

Chapter X: Finances and Giving

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Chapter X: Finances and Giving

"Put this money to work," he said, "until I come back." (Lk 19:13b)

A. Prosperity: For The Whole Man

"Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well." (3Jn 2, NIV)

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." (3Jn 2, KJV) 'even as your soul prospers'

In this text the word "prosper" (in Greek, "evodoo") literally means "to help on the road" or "succeed in reaching." It clearly implies that divine prosperity is not a passing phenomenon but an ongoing state of success and well-being. It is intended for every area of our lives: the spiritual, the physical, the emotional and the material. However, God does not want one to unduly emphasise anyone area, it's better we that maintain a balance.

A.1. Spiritual Prosperity

See Lk 4:18 and Lk 6:27-38.

A.2. Mental Prosperity

See Php 4:6.

A.3. Physical Prosperity

Health: see 1Pe 2:24, Mk 16:15-20 and Jas 5:16.

Wealth: see 2Co 9:8, Lk 6:38 and Eph 6:8.

B. Giving

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Lk 6:38)

"In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Ac 20:35)

" 'Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,' says the LORD Almighty. " 'But you ask, "How are we to return?"

There is a universal law of reciprocity (*mutual trade or exchange*): when you plant a seed the ground yields a harvest, when you put money in the bank the bank returns interest. How can you expect God to honour your desire when you have not honoured His command to live a lifestyle of generosity.

There are various expressions of giving in Scripture.

B.1. Tithes OT v NT

NT. This is when a proportion (2 Cor 9:7 *'you must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure'*) of your income is given to your church.

OT. The principle of proportionate giving predates mosaic law (see Ge 14:20: Abraham gives to Melchizedek, the king. In Ge 28:20-22 Jacob makes a vow to God that he will give one tenth of what God gave him.) The Old Testament law enforcing tithing is found in Lev 27:30-33. Tithing, however, is part of ethical law and not part of ceremonial law and thus still applies today. Jesus approved of tithing as can be seen in Mt 23:23 and Lk 18:12.

One can see from the above that tithing is not a law issue it's a heart issue. It predated and existed before the mosaic law, nevertheless Jesus emphasised the importance of living generously. To be radically and outrageously generous.

It is a biblical requirement and pattern that people who minister must be financially supported by those who receive the ministry. In the Old Testament God commanded that the Levites should receive the tithe because they were special servants of the Lord (Nu 18:21-24). They were not given a special inheritance such as land or animals, nor were they given wages.

Jesus was supported by grateful people such as women in Lk 8:2-3 and Mt 27:55.

He did not provide for His and His disciples needs by supernatural means. Judas was His treasurer and looked after gifts given to Jesus and His ministry.

Jesus said that the worker is worth his keep (Mt 10:9-10).

In Ac 4:35 we see that money was laid at the apostles' feet for distribution.

We are exhorted to share all good things with our instructors (Gal 6:6).

Paul was disappointed that the Philippians were the only church that supported him in the early days of his ministry (Php 4:15). Paul makes it clear that the Lord's money should be shared with those who are teaching and preaching the word of God (1 Ti 5:18). He argues that it is his right to reap a material harvest from those he serves spiritually. The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

"Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

"This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. Don't we have the right to food and

drink? Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living?

"Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? For it is written in the Law of Moses: 'Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.' This was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more?

"But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ. Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel." (1Co 9:1-15).

Paul did not use this right as he thought it would hinder their reception of the gospel (1Co 9:16-18). In fact, we see in quite a few scriptures (Ac 18:3, Ac 20:34, 1Co 4:12, 1Th 2:9, 2Th 3:8) that Paul was not ashamed of doing any sort of work that would help further the gospel. He did not want to be unduly dependent on others and be a burden to them.

We should tithe where we receive our spiritual blessing. The New Testament's teaching is that in normal circumstances each church should be self-supporting. The tithe was given on an annual basis in the Old Testament while on a weekly basis in the New Testament. It depends on when you receive a harvest. First fruits (that is, the first and best of your harvest)

In summary, by definition, *2 Cor 9:7 'you must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure'* the tithe is consecrated to God. A tithe is not given, it is paid. To say we "give" a tithe suggests that tithing is optional whereas Scripture indicates the exact opposite is true. This money is used for people in the service of God's work. 1Ti 5:17-18 says, "**The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.** For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,' and 'The worker deserves his wages.'"

B.2. Offerings

This money is to be used for "things." As an example, let's look at Ex 25:2 and Ex 25:8, "Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give." "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you." See

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also 1Ch 29:3-9, Mal 3:8, 2Co 8 and 2Co 9.

So, giving an offering is free-will giving, and it is given over and above tithing. The Bible teaches that God requires our tithes whereas He deserves our offerings.

In summary, we use offerings for "things" while tithing is used for "people." An example of where offerings are used is the purchase of sound equipment and the maintenance of our church's building as well as operational costs and running expenses.

