

The Power of Giving in Bringing Apostolic Change

(Rev. Nicky Sisco)

Key Verse:

The apostolic principle of giving can be found in **Luke 6:38**, “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again” (KJV).

Lesson Goal: To understand the power that comes through giving to bring apostolic change.

Ralph Marston in the “*Power of Giving*” said, Giving is powerful. Many people will attempt to prevent you from taking, yet no one can stop you from giving as much as you wish. Give and you increase the value that flows through your life. Give of yourself, and you make yourself stronger. Every time you interact with someone else, you have the opportunity to give that person some kind of value. Whether it is a thing, or a thought, a gesture or a kind word, the most powerful gifts are those that come straight from the heart.

Acts 3:1-8 - But such as I have give I thee ...

Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. ²And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; ³Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. ⁴And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. ⁵And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. ⁶Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; **but such as I have give I thee:** In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. ⁷And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. ⁸And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

God by His Spirit and through the power of His Word wants us to become more apostolic in the way we give. *The apostolic principle of giving is simple: what I have I will give* to you. It is an understanding that the blessings and power of God cannot be exhausted. If I will give, it will be given unto me.

- ✓ Giving is an attitude that begins right here (in my mind) and also in my spirit.

Whenever you talk about giving, stewardship must enter the conversation at some point because giving is really a matter of stewardship.

ESSENTIALS OF STEWARDSHIP

Time	Psalm 90:10-12
Talent	Mark 4:24-25
Treasure	Matthew 6:21
Temple	1 Corinthians 6:19-20
Testimony	1 Corinthians 1:5-6
Tongue	Psalms 34:13; 39:1; James 3

Let me give you two basic concepts about stewardship:

(1) Stewardship is not only about your money, it is about your life.

Stewardship is about how you manage your time, talents, yes treasure, but there is more. *It is about giving to God the best of who you are and what you have received.*

(2) Stewardship is about who is in charge of your life.

Exodus 20:3, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

- ✓ If I do not tithe, is money my God? Am I a slave to money?
- ✓ *It has been said, "money makes a good servant but is a terrible task master".*

God Owns Everything!

We often speak of our possessions, but according to the Bible, God owns it all and we own nothing. We are stewards of everything God entrusts to us. Psalm 24:1 says, "The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

Truth: We are stewards and not owners so giving is nothing more than managing God's assets and resources.

- 1) It all belongs to God.
 - 2) God gives His property to us for our enjoyment & investment.
 - 3) A proper understanding of finances is this: God asks that we give Him the first 10%.
 - 4) Those who live by the ownership principle, God blesses.
 - 5) Those who steal from God, God disciplines.
- ✓ Just because something is in your possession does not mean it is your possession.
 - ✓ We show God that He is first in our lives when we give Him the best of who we are and what we have possessed.

How can you bring apostolic change in your life through giving?

- ✓ Give of your time (prayer, Bible reading, evangelism, church attendance)
- ✓ Give of your resources (financial, volunteer your talents)

We read in the early church where they gave according to the need. Individuals gave, churches gave. Giving was a lifestyle born out of a love for their master and each other. Whatever the need is give. If people are needed to clean the church or evangelize or paint the church, do not charge, give! To really experience the power of giving to bring apostolic change you must GIVE! You must become a living sacrifice.

Romans 12:1-2: Become a Living Sacrifice

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. ²And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

The early church experienced great growth because they practiced the principle of giving. Not just of their finances, but of their time, talents, testimony, temple and tongue.

- ✓ They were epistles, known and read of all men (2 Corinthians 3:2).

The biblical principle of giving to bring apostolic change is time tested and proven. Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (KJV).

Prosperity or Poverty

(Biblical Stewardship by Rev. G. Randy and Carolyn Adams, Ministerial Development Series)

Key Verse: “There is one who scatters, yet increases more; And there is one who withholds more than is right, But it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself” (Proverbs 11:24-25, *NKJV*).

Lesson Goal: To understand why some people prosper spiritually, physically, and financially, while others do not.

If you desire to be blessed spiritually and materially, you must recognize and honor God as the source of all blessings. It is seen throughout Scripture that those who gave freely unto the Lord prospered spiritually and materially. On the contrary those who withheld lived in spiritual and material poverty.

God has many ways to prosper those who are faithful and obedient. But, not all prosperity will be financial. Sometimes God chooses to send spiritual blessings instead. “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers” (3 John 2, *NKJV*).

“He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper” (Psalms 1:3, *NKJV*).

