jesus was always about His Father’s business (see Luke 2:49). But, as Paul warns Timothy (see 2 Timothy 2:4), we can get so entangled in the affairs of this world that we’re not available for God’s purposes.

What is God asking you to do with your time? Visit the elderly? Teach a Sunday school

knowing it” (NIV). When my wife’s mother was in her late sixties and a widow, she invited two young single women to live with her. They enriched her life immeasurably. In fact, God used them to bring her to faith in Christ. Maybe they weren’t angels, but they were pretty close!

Your Possessions

The Holy Spirit may not prompt you to give a jar of perfume, as He did Mary, but what about some of your other possessions? For example, do you have a car you could use for transporting the elderly and children? Do you have a vacation home that a minis-

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class? Participate in a prison ministry? Serve on a ministry team? Reach out to your neighbors? Host an international student? Work with youth? Read to a blind person? Spend more time with your family? Ask Him for guidance with a willing spirit.


Your Home

You (and the bank) don’t really own your house. God does! So be a good steward of your home, just as you are with your other resources. Invite people—especially people who live alone—for meals. Honor the Lord by hosting Bible studies and social gatherings, taking in a foster child, and whatever else He leads you to do.

Hebrews 13:2 says, “*Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without*

ter’s family could use?

Perhaps you have a piece of land, a business, or some other asset you could give for Kingdom work. Christian financial experts, such as the National Christian Foundation, can help you structure your gift so that you can continue to use it even as it is working for the Kingdom.

Submit all of your stewardship decisions to God. Ask Him to make your giving, like Mary’s, extravagant, joyful, and worshipful. 



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