B.3. Alms/Mercy giving (*Charity and mercy gifts for the poor*)

Almsgiving is giving specifically to the poor. "All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do." (Gal 2:10) "For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem." (Ro 15:26)

There are numerous other scriptures supporting this category of giving:

• Mt 6:1-4	Giving to the needy.
• Mt19:21	Selling your possessions and giving to the poor.
• Lk 3:11	Those with much sharing with those who have none.
• Ac 2:44-45, 4:32	All believers sharing their possessions with each other.
• Ac 11:27-30	Giving gift to the elder to administrate.
• Ro 12:8	Contributing to the needs of others.
• Eph4:28	Working to have something to share with those who have none.
• Jas 2:14-17	Giving as an expression of good deeds accompanying our faith.
• 1Jn3:17	Having pity on those who are in need.

We believe our family (1Ti 5:8) and the needy in our church have priority in receiving alms. It is wiser to give food, clothing and shelter rather than money.

B.4. Apostolic Giving

As a church we tithe to Freedom Hill Cluster which is in relationship to COTN (Church of the Nations) and other translocal ministries, and each member is encouraged to do the same, including blessing those who plant churches.

B.5 Missions

This is giving our money towards the extension of God's kingdom into the nations. We should contribute generously to His purpose of world evangelism. We are co-workers with God (1Co 3:9). We are to be helping Him carry out His plan of redeeming the world. We should see our giving going out all over the world, carrying the truth to the nations. Paul the apostle said to the Philippian church in Php 4:18, "I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God."

B.6. General Giving (Lifestyle Of Generosity)

We serve a wonderfully generous God. We need to reflect this in living a **lifestyle of generosity**. There are numerous passages in Scripture exhorting us to **live generously**. "It is more blessed to give than receive." (Ac 20:35b) The early believers in Ac 2:45 shared all their possessions and no one had any need.

"All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need." (Ac 4:32-35)

B.6. God Is Not In Need

"I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens,
for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.

"I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine".

"If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it." (Ps 50:9-12)

" 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the LORD Almighty." (Hag 2:8)

God does not need our money. The gold is His, the silver is His, the cattle on a thousand hills are His, and, as it so happens, God says that even the thousand hills are His. When we give, we give to the Lord, not to men (2Co 8:5), not because the Lord needs it, but **to remind ourselves that it belongs to Him** (Dt 8:18, Dt 15:15, Dt 24:17). We work because God created us to work, not because God is unable to provide or because God is desperate for our finances. (We do not need to compromise our spiritual involvement in the church so that we can" earn more to tithe more," as if God needed your money more than your heart. God does not *you're*

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your money to advance His kingdom, He needs people who are willing to say 'yes')

B.7. Practical Hints

- Tithe on your income to your local church
- The tithe must be first-fruits harvest or other income.
- Reference your generosity clearly so the Elders know how to administer and distribute it.
- Never give out of manipulation, but rather out of conviction. God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor 9:6 - 8). Don't give reluctantly or under pressure.
- Think before giving a pledge as this should always be honoured.

B.8. Summary

The spirit of the New Testament is to be generous givers on all occasions (a mindset and lifestyle of giving). "I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. "They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed. (Ps 37:25-26)

"Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice." (Ps 112:5)

"A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." (Pr 11:25)

"A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor." (Pr 22:9)

See also 2Co 9 and 1 Tim 6:18.

C. Giving And Christian Finances

When we give our lives to Christ, He becomes our Lord and saviour. This means not only has He saved us from eternal damnation, but He is Lord- of our lives. In other words, everything we have is His: all we have belongs to the Lord, we are stewards'. Scripture says a lot about our responsibilities in dealing with our finances and material possessions. Money is mentioned more than 750 times in the Scriptures and half of Jesus' parables involve money. Approximately 1/6 of the New Testament deals with money, greed and related issues. God's care and provision for those He loves is seen in numerous ways (Mt 6:25-33). We believe that God is our provider and not man.

"Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Mt 6:25-33)

C.1. Money Is Not Evil

"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." (1Ti 6: 10a) It is the love of money and greed that is evil and not money itself. Money is neutral and can be used for both good and evil. We need wealthy, Kingdom- minded Christians who seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness (Mt 6:33). Being wealthy is not evil, but a blessing. What is important to God is what you do with your money and how you make it (Clive Pick put it this way: "God is more interested in our financial maturity than our financial comfort"). In the Old Testament, wealth was a blessing for obedience while poverty was a curse for disobedience (Dt 28).

1Ti 6:17-19 gives instructions to the wealthy. Wealth is relative and we are commanded to be responsible with our riches. We cannot serve both God and money (Lk 16:13). There are two ways to get enough: one is to accumulate more and the other is to desire less. Money has no eternal value and does not guarantee success in life. It is more important to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal." (Mt 6:19-20)

"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (Php 4:11-13)

"The blessing of the LORD brings wealth, and he adds no trouble to it." (Pr 10:22) See also Pr 8:17-21.

C.2. Finances And Faithfulness

What we do with our money is one of the measures God uses to test if we are faithful: to determine who is qualified to handle spiritual riches: "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So, if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you

with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?" (Lk 16:10-12). If we are faithful with the little we can be trusted with more - read the parable of the talents in Mt 25:14-30:

" Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

"After a long time, the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.'