Which one is most important material or spiritual prosperity? The correct answer for Christians is spiritual blessings. But where poverty is great, it may be difficult to say that. Only spiritual prosperity is lasting and eternal. Material prosperity is like all other physical things that will perish one day. Material prosperity will not get us to heaven and it may even hinder us from getting to heaven if we allow the love of money to be our main objective.

1 Timothy 6:10 does not say, that money is evil, but that the “love of money is the root of all evil.” Love of money enslaves people and brings them many sorrows. God does not bless some people with financial prosperity because it would destroy them. They are not capable of being the master of money; instead they are mastered by money.

“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (James 4:3). *Money is a good servant but a dangerous master.* —Bouhours

“Give me neither poverty nor riches...Lest I be full and deny You, and say, "Who is the LORD?" Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God” (Proverbs 30:8- 9, *NKJV*).

We would do well to live by this verse. If we are neither wealthy nor poor, we will avoid temptations that wealth and poverty both produce. There is a warning in this verse concerning riches: “Lest I be full and deny You.” Being rich can lead to temptations of pride. There is also a warning about poverty: “...Or lest I be poor, and steal.” Being poor can lead to temptations to steal.

Richard Baxter, a seventeenth-century pastor wrote, “Poverty also has its temptations...For even the poor may be undone by the love of that wealth and plenty which they never get; and they may perish for over-loving the world, that never yet prospered in the world.” A wealthy person has a tendency to trust in money instead of God, believing that money can solve all problems. On the other hand a poor person may be tempted to do anything to become rich—even to lie and steal.

Sir Robert L'Estrange, a seventeenth-century British journalist, observed, “He that serves God for money will serve the devil for better wages.”

The principle of sowing and reaping.

God has given a principle that ensures His blessings. This principle of sowing and reaping applies to every realm in the universe: natural, physical, and spiritual. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7-8, NKJV).

1. In the realm of nature if you sow little corn, you will reap little corn—if you sow much corn, you will reap much corn.

2. In the physical realm the principle of sowing and reaping also applies to our finances. If you sow small amounts in the kingdom of God and His work, you will reap small blessings. If you sow abundantly you will reap abundant blessings. Giving money to the work of the Lord is like sowing seed. It can be seen as an investment.

“The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself” (Proverbs 11:25). What is given to the Lord will come back. “Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days” (Ecclesiastes 11:1, NKJV).

3. In the spiritual realm if you sow abundant spiritual seeds such as faithfulness, obedience, prayer, and worship, you will reap abundant spiritual blessings. The spiritual seed we sow today will be reaped in heaven.

The principle of sowing and reaping applies to both Christian and sinner. Perhaps someone has planted certain seeds of sin before their conversion. According to the principle of sowing and reaping those seeds will come up and will have to be dealt with in spite of conversion. This principle cannot be annulled. All seeds planted will come up and produce after their kind. But God will help His child deal with the unwanted harvest caused by past sins if we keep our faith and trust in Him.

“You do not have to be rich to be generous. If he has the spirit of true generosity, a pauper can give like a prince.” —Wells

Examples of God turning poverty into prosperity.

- ✓ Financial poverty to financial prosperity (Judges 6:15-28).

Gideon told the Lord he was poor and therefore could not do the work the Lord asked him to do. God never accepts being poor as an excuse not do His will. In verses 25-28 we see how God gave Gideon financial prosperity but later it became a snare to him.

- ✓ Physical poverty to physical prosperity: The Widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17: 8-24).

This woman was a poor widow and had very little, but she obeyed the man of God and was blessed because of her obedience. God turned her poverty into prosperity. (See also 2 Kings 4:1-7.) Obedience is the first step to a miracle.

- ✓ Physical poverty to spiritual prosperity: Church of Smyrna (Revelation 2:9-10).

Jesus told the church of Smyrna, “I know your works and tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich)...” (Revelation 2:9, NKJV). They were not rich materially but they were rich spiritually. They had a crown of life (eternal life) reserved for them in eternity. Salvation is worth more than all the material prosperity in the world. Jesus said, “What will a man give in exchange for His soul?” (Mark 8:37, NKJV).

Would you be willing to sacrifice your soul (spiritual prosperity) for material prosperity? Poverty does not hinder faith. God is able to make us rich in important things even in our deepest poverty.

“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10, NASU). While Jesus Christ was on earth He was acquainted with poverty. “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 8:8-9, *NKJV*).

- ✓ The majority of His followers and apostles were poor by the world's standards but they were rich in eternal things by God's standards. "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6).

Paul admitted to knowing poverty. "...As having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Corinthians 6:10, *NKJV*). True riches cannot be purchased or measured with silver or gold.

Material prosperity can lead to spiritual poverty.

"Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God, in not keeping His commandments...But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:10–18). Forgetting that all financial blessings come from the Lord, and not obeying His commandments concerning stewardship can lead to financial poverty. Worshiping material things, pride, and rebellion all lead to spiritual poverty.

"And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were about their camels' necks. {collars: or, sweet jewels} And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house" (Judges 8:26-27, *NKJV*).

What should have been a blessing to Gideon became a snare. Like Gideon, we sometimes let material things become a trap to us and harm our spiritual life. *Ask great things, and little things shall be added unto you; ask heavenly things, and earthly things shall be added unto you.* —Clement, Origen, and Eusebius.

Whether small or large, our riches are God's. God has not made us owners, but His stewards. Many people believe they are the owners of the material possessions that God has blessed them with, without taking into consideration that God is the Master and Proprietor of all things in earth and heaven.

God is the owner of the individual. We are the "purchased possession, to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:14, *NKJV*). Paul said, "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20, *NKJV*). We are the legal property of God; He is our master. If a person has been born again of water and Spirit, he belongs to God. "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people..." (1 Peter 2:9-10, *NKJV*).

The secret to physical, spiritual, and material prosperity is *obedience* to God's Word, *giving liberally* to the work of God, and *recognizing* God as the Master (Owner) of all things. God blesses the hand that gives liberally.

***The hand that gives is always higher than the hand that receives.* —Ghanaian proverb**

Maintaining Integrity in Stewardship

(Biblical Stewardship by Rev. G. Randy and Carolyn Adams, Ministerial Development Series)

Key verse: “For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money” (Titus 1:7-8, *NKJV*).

Lesson Goal: To understand that integrity is vital to the practice of biblical stewardship.

Definition of integrity: The word integrity comes from the Latin *integritás*, meaning complete purity. *Webster’s Dictionary* defines integrity as strict adherence to a code of moral values, artistic principles, or other standards; complete sincerity or honesty.

In his epistles bearing their names, Paul gave to Timothy and Titus the qualifications of an overseer. “...Without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, orderly, given to hospitality, apt to teach; no brawler, no striker; but gentle, not contentious, no lover of money; one that ruleth well his own house, having (his) children in subjection with all gravity” (1 Timothy 3:2-4, *ASV*).

“Someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious. For a bishop, as God’s steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quicktempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it” (Titus 1:6-9, *NRSV*).

An overseer is one in a position of authority or in the ministry (a leader). These Scriptures let us know that those who serve in positions of ministry must have the highest degree of integrity. But these virtues are not just for those in leadership. They apply to all Christians. A good steward has all these virtues:

- ✓ Loyalty
- ✓ Faithfulness
- ✓ Dedication
- ✓ Trustworthiness
- ✓ Truthfulness
- ✓ Humility

These virtues equal integrity. God requires integrity of every Christian. Notice that each of the virtues mentioned above involves inner character. Jesus is more concerned with inner purity than outward actions and appearance.

Outward actions must be motivated by an inner purity. “The greater the Master is, the greater the virtues required in His servant.” — (*JFB Commentary Titus 1:7 Power Bible CD-ROM*)

- ✓ Integrity is honesty—simply being what a person professes to be.

“I hope I shall possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain what I consider the most enviable of all titles, the character of an honest man.” —George Washington

We must be honest in all our dealings with God and man. For example, when a person cheats on an exam or test, this may seem like a small thing, but this reveals that they are willing to compromise their integrity to gain desired results. This seemingly small thing can be a first step to doing more dishonest things.

Integrity can be seen in the use of money.

A good example of integrity with the use of money is in Genesis 43. When the brothers of Joseph returned from Egypt after buying grain, they found their money had been put back into their sacks. Unknown to them, Joseph had instructed his steward to do this. When it was time for them to return to Egypt to buy more grain, Jacob told his sons to, “take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight” (Genesis 43:12). By this action Jacob showed integrity. He did not want to profit financially from someone else’s mistake. Jacob was blessed for his integrity. When his family was brought to Egypt, Joseph gave them Goshen, the best part of the land of Egypt, and he provided them with food (Genesis 45:1-15).

“He who is faithful (*honest*) in the least is also faithful (*honest*) in much. And he who is unjust (*dishonest*) in the least is also unjust (*dishonest*) in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful (*honest*) in the unrighteous mammon, (*money*) who will entrust the true riches to you?” (Luke 16:10-11; emphasis and paraphrase mine).

