

USING MONEY FOR GOD'S GLORY

2 Corinthians 9:6-11

It is the main subject in nearly half the parables Jesus told. In addition, one out of every seven verses in the New Testament deals with the topic. What is the subject? **Money.**

[1] MONEY AND THE BELIEVER

The Bible certainly has a lot to say about the believer and his money. While Scripture offers about 500 verses on prayer, and fewer than 500 on faith, there are more than 2,000 verses on money! Perhaps that is why the early Church placed such a high priority on giving. In **Acts 2:45** we read that they **"sold their possessions and good, and divided among all, as anyone had need."**

The early Church looked out for one another and invested financially in what God was doing. Unfortunately, the concept of giving today has become somewhat distorted. On the one hand, we have those who tell us that we must take "faith vows" and send in our "seed money" so that God may prosper us. On the other hand, we have those who see no need to regularly give of their resources to God.

Yet, this aspect of our lives tells a great deal about our spirituality. You can tell a lot about a person by taking a tour of his checkbook. It reveals that individual's real value system. Jesus Himself said, **"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21).**

It is sometimes said that we should give until it hurts. But Jesus teaches that it should hurt when we cease to give, or if we are giving for the wrong reasons. This illustration speaks to our real motive in giving.

Illustration:

Sometimes our generosity comes from mixed motives. It seems that some vandals had cut down six royal palms along Miami's Flagler Street. Since the palms were very expensive, Dade County authorities weren't sure if they could replace them very soon. But then someone donated six more and even had them planted. The old ones had been about fifteen feet tall and provided a nice foreground for a "Fly Delta" billboard. The new palms are thirty-five feet tall--completely hiding the sign. The new donor: Eastern Airlines.

[2] GIVING: A REAL TEST OF FAITHFULNESS

Jesus said, **LUKE 16:11-12** ***"Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"***

12 "And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?"

To God, the faithful giver is one who understands that he is not the owner, but the steward of his resources. Martin Luther once said that three conversions are necessary: the conversion of the heart, the mind, and the purse (or wallet).

PROVERBS 3:9-10 ***Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; ¹⁰ so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.***

PROVERBS 11:24-25 ***There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. ²⁵ The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.***

Let us look at some Biblical Principles of Giving as they relate to our stewardship (oikonomos, primarily denoted "the manager of a household or estate").

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES ON GIVING

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

1. OUR MOTIVE IN GIVING IS IMPORTANT.

"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver"- 2 Corinthians 9:7

The word for "cheerful" in this verse could also be translated "hilarious." We should give hilariously, joyfully--not out of mere duty or guilt. As Jesus said,

"It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

2. AS WE GIVE, GOD WILL GIVE TO US.

2CORINTHIANS 9:8-10 ***And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work.***

⁹ As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness remains forever."

¹⁰ Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,

God promises that if we have the right attitude and are generous, He will bless us. In reality, if our financial condition is bad, it could be because, in a sense, we have reaped what we have sown (we've sown little, we've reaped little).

"With what confidence can we ask the Lord for more substance if we have not honored Him with the substance we've already been given? What we withhold, withers, but what we scatter, gathers. What we lay aside spoils, but what we release, returns. If we fulfill another's needs, God will fill our needs!" --J. H. Pickford

This truth is conveyed many times in the pages of Scripture:

- ***"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."*** -Luke 6:38
- ***"Honor the Lord from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine."*** --Proverbs 3:9-10
- ***"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."***--Philippians 4:19

Let us not misunderstand this great truth. Some people think that they can "ask" or "claim" anything their greedy, little heart may desire. Philippians 4:19 does not say, "God will supply all your "greeds" or even your "wants" or "desires." That is because God knows that for some, too much materially could hurt them spiritually.

Agur, the writer of **Proverbs 30:9**, insightfully describes the relationship of one's material status to one's walk with the Lord:

"Give me neither poverty or riches, feed me with the food you prescribed for me, lest I DENY you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of the Lord."

3. OUR GIVING SHOULD BE SACRIFICIAL

The context of this familiar promise of God supplying our need in Philippians is significant. At the time Paul penned those words, the Philippian believers had just helped Paul in his hour of need. They believed that love should not just be in word, but also in deed. So, they had given Paul a financially sacrificial gift. As a result, they had a need. Their need was not created by bad stewardship or an unwillingness to work, nor by extravagance or foolish spending. Instead, it came from a heartfelt desire to assist a fellow brother in Christ in his work for the Lord.