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

"The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.'

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

"Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

"His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

" Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' "

Remember that whoever sows generously will also reap generously (2Co 9:6).

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D. Rewards For Obedience

God honours obedience before sacrifice (I Sam 15:22). Whoever gives according to God's instructions will receive untold blessing and reward.

Remember Mal 3:10: God promises abundant blessing, both materially and spiritually. He will also protect our possessions (Mal 3:11, Dt 11:13-15, Dt 28:12) from our foes, pests, elements, powers and principalities. According to Mal 3:12, surrounding nations will see the fruit that comes from giving to a generous God. As individuals and families, people will be able to see the spiritual richness and blessing we receive. God's purpose for the Church is that we should be as a delightful land: a paradise of fruitfulness.

God's promise that He will pour out His blessing is conditional on us being obedient to His word and giving accordingly. This is the only situation in which Scripture tells us that we are able to test God (Mal 3:10).

See also Pr 19:17, Pr 25:22, Eze 44:30, Mt 5:43-48, Lk 6:35, Lk 12:33, Lk 14:12-14, Ro 12:13, Heb 13:2, 1Pe 3:9 and 3Jn8.

Jim Elliot, a missionary to the Auca tribe in the Amazon, said the following just before he was martyred at the age of 29: "He is no fool who gives away what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose."

NEEDS AND WANTS.

Some of us will ask God for something we need or want and even beg God for things we want and when He does not give it to us, we get **despondent, disappointed and unbelief** creeps into our hearts.

Heb 4:11 ... 'Unbelief will prevent you from entering God's rest' ...

Philippians 4:19

(NLT) "and this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from His glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus"

(Passion) "I am fully convinced that my God will fully satisfy every need you have, for I have seen the abundant riches of Glory revealed to me through Jesus Christ"

First comment on Phil 4:19 ... The promise is not that God would make us wealthy – that's often preached in the prosperity gospel and it's a total misunderstanding of the verse and context.

The church in Philippi was one of the **1st Jesus Communities** that were established after the Holy Spirit was poured out in **Acts 2**.

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Paul is in prison (1:7) when he wrote this letter to the church in Philippi, **to thank them** for the **generous financial gift**, they had collected and given to him.

We love generous hearts, and our desire is that we would continue to be a community that not only tithes as a lifestyle, but we also want to become an extremely generous community in every way.

We believe that all the resources we have – financial and the ability to produce wealth - comes from God and we have the privilege of stewarding what God has given us with a thankful heart to the glory of God.

And Paul says to the church in Philippi ... “just as you have supplied all I want; I pray that God will supply all you need” ... as VCC we thank you for your generosity and pray that God will supply all you need ...

Paul concludes this letter (NKJV) Phil 4:19 ... by saying ... **“And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus”** ... as you have been generous in your giving, we pray that God will be generous to you ... He also reminds the church that **God is our source, our provider and the one who sustains us.**

It's not because we are clever – it's because **“God chose to place His hand of blessing on your head”** Ps 139:5 ... and vs 16 says ... **“every day of my life was recorded in your book; every moment was laid out before a single day had passed”** ... God has already planned your tomorrow ... **the question is: are we going to ask God what He has planned for our tomorrow or are we going to go ahead and do what we have planned anyway, and then have the audacity to ask God to bless our plans?**

The promise Paul writes about in **Phil 4:19** is a promise from God to make every heavenly resource available to you **as you pursue the purposes and will of God for your life. The storehouses in heaven are stacked with everything you need to accomplish the will of God for your life.**

This promise is not a **get rich quick scheme** or a promise to **give you your dreams, hopes and desires**, nor does Paul insinuate that God will give you everything that you ask for, simply because you ask.

This promise in **Phil 4:19** is that you will have all the resources of heaven/whatever you need, to accomplish the will of God for your life.

Chpt 15:7 ... of John's gospel records Jesus saying ... **“but if you abide/remain in me, and my words abide/remain in you; you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted to you / and the Father will give it to you”** ... why would Jesus say that, and then our prayer for stuff is not answered?

Because we ask with wrong motives ... to ask with right motives we have to abide/remain in the word and the word must abide/remain in us ... then we can ask for whatever we want **to accomplish the will of God in our lives** in Jesus name, and God will give it to us ... because we ask with right motives ...

This is also **not a promise to give you wealth or health**, but the promise is for every resource in heaven to be made available to you to extend His kingdom ... **if you ask with the right motives and according to God's will for your life, it will be granted/given to you.**

MINISTRY OF GIVING

2 COR 8 & 9

Context

(Chpt 1-7) Paul addresses the conflict that the Corinthians had with him whereby they were rejecting Him because he was poor, he was often homeless and not such a good public speaker. They asked Paul to prove his credentials with letters of recommendations because they had become enamoured, fascinated and even besotted with the wealthier preaches, elevating their status with self-promotion. Paul says it's not his job to be impressive but rather to point people to Jesus who is impressive. He also goes on to say that they are proof of his leadership and his letter of recommendation, which has been written, by the Holy Spirit **(3:2-4)**, on their hearts as new covenant people and they should not need more proof than that.