“Airplane pilots and computer operators can push test buttons to see if their equipment is working properly. God has a quick test button He can push to see the level of commitment—our pocketbooks [money].” (*Life Application Bible—NIV*, Pg 159)

God tests our integrity by the use of our earthly possessions, and when it comes to money, He tests us to see where our true treasure lies. He tests us to see if we are honest concerning financial matters. Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21). This can also be said in another way: “Where your heart is, there your treasure will be also.” Integrity is worth more than money and possessions. Possessions or money can be replaced easily but when you lose your integrity it is very difficult to regain, because integrity involves the character of the person.

God's Plan for Prosperity Part 1

(Path To Righteousness, Edited by Linda Poitras)

Key Verse: “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” (Malachi 3:10)

Lesson Goal: Understanding biblical prosperity and discovering God's plan to prosper our lives.

There are many new doctrines circulating in our world today, and millions of people are following after them (Matt. 24:11). One of these is the “Doctrine of Prosperity”. People flock by the thousands to hear various speakers describe the latest “get rich quick” method - using the Bible in a twisted and perverted sense to accomplish their aims. These people have forgotten one very important passage of scripture, in their desire to see their blessings with their natural eyes. Paul wrote to the church at Colosse: “*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth*” (Colossians 3:2).

Henry Ward Beecher once said, “No man can tell whether he is rich or poor by turning to his ledger. It is the heart that makes a man rich. He is rich according to what he is, not according to what he has.” Solomon, that wisest of men, wrote in Proverbs 30, verses 8 and 9: “*Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*” If I will keep this in my heart, I will have the proper attitude when I look for the blessings God has promised me. Not all prosperity takes the form of money.

In his Lesson: “Stewardship - Pushing Until Prosperity Happens” - Rev. Jim Poitras writes: “God has many ways of causing His children to prosper, but not all prosperity is economic or financial. Spiritual prosperity is the most important”. Jesus concluded his parable of the rich man who ended up in hell by saying: . . . *so is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God*” (Luke 12:21).

True prosperity is an all around success that includes:

- 1) Being exalted (Deut. 7:14; 28:13)
- 2) Success in the home and work place (Deut. 28:3, 8-12)
- 3) Sound health for the whole family (Deut. 7:15; Mal. 4:2)
- 4) Protection and victory over one's enemies (Lev. 26:6-8; Deut. 28:7)
- 5) Child-bearing and soundness (Psalm 113:9; Deut. 7:14)
- 6) Favor with God and man (Lev. 26:11-12; Deut. 28:9-10)

So, how do we go about finding the prosperity that is God's Plan for our lives?

WHAT ABOUT TITHES?

As with every other portion of His creation, God has a special and beautiful plan for His people to be happy, enjoy abundance, and know His richest blessings. He gave this plan very early to the children of Israel - all the way back to the time of Abraham.

How do you suppose Abraham knew, in Genesis 14:20, to give a tithe after the Lord had blessed him and given victory in battle? Melchizedek was the first recorded priest of the most high God, and Abraham treated him accordingly. It is recorded that Abraham gave the priest “tithes of all”. Some say that tithing is no longer necessary because we are not under the Old Testament Law. But Abraham paid tithes **before** the Law!

Abraham is not the only example of tithing before the practice was actually defined. Abraham's grandson, Jacob, also practiced tithing. When he was running from Esau, after God had visited him at Bethel, he promised God one-tenth of all his increase (Genesis 28:22). Where did Jacob learn

about tithing? The Bible doesn't record this, but most traditions are passed down by the father of the family. The fact that Jacob knew about the practice tells us that he had seen or heard of it before - probably from his own father, Isaac, who had in turn learned from his father, Abraham.

I. WHAT ARE TITHES?

A. Tithes are the tenth part of one's income or substance, given to God in order to support the ministry. The Hebrew word for "tithe" (*ma'ser*) literally means "a tenth part".

- 1) When God set up the laws and ordinances that ruled His people, He established tithing as a means of financial support for the priesthood.
- 2) In the Old Testament, the word "tithe" usually refers to the tithe given to the Levites for their service in the Tabernacle. The Lord spoke unto Aaron and said, "*And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation*" (Numbers 18:21).

B. The Israelites were basically a farming people, so their tithes were usually in the form of farm produce, or every tenth among the animals.

- 1) At harvest time, the tithes were brought to the Tabernacle, and later, to the Temple in Jerusalem.
- 2) If a person lived far from the "storehouse", the law allowed him to convert his tithe into money and travel with it to pay his "tithe".

C. One-tenth of the general tithe went directly to the High Priest (Numbers 18:21-28).

II. WHO RECEIVED THE TITHES?

The Levites were set apart from the other tribes in Israel. They were not to labor in the fields or among the herds, but were to devote their efforts to the service of God in the Tabernacle. So that they would be able to perform their duties properly, God provided a living for them in the tithe. But when Israel forsook God, tithing was forgotten. Then, the Levites were forced to make a living somewhere else, and they went to the fields. "*For the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field*" (Nehemiah 13:10).