Because their hearts were right, Paul assured them--and all believers--that God would indeed supply their needs. **God would not be their debtor.**

Some may say, "I can't afford to give!" In reality, you can't afford not to give. David said that he would not give to the Lord that which cost him nothing (2 Samuel 24:24).

2 SAMUEL 24:24 Then the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

Generosity is not measured by the size of the gift itself, but by its size in comparison to what the individual possesses.

The widow who gave two mites to the temple treasury gave more than the many rich people who gave large sums because, as Jesus said, ***"They put in out of their surplus, but one, out of her poverty, put in all she owned"- Mark 12:44***

Some might say, "If I had a million dollars, I would give more to the Lord." But that is not necessarily true. It is all relative. The person who has a million could easily say, "If I just had ten million . . ."

The question God would have for us is this: What are you doing with what I have given to you? Are you being faithful with that?

When we read that God promises to meet our needs, that does not mean that we can strike a bargain with God, in which as we give to God, He must give back to us in a multiplied way. That would be "giving to get." God will not honor that type of giving because it comes from an impure motive. Instead, we should give because God has so graciously and generously given to us. As Christians, we have received the gift of forgiveness and the hope of eternal life. Other's may have also received the healing of a marriage or the mending of a home. And you have received it from the Lord "free of charge." We should give because we have received.

Read Matthew 6:1- 4

THE RIGHT AND WRONG WAYS TO GIVE TO GOD

We can miss the boat on giving in a number of ways: We can not give at all--or give sporadically, at best--and disobey God, missing many of His special blessing in our lives. We can give, but have the wrong motives.

THE WRONG WAY TO GIVE . . .

The latter is the case in this passage of Scripture. Verse two says, ***"When you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly I say to you, they have their reward."***

The word "reward" in this verse means "paid in full and receipted." In other words, if you give financially or of your time or do something in such a way as to draw attention to yourself, you have already received your reward.

THE RIGHT WAY TO GIVE . . .

God wants us to give with the right motive. Jesus explains, "***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***" (vv. 3-4).

In that particular culture, the right hand was considered the primary "hand of action." In a normal day, many things would be done with the right hand that would not involve the left. The idea here is to do our giving quietly, not proclaiming it, announcing it, or bragging about it.

We should also give in secret--no matter what kind of gift it is. Whether you give of your finances, in faithful prayer, or by serving in Sunday School or some unknown region in the mission field, it should be done unpretentiously, with no thought of recognition or appreciation. Then, your Father who sees you in secret will reward you openly.

It comes down to this: **if we remember, God will forget; but if we forget, God will remember.** We need to leave the bookkeeping to God, realizing that "we have only done that which we ought to have done."

OUR GIVING REVEALS OUR TRUE PRIORITIES

In the Old Testament, the Prophet Haggai addresses the needs of the people as they lamented about the fact that no matter how much they made, it was never enough.

God then reveals to them that their real problem is not material but spiritual.

They had experienced a spiritual breakdown. While they had plenty of money for their own needs, they had nothing left for the work of God and the maintenance of His temple. God said, *"You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it"* (Haggai 1:6). God reproves the people for thinking only about themselves and not about His work or the needs of others.

God goes on to tell these people, *"What you brought home, I blew away. Why? Because of My house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house"* (Haggai 1:9). The people's improper priorities, their selfishness, and their failure to seek to please God caused their lives to be out of balance, frustrating and unfulfilling.

The giving issue is but the outgrowth of a life that is right with God.

We need to discover the joy of giving--sacrificially, hilariously, regularly and quietly. Remember, God is not asking us to give because He needs our resources. The whole world is at His disposal! In essence, He is challenging us to make Him the focus of our loves, rather than our money and possessions. Then, as we express our love to God by freely giving him a portion of our resources, He will tangibly display His faithfulness to us in return.

10 REASONS WHY IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE

The most unbelieved beatitude in the Bible is: ***"It is more blessed to give than receive"*** (Acts 20:35). The giver happier than the getter? Surely some mistake? That goes against all our intuitions and instincts. So let me help you to believe it and act upon it by giving you ten reasons why it is more blessed to give than to receive.