Paul then goes on to compare the old covenant - that was mediated between God and Israel by Moses - to the new covenant that was mediated between God and the Corinthians by Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The old covenant was truly glorious, and it made Moses shine with the glory of God, but that glory soon faded, and the laws of that covenant were also ineffective in truly transforming Israel. The new covenant by comparison was even more glorious because the resurrected Jesus, is the glory of God, and He lives on forever with a never fading glory transforming the lives of those who accept and love Him.

Jesus' exaltation as King was done through His suffering and death on the cross. The cross also revealed God's plan for salvation (Jesus died for all) and it showed God's character and self-giving love. The cross also showed a new CRUCIFORM way of life – a life shaped by the cross - a life of sacrifice, and so Paul's says his life imitated the cross through his poverty, humility, suffering and struggles, for the benefit of others – to serve the Corinthians. He says, if they disapproved of his suffering then they also disapproved of Christ's suffering. Paul says in a passionate appeal, that his life is proof that he authentically represents the crucified and risen Christ.

(Chpt 8-9) Paul's heart is to see the Corinthians lives transformed and so he won't let go and addresses the topic of forgotten generosity.

Due to a famine the Christians in Jerusalem found themselves in poverty, and so Paul sets out and asks the churches – that he planted – to raise money, so they can send a **relief gift** to help the churches in Jerusalem.

The Galatians and Macedonians were thrilled to give – the privilege of giving – but the Corinthians amidst the **conflict** with Paul had not saved up money for this gift.

For Paul this is not really about money but rather that the Corinthians have not been transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ - which at its heart is a gospel of grace and generosity.

Paul reminds them that they know the Generous Grace of our Lord Jesus that even though He was rich – for their sake - He became poor, so that through His poverty they may become rich.**(8:9)**

Paul explains the story of the gospel using financial metaphors, that Jesus gave up His glorious honour and wealth and lowered Himself to die like a poor slave so that others who are poor through slavery to sin can be exalted and become '**Rich**' through '**God's Grace**'.

Paul saying, to be a Christian is to **become more generous** with your resources to help others.

Lifestyle of Generosity

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As a community of believers – part of our “values” is that **we are not spiritual consumers - we are spiritual contributors.**

We contribute or give to society – we don’t complain about stuff, nor do we ask, “what’s in it for me”?

The lifestyle we embrace as a family is that of **giving**, being generous with what we have freely received.

Generosity comes from a place of having something to give, and according to **2 Pet 1:3** ... **“we have been given everything we need for living a Godly life”** ... and so we really do have plenty to give.

Generosity for Christians is a lifestyle that includes our **Time, Talents and Treasures.**

Adopting a lifestyle of generosity is the culture of heaven. **John 3:16 for God so loved that he gave** ...

I don’t want us to have a distorted view on **money and giving** – many times the church has been guilty in the past of creating a wrong mindset around finances and generosity.

We often speak about **“on earth, as it is in heaven”** and since there is no lack in heaven, there should be ‘no lack’ for Christians here on earth.

We don’t agree with the **“name-it-and-claim-it”** theology (*then we’ll only see God as the one who blesses me*), nor do we want to accept **“lack as our portion in this life”** ... because God says **“pressed down, shaken together and overflowing into your lap”** ...

We want to help shift those who have a **poverty mindset** to having an **abundance mindset** that advances the Kingdom with what is in your hand.

(Ex 4:1-9) Moses’ protest was that he had no power and using what was in Moses’ hand, God gave a convincing demonstration of divine power – and God is asking today – “what is in your hand” because He wants to turn what you have in your hand into a convincing demonstration of His power.

Genesis 1 says **“the earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters”** ...

And ... God created the heavens and the earth ... and then he created humans and blessed us to rule and then He instructed us to **oversee** or **manage** His creation.

We have the privilege of managing the **gift of creation** to glorify God.

James 1:17 ... God is the owner of everything created - and so we believe that everything **created** belongs to God and you and I have the privilege of managing that which we have freely received.

Rom 11:36 ... **for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever** ... God does not share ownership – but He does assign responsibility.

Likewise with **salvation** - we **STEWARD WELL** the gift of eternal life by nurturing and appreciating that which we are responsible for ... **becoming Christ like**.

Spiritual maturity is my responsibility, so we don’t neglect the **gift of salvation**.

In the same way we **STEWARD WELL** our **Spiritual gifts** by using that which belongs to God to bring Him Glory.

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Gal 5 speaks about the **fruit of the Spirit** ... **v 16** says ... **let the Holy Spirit Guide your life** ... **V 22** says ... the **Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives** ... Love, joy, peace, goodness etc

I cannot generate more patience or goodness – but as I steward well my relationship with God and walk in close union with Holy Spirit – He produces **fruit of my stewardship**, in me.