III. WHAT WERE THE FIRSTFRUITS?

Not only did God expect a tenth of all the increase in Israel, He required the firstfruits. God promised the Levites, "*All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the LORD, them Have I given thee. And whatsoever is first ripe in the land, which they shall bring unto the LORD, shall be thine*" (Numbers 18:12-13). God did not want the left-overs - He DEMANDS the BEST that we have! We should give the LORD the firstfruits of our labor too. Why not pay tithes **before** other bills are paid? We would be amazed at how God would bless our increase if we would practice putting Him **FIRST!**

*"The first fruits belong to the LORD. That is why we should pay our tithes first.
We then ensure God's blessings on the remaining ninety percent. If we spend it all before we pay our
tithes, there is nothing for God to bless."
(Rev. T. F. Tenney)*

God's Plan for Prosperity Part 2

IV. WHAT ABOUT TITHING TODAY?

- A. Tithing was considered as a tax in some of the early churches, but in the real sense, tithing expresses the character and the personality of God, which is the act of **GIVING**. *"For God so loved the world that He GAVE His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).*
- B. 1) His plan was that we would honor Him with our firstfruits in the understanding that He gave us all that we have - it all belongs to Him. *"The earth is the LORD'S and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1).*
- 2) In return, He planned to bless His own people in a way they could not even contain - TRUE PROSPERITY! (Malachi 3:10)
- 3) Hebrews 7:2 says: *"To whom Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace."*
 ✓ The beauty of Hebrews 7:2 is so simple, yet easily overlooked. When we tithe to the "King of Righteousness", he is also, after that, called the "King of Peace"! Most people in the world today chasing or running after wealth, are not happy, and they surely don't have peace! But when we give our tithe as God intended - we are actually giving them to the one who grants us peace!
- 4) Tithing, which comes from the spirit of Giving, invokes the blessing of God to insure "**Genuine Prosperity**". *"The blessing of the Lord maketh rich and addeth no sorrow" (Proverbs 10:22).*

V. A COMMITMENT TO OBEDIENCE

- A. I Samuel 15:22 is a very special scripture whose principle is followed throughout the entire Word of God: *"And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams".*
- B. God is still looking for people who will just simply OBEY His Word. He even tells us that the true test of our love for Him will be shown in our obedience - *"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me" (John 14:23-24).* This is a very strong statement! No matter what we SAY, if we don't **OBEY** God's sayings, we DON'T LOVE HIM!
- C. The unfortunate idea of millions of people in our world today is that "tithing" is a voluntary relinquishing of something valued, but in the sight of God, it is the key to emancipate his children from the scourge of financial and health problems. God has ALWAYS wanted His children to be happy, healthy, and full of all the good things they need, but they persist in disobedience. And so, God continues to call all His children to belong to His assembly of faithful givers: *"Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. . . Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High:*

And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee; and thou shalt glorify me” (Psalm 50:5, 14-15).

- D. When you study God’s relationship with the children of Israel, it becomes clear as to what is the source of their woes and suffering. Most people would attribute their mishaps, tribulation and upheavals to the devil, but God claims responsibility for these perils in His Word and explains His actions to be the direct result of **disobedience** on the part of his beloved children. *“Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house” (Haggai 1:9).*

Why had God’s people lost his blessings? Why do we not have them today?

- 1) because of self-seeking lives
- 2) very little interest in God’s goals and purposes

VI. WHY GIVE TITHES?

A. It Already Belongs to God! The key to prosperity is given to those who believe that what they give comes from God, for every thing, even our breath, is given to us by God! *“But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee” (1 Chronicles 29:14).*

B. I Don’t Want to be CURSED! *“Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation” (Malachi 3:9).* Many cultures and countries of the world understand what it means to have a curse placed on an individual with demonic powers. But how many of us understand about the curse we place on OURSELVES when we fail to obey God’s Word?

- 1) Poverty is a curse in many parts of the world, but God never intended it to be so. The deceiver has blinded our eyes and made us believe that we “can’t afford” to pay our tithes. We can’t afford NOT to! Haggai 1:6 tells us what happens when we fall into this “I can’t afford” trap - *“Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes”.*
- 2) When God branded His people as robbers,
 - a. He was drawing their attention to the fact that all they had was from His Divine Treasury.
 - b. They had no right, even as His children, to disburse these funds without recognizing Him as the owner.
 - c. The creator does not expect the creature to pay for the benefits of His grace. That is why He says BRING and not PAY. What you bring honors the Lord, but He does not rely on that to consolidate His position as God, for He cannot deny Himself.
 - d. All that God wants, is for His children to demonstrate one of His qualities - GIVING - just as He gave His own blood for our redemption.
 - e. Tithing gives us protection from the devourer - the one who would take our blessings from us by sickness, trouble, and lack of food and shelter. God has promised to make us a blessed people when we commit ourselves to obedience to His word. *“And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast*

her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 3:11-12).