1. Giving obeys God's command

The Old Testament has way more commands about financial giving – who, when, and how much – than the New Testament. Maybe the New Testament writers just assumed that as God had given far more to us in the New Testament – giving Himself to death – that our giving should follow fairly logically and easily. But, just in case we might miss the link, there are clear New Testament commands also (e.g. 1 Corinthians 1:2). As all of God's commands are given to enhance our lives, obeying this command will increase our happiness.

2. Giving submits to God's Lordship

Every act of obedience recognizes that there is a higher authority in our lives, that there is a Lord over us who is entitled to honor and respect. Due to our temperament, personality, or circumstances, we may find some commands relatively easy to obey. Our submission is really tested in the areas where our own nature and situation make obedience more difficult. For most of us, money is one of those areas. Our wallet is often the last citadel to fall to God's rule, and even when it does fall, it gets rebuilt and re-secured again all too quickly. If only we could remember that Divine Lordship is not a threat; rather it's the place of greatest safety.

3. Giving exhibits God's heart

God is THE giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). As His image-bearers we are called to copy His giving, to be mini-pictures of His infinitely large heart. The larger our hearts (and the wider our hands), the larger the picture we paint of God's character. What do people think of God when they think of the way you use your money?

4. Giving illustrates God's salvation

At the heart of the Gospel is sacrificial self-giving (John 3:16). That's why when the Apostle Paul wanted to encourage the Corinthians to give more, he pointed them to the person and work of Christ.

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 2:9). Yes, you abound in faith, love, etc., but “see that you abound in this grace also.” When we give sacrificially, painfully, for the benefit of others, we are faintly and on a small-scale preaching the Gospel message.

5. Giving trusts God’s provision

The biggest deterrent to giving is fear, the fear that if I give away too much I won’t have enough for this or that. When we give sacrificially, above and beyond what is comfortable and easy, we are expressing our faith and trust in God to provide for us and our family. This is not an argument for folly, but for faith. Many Christians have discovered the joy of casting their crumbs of bread upon the waters and multiple loaves returning after many days (Ecclesiastes 11:1). It’s such a joy to see God fulfill His promise of provision when we obey Him.

6. Giving widens God’s smile

The Lord loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 2:7). It delights Him to see His people gladly opening their hearts and hands to provide for the needs of His Church and indeed of all His creatures. Through Paul, God repeatedly commends and praises those who gave of their funds and of themselves to Gospel work (2 Corinthians 8:1). There’s nothing that makes a Christian happier than knowing that she’s made God happy, and happy giving means a happy God.

7. Giving advances God’s kingdom

Many of us have contributed to Apple in one way or another. We have helped to grow the company from a garage operation to the worldwide empire it is today. And I’m happy about that, as it’s a company that has brought many blessings to the world. But think of what blessing results when we fund the mission of Christ’s church. We are paying salaries of ministers and missionaries. We are funding resources for outreach, evangelism, and discipleship.

But above all we are investing in the spiritual and eternal welfare of people from every nation, tribe, kindred and tongue. Our dollars are changing homes, relationships, countries, and even the eternal destiny of many souls.

8. Giving promotes God's sanctification

Giving not only promotes God's work through us, but also God's work in us, our sanctification. Giving money, especially when it pains us, requires much self-denial and self-crucifixion. However, as every act of giving weakens and even breaks our sinful and selfish nature, the more God's grace spreads in our hearts. Yes, money leaves our pockets, but sin also leaves our heart. And that's a great deal. Priceless actually.

9. Giving testifies to God's power

Although we are not to let our left hand know what our right hand does, it's pretty obvious that Christians give a lot to their churches and Christian charities. Even secular observers have noticed with amazement how generous Christians often are with their money. They may not say it but they surely must think it: "This must be the real deal for people to give away so much of their own money. They must really believe this stuff. The God they worship and serve must be incredibly powerful to make people so generous."

10. Giving praises God's character

Giving in a right spirit is an act of worship. It is rendering Him a tribute of praise. It is saying. "You gave me everything and here is a small expression of my gratitude and praise for all your good gifts. It's only a token, a sample of what I really feel, but you know the heart that lies behind it. As David sang: ***"What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" (Psalms 116:12).***

Giving better than getting?

Do you now see how giving makes us more blessed than getting? We can get so much happiness when we see how God is glorified in our giving and when we see Him bless others through our giving.

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