Prophetic words need to be appreciated, accepted and nurtured because therein lies the preferred future that God has for us – Gods plans are for our **good and not for disaster; plans to give us a future and a hope Jer 29:11 – 12.**

John 17: 1 – 26 ... is a beautiful prayer Jesus prayed and we want to highlight 2 points from this portion of Scripture.

1. **Verse 4** ... **"I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do"** ...
2. **Verse 7-8** ... **"Now they know that everything I have is a gift from you, for I have passed on to them the message you gave me"** ...

Jesus fulfilled His mission here on earth by faithfully completing the work His Father gave Him to do and now, our responsibility is to faithfully complete the work God has given us to do **with the resources he has equipped us with.**

Some explanations and truths on managing /stewarding

1. Another word for steward is **overseer**
 - a. we are merely overseers of everything we have been given. From salvation to the clothes on our back, to our modes of transport, our finances, our spiritual gifts and our lives – all belong to God, and we have been given the responsibility to oversee the gifts and resources by using them to advance the kingdom.
2. In the Gospels, **Steward** is also defined as a **manager**. **Luke 16** Jesus tells the parable of the **unjust manager** who was wasting his employer's money:
3 observations:
 - a. **He was a free man** – just as we are today – free to make our own choices
 - b. **He had full charge of his master's affairs, and he chose to use what belonged to his Master to his own advantage.** We can either use the resources, treasures/finances and gifts/talents God has given us in a responsible manner to advance His kingdom or we take from God and use it for our own good.
 - c. **He was fully accountable to his master** and had to give an account when called upon and the same charge has been given to you and I today – **we are fully accountable to God for how we used the resources He gave us.** **2 Cor 5:10** says ... **we must all stand before the judgement seat of Christ – where we will receive what we deserve.** He will look at how much better off His Kingdom is:
 - i. How we used our **time, talents and treasures** for Him.
 - ii. We won't be able to exaggerate because He knows everything, and He's already seen it all.
3. Charles Bugg in the Holman Bible Dictionary defines stewardship as follows: **"Utilizing and managing all the resources God provides for the Glory of God and the advancement of His creation"** ... it's our obligation to manage and intelligently use the gifts and resources that God has given us to advance the kingdom.

- a. We have not **received all things** so that we can have a better life – we have been **given all things** so that we can advance the kingdom and help others in need with our time, talents and treasures.

It's selfish to think "I have worked hard, I deserve this" ... the only thing we deserved was separation from God because of sin, but through His mercy Jesus made a way for us to be reconnected with God – we owe Him everything.

Our language should be **"I have worked diligently to advance the kingdom of God with the resources and gifts God has given me"** ... that's the language of heaven

LAYING FOUNDATIONS

My cognitive ability, my strengths as an individual, my finances, my practical and natural resources, my marriage and my children, everything I own, or possess – **my time, talents and treasures** – are all a gift from God so that I have everything I need to advance His Kingdom and bring Glory to His name ... That's our mandate ...

I did not receive all things so that I can have a better life.

When my way of thinking is self-centred, and I have a selfish mindset - I treat God as the one who is there purely to supply my blessing.

Let's rather see God as the OWNER of all things and honour Him by using the gifts and resources he has given to us, to advance His kingdom.

Everything we have – everything we do with what we have is to advance His kingdom - We are called to **STEWARDS WELL** the gifts and resources God has given us and that includes our finances.

When we have the wrong mindset, we approach God as if the only role He plays in our life is **as a giver of blessing** and as a supplier of my needs.

Now that we know all things belong to God and that we have been given the privilege of using the gifts and resources to advance His kingdom let's look a bit closer at time, talents and treasures.

Treasures are anything of value – our possessions including our finances.

What we believe:

1. Money is a tool God gives us to accomplish His purposes.
2. We are stewards of what God has given us – we therefore simply take care of God's possessions.
3. We give not because of a command, but "**out of our own free will.**"
(2 Cor. 8:3).
4. Each one should give what he or she has "**decided in your heart.**"
2 Cor. 9:7
5. Each should give their best out of what they have.
(**Luke 21:1-4; 2 Cor. 8:12**)
6. Giving is an act of worship between you and God.
Remember that what you give is a direct reflection of how you view God.
7. *Giving is a measure of our love for God ...* **Matthew 6:19-21**
8. *Giving is an expression of our faith ...* **James 2:15-17**
9. *Giving more results in receiving more:*
 - a. **Give and it shall be given to you (Luke 6:38).**
10. *Giving should be done in secret:* **Matthew 6:1-4**
11. *Giving produces a willingness to work:* Believers should be willing to work in order to be able to give more (**Acts 20:33-35**).
12. Poverty is not an excuse not to give **2 Cor 8:1-2**
13. Giving is seen as a privilege of sharing **2 Cor 8:3-4**
14. Give yourself first to the Lord **2 Cor 8:5**
15. Christ is the example of a great giver **2 Cor 8:9**
16. What you sow you will reap (**2 Cor 9:6**)
17. God loves a cheerful giver (**2 Cor 9:7b**)
18. God will supply the giver's needs (**2 Cor 9:8-11**)
19. Giving is a form of worship of God (**2 Cor 9:12**).
20. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift (**2 Cor 9:15**).