- C. When the people asked God "*Wherein have we robbed thee?*" He answered, "*In tithes and offerings*". Are not "tithes" and "offerings" the same thing? ABSOLUTELY NOT! They are both a very important part of God's financial plan, but their purposes in the work of God differ, and they should never be joined or confused.
- 1) There were many types of offerings in the Old Testament - peace offerings, sin offerings, trespass offerings, thanks offerings, and many more.
 - 2) These offerings were either fulfilled or altered by the New Covenant, so, in the New Testament, we find examples of offerings being taken for the needy saints in Jerusalem.
 - 3) Today, our offerings are used to support many worthy causes in the church when we give from a heart of love. The tithe is God's perfect plan for supporting the ministry of the church. Offerings should be given over and beyond the tithe as God prospers us. Never keep only your tithe and divide it - calling a portion "offerings". You are still cheating God when you practice this!

VII. GOD'S PURPOSE IS TO GIVE LIFE.

The purpose of the Lord's calling is to give life - not just ordinary life - but ABUNDANT LIFE here on earth for His people (John 10:10). He wants us to show forth His glory and the only way is to bless His work with our substance - recognizing that it all comes from Him. In this way, He can open the windows of heaven and bless us as He planned to do from the beginning, and we shall receive our eternal reward also with joy, knowing that we have done our best and given our best while on earth. The "FULL LIFE STUDY BIBLE", published by Zondervan Press, gives us a very good lesson on the Stewardship of our Money. Let us live by these 7 important principles found in the New Testament Church - striving to be the best stewards we possibly can of God's blessings:

1. We must remember that everything we have belongs to the Lord, so that what we do possess is not our own, but what God has entrusted to us. We have no rightful ownership of our possessions. "John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven" (John 3:27).
2. We must decide within our hearts to serve God and not money. (Matt. 6:19-24) The Bible makes it plain that any greed is a form of idolatry (Col. 3:5).
3. Our giving must be:
 - a. to advance the kingdom of God, especially the work of the local church and of the spreading of the gospel throughout the world (I Cor. 9:4-14; Phil. 4:15 - 18; I Tim. 5:17-18)
 - b. to help those who are in need (Gal. 2:10; II Cor. 8:14)
 - c. to lay up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:20)
 - d. to learn to fear the Lord (Deut. 14:22-23)
4. Our giving should always be in proportion to our income. In the O.T. the tithe amounted to one-tenth. Giving less than that was disobedience to the law of God and was in effect robbing God (Mal. 3:8-10). Similarly, the N. T. requires that our giving be in proportion to what God has given us (I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 8:3,12)
5. Our giving should be voluntary and generous; this practice is taught in both the O. T. (II Chron. 24:8-11) and in the N. T. (II Cor. 8:1-5, 11-12).
 - a. We should not hesitate to give sacrificially (II Cor. 8:3) for that is the spirit in which the Lord Jesus gave Himself for us.
 - b. Far more important to God than the monetary value of the gift is the sacrifice involved (Luke 21:1-4).

Third Quarter Lessons

Prosperity & Stewardship

6. Our giving should be cheerful (II Cor. 9:7). Both the example of the Israelites in the O.T. (Ex. 35:21-29; II Chron. 24:10) and the Macedonian Christians in the N.T. (II Cor. 8:1-5) serve as models for us.
7. God has promised to reward us according to how we have given to Him (Deut. 15:4; Mal. 3:10-12; Matt. 19:21; I Tim. 6:18-19).

THE CHALLENGE QUESTION: WHY NOT FOLLOW **GOD'S PLAN FOR PROSPERITY?**

Discussion Questions:

1. What is true prosperity? What does it include?
 2. What are tithes?
 3. What is meant by firstfruits?
 4. Why should a person tithe?
 5. Give two reasons why had God's people lost his blessings?
-

The Purpose of the Offering

(Biblical Stewardship by Rev. G. Randy and Carolyn Adams, Ministerial Development Series)

Key verse: “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Lesson Goal: To understand that offerings should be given voluntarily, out of love and gratitude to God.

“It is possible to give without loving, but it is impossible to love without giving.”—Braunstein

Giving is a spiritual principle.