What is God's unspeakable gift?

That God gave His own Son as a ransom for many.

➔ **Old Testament talks about giving to the Lord in 4 ways.**

Tithe (10%) **Gen 14:19 – 20** and **Lev 27:30**

It's a way of giving thanks for the blessings you have received, and it is usually given to your spiritual storehouse, where you are being spiritually fed.

The bible talks about bringing the tithe to the storehouse (**Deut 12:6**) not paying your tithe.

Tithe was a command (**Deut 12:11**)

Offering (*an amount you have determined to give in your heart*)

Offerings are a free will giving – over and above your tithe – and it's up to you how much and how often you want to give.

Alms/Mercy (*again, you determine what you want to give*)

Alms or mercy gifts are for those in the church community who are less fortunate than you.

You can give grain, money, clothes, livestock etc to help others.

Grain/First Fruits (*This is an offering to say thank you for any increase you have received and again you determine how much you want to give to say thank you God*).

- You may have received a salary increase at work
- You may have received a refund from the tax man
- You may have received interest on your investment or bank account
- Whatever you receive over and above your normal income the grain/first fruit offering is to say thank you.

➔ **New Testament brings a freedom and a greater challenge to our giving and Jesus' life is an example that giving is a culture of heaven ... John 3:16**

Remember before you were saved you did not like listening to anything Christian – after your heart was settled by God you could listen to Christian preaches and music.

If you're cringing when we talk about money, it just means that the issue has not been settled in your heart yet!

(Bill Johnson) In the OT, the blessing of God was seen in material wealth – Abraham, David, Solomon, Hezekiah – External blessing that God gave to change their hearts. Giving was a command to settle the heart. External blessings were received when they were obedient for an internal change.

In the NT it's an internal prosperity to change the external. The Kingdom is within you ... **3 John 2** ... that you would be in good health just as your soul prospers ... the extreme abundance I have received internally is to benefit others externally

OT outside in

NT inside out

NT teaches it's a heart issue for the benefit of others **Luke 16:9** ... **here's the lesson. Use your worldly resources to benefit others** ... once you've settled the money issue in your hearts, you will be happy to talk about it.

The essence of this teaching is this: Every resource and gift you have been given is to advance the Kingdom of God and give God glory.

LAYING FOUNDATIONS

What you have, has not been given to you so you can have an easy life, it's been entrusted to you, so that you will have everything you need for a Godly life, to advance His kingdom and bring Him Glory.

Lifestyle of Generosity (Part 2)

When we talk about a lifestyle of generosity we look to God as our perfect example – we see His generous nature reflected around us all day, and in our process of becoming Christlike, we begin to do what Jesus did and does, we begin to think like He thinks and, we begin to copy His example, faith rises in our hearts to say “ok, I can do that” ... and we begin to live the way Jesus lives ...

Ps 23 ... He “**prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemy**”, a never-ending supply of everything we need; that's how generous He is

If you need emotional stability – just sit at the table, He has prepared for you

If you need peace – just sit at the table, He has prepared for you

If you need answers – just sit at the table, He has prepared for you

If you need advice and perspective on any issue – just sit at the table, He has prepared for you

If you want to know your purpose, your calling, direction – just sit at the table He has prepared for you ... He is the perfect example of generosity

Settling the topic of money in your heart

Remember before you were saved you did not like listening to anything Christian – after your heart was settled by God you could listen to Christian preaches and music.

If you're cringing when we talk about money, it just means that the issue has not been settled in your heart, yet!

(Bill Johnson) In the OT, the blessing of God was seen in material wealth – Abraham, David, Solomon, Hezekiah – External material blessing that God gave to change their hearts.

Giving in the OT/OC was a command to settle the heart.

OT - External blessings was a reward for obedience

In the NT/NC it's the other way around.

It's an internal prosperity that you have been given - to change the external.

Luke 17: 21 says ... “**The Kingdom is within you**” ... **3 John 2** ... “**I hope that you are in good health just as your soul prospers**” ...

the extreme abundance I have received from God affects the heart internally and it is given to me is to benefit others externally

OT External blessing of material things to change the internal condition of the heart towards God.

NT internal blessing given (*not as a reward for being good*) to change the environment around me.

Giving in the OT was easier than it is now; it was boxed and structured as a command to obey – the parameters for giving were easier to obey

But the NT/NC the bar has been raised higher; not only does it include the 4 areas of giving noted in the OT, but now even more – to be generous with everything we have been given and to give out of our abundance with thankfulness and gratitude and see it as a privilege to give.

LAYING FOUNDATIONS

Internal blessing is a change of heart towards everything – my attitude to work, my view of marriage, income, gifts, resources, time, talents and treasures etc are all given to us to affect change externally – to benefit others.

Revelation of the goodness of God changes my perspective on life to the benefit of others.

The very gospel is to the benefit of others - just as your resources are to be used to benefit others

Luke 16:9 ... the parable of the shrewd manager Jesus said ... **“here’s the lesson. Use your worldly resources to benefit others.**

Luke 16:13 ... Jesus continues by saying ... **“you cannot serve two masters. You will hate the one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other ...**

Here’s another phrase by a well-known speaker ... If you find yourself despising messages on money in church, then you most likely have an idolatrous relationship with money ...

You see friends ... money is a heart issue

Remember the story about Moses when God asked him what was in his hand, and he used the staff to part the red sea ... what’s in your hand?

The gifts and resources in your hands friends have been given to you so that you have everything you need to - advance the kingdom

We either loyal to God or to the world.

In **Luke 16** Jesus says the “shrewd manager who is immoral, unjust, unreliable and an unfaithful steward who had authority to manage his masters’ possessions, abused his privilege and looked after his own future.

According to Jesus the man’s approach is immature ... because if you’re unfaithful with the little things (**money**) how could you be entrusted with the greater things (**Kingdom**).

Paul writes in **Heb 6:1 – 2** ... **Let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ ... Surely, we don’t need to start again with the importance of repenting from evil deeds** – what are evil deeds he’s referring to here? **Luke 16:8** ... **“Looking after yourself and having no concern for others”** Jesus considers them as evil deeds.

God places more emphasis on our character than our gifts.

Your heart is more important to God than your financial resources.

So, when the NT talks about settling the money issue in your heart, God knows that once you’ve done that, there’s no stopping your generosity. Now that’s a Kingdom Culture a Lifestyle of Generosity.

Another way of looking at it is in **Mark 4** ... **“With the measure you use, it will be measured to you”** you give a little, you receive a little.

So, giving in the NT is so much more than the command of the OT.

It starts with me settling the money issue in my heart so I can do all that God has planned for me with the resources He has given me.

Remember – we reap what we sow.

A few concluding stories

Mac Pier says in his book – **Disruptive Generosity** ... “One of the unique dimensions of money is that money can use the temporal stuff, to make an impact on the eternal”

LAYING FOUNDATIONS

Ray Nixon – a Dallas Market place Leader says ... “you cannot underestimate the importance of being placed in a strategic job and location” ... simply means you cannot underestimate the importance of the work you do and where you do it ... God has strategically placed us where we are as he needs us to advance His kingdom here and now – and then He gives us everything we need so we can be generous.

Don't wish you were somewhere else – ask God what He wants you to do “here and now” with what is in your hand.

Bob Doll – a presenter at MOVEMENT DAY (a catalyst organisation that encourages marketplace leaders to change their city) says these 4 things

1. Jesus spent more time talking about money and possessions than any other subject
2. Don't store up wealth on earth (**Matt 6:19**)
3. You can't take it with you. Send your wealth ahead. Pay it forward ...
4. Earth is not our home, and everything we have, God gave us even our cleverness

Final statements

God has graciously given us everything we need for a Godly life; He modelled generosity by giving us His son; How much more shouldn't we give our time, talents and resources out of gratitude and thankfulness to advance His kingdom.

Let us be a people, a community, who has settled giving in our hearts, and with faith sow wherever God asks us to.

Daily we face opportunities to be generous – and our choices reflect our view of God.

Giving is more than a 10% tithe – it's a lifestyle of generosity which we have the privilege of expressing on a daily basis and in every area of our lives.

Let us be a people who understand it all belongs to God anyway and we have been given the responsibility to **manage his possessions** to advance His kingdom.

Lastly, we're all farm managers ... given the responsibility to manage **His** possessions and it includes being wise with the natural resources we have:

- Looking after your money and investing well, paying your taxes and given with a cheerful heart
- Looking after your home and inviting people to share the joy with you
- Honouring your marriage vows and teaching others how to live a Godly marriage
- Looking after your family and making sure they're trained in the ways of the Lord
- Honouring God in your business by being upright and generous.
- Living a lifestyle of generosity – towards the church to advance the Kingdom

Giving is more than a 10% tithe – it's a **lifestyle of generosity** which we have the privilege of expressing on a daily basis in every area of our lives.

Additional notes on giving

Paul's principles on giving.

1. The Phil. Church's relationship with God and its desire to please Him was seen in their giving to the Saints. (**Phil. 4:10-16; II Cor. 8:4-5**).
2. Christians gave not because of a command, but “**of their own free will.**”

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(2 Cor. 8:3).

3. Christians sacrificed personal wants and needs to help meet the needs of others. (2 Cor.8:2, 3).
4. Their giving is called "...a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God." (Phil. 4:18).
5. Their sacrifices would be rewarded by their needs being met and by increased rewards in Heaven. (Phil. 4:17b, 19).

How much should we give?

1. Each one should give what he or she has "**purposed in their heart.**" 2 Cor. 9:7
2. Each should give their best out of what they have. (Luke 21:1-4; 2 Cor. 8:12)
3. *Each should give their first fruits. While not a command, it is a **principle** that is found in previous dispensations (Gen. 4, Ex. 13:11)*

When should we give?