Throughout Scripture, the giving of offerings is considered separate from the tithe. The first mention of someone giving an offering to the Lord is found in Genesis 4:3-4: “And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering” A popular conclusion from this Scripture is that Adam taught his children what was an acceptable offering to God. If this is true then Cain may have acted in rebellion by offering an unacceptable offering. “And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?” (Genesis 4:6-7).

The purpose for giving an offering is not because God needs our financial support, He already owns everything. He wants to see if we love Him enough to give back to Him a portion of what He has given us. He wants to see if we will give voluntarily to His Kingdom and work. Martin Luther said, “I have held many things in my hands and I have lost them all. But whatever I have placed in God’s hands, that I still possess.”

The purpose of the offering is for the advancement of the work of God, and the support of the local church. The tithe is for the support of the pastor. God commanded the Israelites to give the tithe and He also expected the Israelites to give an offering. The offering is not a fixed amount. God allows the person to determine the amount to be given. (To “purpose” means to resolve, to perform or accomplish.)

God wants our offering to be given voluntarily from the heart, with an attitude of thanksgiving, according to our love for Him. The amount of the offering should be in proportion to the blessings God has given. In his book, *Christian Living*, John Hopkins said, “The desire to give or not to give is a good thermometer of the spiritual condition of a person.” “Take from among you an offering to the LORD. Whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as an offering to the LORD: gold, silver, and bronze” (Exodus 35:5, NKJV).

Giving to God is an act of our worship. The first recorded act of worship was when Cain and Abel presented their offerings to God. It was, and is, an acknowledgement of the sovereignty and lordship of God over all the earth. No Jew came to worship empty-handed (Exodus 23:15; 34:20). Giving was part of his devotions.

An offering given with a humble heart demonstrates thankfulness to God for all His blessings. Offerings provide the worshipper with a great opportunity to demonstrate their love and thankfulness to God.

Giving to God demonstrates our love. Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). We show our love towards God by complete obedience to His Word. Love causes us to give without placing conditions on God to give back to us in return for our obedience. It is not enough to bring a physical offering in the hand—the truest offering is an offering in the heart.

Giving to God demonstrates our trust in Him. Giving of our abundance is an act of thanksgiving—giving out of need is an act of faith.

Giving to God promotes humility. Giving acknowledges that all we are and have belongs to God. When we give back to God we are acknowledging Him as Creator of all things, and we depend on Him for our total existence.

Giving to God demonstrates our gratitude. We give because we are thankful for all He has done. The greatest hindrance in giving to God is the lack of faith. This attitude demonstrates to God that we do not believe He is able and willing to supply all our needs. Therefore in the area of finances, we wrestle within ourselves concerning the amount we know we are capable of giving. Then instead of giving according to our ability, we give according to our concept of what we think is reasonable.

Here are some guidelines for giving:

1. Give to God first. “Honor the LORD with your substance, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; and your barns shall be filled with plenty, and your presses shall burst with new wine” (Proverbs 3:9-10). If we give to God first, He will make sure that we have plenty!

2. Give systematically. “On the first day of the week let each of you lay something aside” (1 Corinthians 16:2, *NKJV*). Paul said we should give on the first day of the week— systematically. Giving will become a habit if we repeat the act over a period of time.

3. Give quietly. “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them” (Matthew 6:1, *NKJV*). If our motivation for giving is to be seen by others then we are not giving for the right reason. The only reward for this type of giving is the recognition of men.

4. Give cheerfully. “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7, *NKJV*). God does not want us to give grudgingly or because we feel obliged to give. He desires that we would give cheerfully because of our love for Him.

5. Give from the heart. “Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart...” (Exodus 25:2, *NKJV*). John Hopkins, in his book *Christian Giving* (Page 18), says, “A heart that is spiritually healthy and that loves the work of the Lord, will give generously. But a spiritually sick heart will look for ways to give less to God. A heart that purposes to give to God loves God.” If the heart is not implicated in the giving, the person will find all types of excuses for not giving and will eventually stop giving altogether.

6. Give voluntarily. “Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy” (1 Chronicles 29:9). In Scripture, God links willingness with the heart. Everyone is expected to give willingly from the heart out of love for Him. Giving voluntarily pleases God. God does not accept an offering given against the will.

7. Give the best. “By offering polluted food on my altar...When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not wrong? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not wrong? Try presenting that to your governor; will he be pleased with you or show you favor? ...I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hands” (Malachi 1:7-10, *NRSV*). God is not interested in something that is of no value to us. God gave to us His best and He expects us to give our best to Him.