1. Paul instructed the Corinthian church to take up a collection – weekly - on Sundays. Collecting monies on this day was probably based upon all the people being in one place at one time. (Acts 11:27-30; Rom. 15:25-27)
2. Whenever there is a recognizable need. (Phil. 4:15-16; James 2:14-16)
3. When it benefits the spreading of the gospel or ministry.

Where should we give?

1. The local church. (Acts 4:32-37).
2. To aged parents and grandparents. (1 Tim. 5:4).
3. To Missionaries. (Phil. 4:10-20).
4. To teaching Elders/Pastors/Teachers. (1 Cor. 9:14; 1 Tim. 5:17, 18).
5. To our needy family members and neighbours in society. (Luke 10:25-37; Gal. 6:10; 1 Tim 5:8)

Points to Ponder

1. Give eagerly and willingly. The Lord loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7).
2. Remember, what you do now with your monetary resources will echo in eternity.
3. ***We understand and practice all these principles as we steward God's gifts and resources.***

According to **James 1:17**, God owns everything because He is the Creator, Maker and Giver of all things — so when we give, we are merely giving back a portion of what belongs to God anyway.

Our stewardship towards God includes **everything that we have been given** and how we use it on behalf of the Lord and for the Lord's work.

We are stewards of the abilities, spiritual gifts, knowledge, money, in fact, everything that we have been given – and one day we will give account of what we did with what God gave us

Five Basic Principles

LAYING FOUNDATIONS

There are five basic principles of Biblical giving.

1. ***Giving is a measure of your love for God:*** **Matthew 6:19-21** teaches that we should lay up treasures in heaven, for where our treasure is, there your heart is also. If we lay up treasures in heaven, our heart will be on heavenly things.

1 Timothy 6:17-18 teaches that the rich should have their hope set on God and be ready to give out of their wealth. Believers must remember our hope is not on wealth, but on the Lord God (**Titus 2:11-14**).
1 John 3:17, if one does not give, then the question is, “Does the love of God abide in that person?”
2. ***Giving is an expression of one's faith:*** **James 2:15-17** teaches that the believer's faith becomes useful when it is expressed through works. The work of giving therefore shows your faith. The believer is not saved by works but shows his or her faith through their works.
3. ***Giving more results in receiving more:*** This is not a license for the name-it-and-claim-it movement, but simply to say that the believer can never out-give God. This is a promise from God: **Give and it shall be given to you (Luke 6:38)**. **Philippians 4:15-19** teaches that God will supply the believer's needs (not 'wants').
4. ***Giving should be done in secret:*** **Matthew 6:1-4** says that giving should be done in secret, not for show. Keep your giving between you and God.
5. ***Giving produces a willingness to work:*** The believer should be willing to work in order to be able to give more (**Acts 20:33-35**).

Principles Found in 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

Paul deals with eight points relating to giving in **2 Corinthians 8:1-15**.

First, poverty is not an excuse not to give. Look at the Macedonians: out of their poverty they still practised grace giving (**2 Cor 8:1-2**).

Second, giving is an opportunity to be sought and chased after! (**2 Cor 8:3-4**). **Third**, give yourself first to the Lord (**2 Cor 8:5**).

Fourth, giving is proof of your love of God (**2 Cor 8:6-8**).

Fifth, Christ is the example of a great giver (**2 Cor 8:9**).

Sixth, be willing to make a pledge and more willing to fulfil it if God provides (**2 Cor 8:10-11**).

Seventh, give willingly (**2 Cor 8:12**). Our willingness makes it acceptable to God. However, if we give grudgingly, it may help the one who receives it, but it does not put the giver in good standing before the Lord. It is better not to give than to give grudgingly.

Eighth, do not give to the point of poverty but to the point of equality (**2 Cor 8:13-15**).

Principles Found in 2 Corinthians 9:6-14

Paul provides seven principles relating to giving in this passage.

First, what you sow you will reap (**2 Cor 9:6**). If you sow bountifully, you will reap bountifully (but the inverse is also true: if you sow sparingly...).

Second, give as you purposed in your heart to give, but not grudgingly (**2 Cor 9:7a**).

Third, God loves a cheerful giver (**2 Cor 9:7b**). Giving should be done with a cheerful attitude, even hilariously (the Greek word means “hilarious”).

Fourth, God will supply the giver's needs (**2 Cor 9:8-11**).

Fifth, giving is a form of worship of God (**2 Cor 9:12**).

Sixth, a believer's giving is proof of one's love for God and it brings glory to God (**2 Cor 9:13**).

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Seventh, giving is a form of fellowship with other believers who are not present (2 Cor 9:14).

Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift (2 Cor 9:15).

What is God's unspeakable gift?

The gift that God gave was His own Son, who became poor so that believers might become spiritually rich. That is the greatest gift that God can provide. God provided salvation, but it cost Him something; it cost Him the life of His Son. The giving of believers may cost us something, but just as God's sending His Son was a measure of His love for the world (John 3:16), so we should be proving our love for God by giving as well.