8. Give in faith. “And Elijah said to her, ‘Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son.’” (1

Kings 17:13, *NKJV*). This was a test of her faith and obedience. We must exercise obedient faith before our needs will be met.

9. Give generously. “The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the LORD commanded to make” (Exodus 36:5).

From generous hearts they brought their voluntary offerings so the Lord's house could be built. The people gave so generously that Moses had to stop them from bringing their offerings to the Lord. “And Moses gave commandment...saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing” (Exodus 36:6). Often a person is convinced he should give liberally, but a selfish spirit prevents it.

10. Give accordingly to ability. “They gave after their ability into the treasury” (Ezra 2:69, *ASV*). Some people are capable of giving more than others, but everyone should give according to their ability.

11. Give sacrificially. “And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury” (Mark 12:42-43).

She gave the smallest of Jewish coins, yet Jesus said she gave more than all the others. How could He say that? Jesus did not say she gave more in quantity than all the others. But she gave more in quality or more in proportion to her means and thus showed more love than all the others. “It is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have”(2 Corinthians 8:12, *NKJV*).

God looks more at the inward motives than the outward actions. Christian giving reaches into self-denial. As people become more spiritual, sacrifice will increase.

Here are two questions that help determine sacrificial giving:

- ✓ Have I given to the point of sacrifice?
- ✓ Have I denied myself anything in order to be able to give?

If we follow these guidelines and give accordingly, we will be blessed in the same manner. “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again” (Luke 6:38).

“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come” (1 Corinthians 16:2, *NKJV*). Just as the three principles stated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 16:2 were applied to the giving of the tithe, these same principles should be applied when giving offerings. Offerings should be given:

- 1) **Systematically**—“on the first day of the week...” (The particular timing will obviously vary depending upon individual circumstances, for some it may be at the end of the month, for others each week, etc.)
- 2) **Personally**—“let each of you lay something aside” (No one is exempt, and each individual is responsible)
- 3) **Proportionately**—“storing up as he may prosper” (The amount of the offering is not fixed but should be in proportion to the blessing God has given.)

God is not unreasonable. He does not expect us to give something that we do not have. God judges our gift according to what we have or according to our ability to give. “For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not” (2 Corinthians 8:12).

Alms Giving

Key Verse: Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward” (Matthew 6:2).

Lesson Goal: To understand the difference between offerings and alms giving.

Alms giving can be defined as the act of charity; giving to the poor or needy. This literally means “doing kind acts.”

Jesus taught that we should give to the needy in Matthew 6:1-4. He said, *when not if* you do alms, letting us know that we should give to the needy out of compassion. We should give with sincerity and not to be seen of men and receive their praise (Matthew 6:2).

“The first *good deed* Jesus used as an example was giving to the needy. The Jewish law commanded giving to those in need (Deuteronomy 15:10-11). Jesus expected His followers to do likewise, following God’s law. However, Jesus’ followers were to have a different motive for their giving than did the hypocrites. God will reward those who are sincere in their faith and whose motive in doing good deeds is to glorify Him. No one should call attention to the act. Jesus condemned practices to impress others.” (*Life Application New Testament Commentary*)

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matthew 23:23). This verse states we are to give the tithe, offerings, and alms. According to Deuteronomy 14:28, every third year a tithe was to be given to the poor, to be eaten at their dwellings. This “tenth part” did not take the place of the tithe given to the Levites but was in addition to it and to the offerings. Jesus acknowledged that the scribes and Pharisees gave a tithe, and did not condemn them for that, but He did condemn them for neglecting other matters such as mercy (compassion and kindness to the poor). He told them that they first needed to have “justice, mercy and faith...these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”

We are to give to the poor and needy, but in doing so, we must not fail to give tithes and offerings. Neglecting one to do the other is not acceptable.

Martin Luther said, “God divided the hand into fingers so that money would slip through.”

- ✓ There is a difference between offerings and alms. When you give alms, this is considered a *good deed* and it should be given out of compassion for the needy.

Cornelius gave generously to those in need and he was therefore greatly respected in the community (Acts 10:2). The poor can also be helped with things other than money.

We can give them food or clothes. Dorcas is an example of someone who was “always doing good and helping the poor” by making robes and other clothing for the poor (Acts 9:36-42).

In Acts 3: 2-10, we see the story of a lame man who was laid by the gate Beautiful and begged for alms daily. Giving money to beggars was considered praiseworthy in the Jewish religion. In order to be seen by the people as they entered the Temple to pray, the beggar placed himself at the entrance hoping they would give him money. Peter and John came to the Temple at “the hour of prayer” but instead of giving the man alms, they gave him something better than money, he received healing, through the power of Jesus’ name.

“If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother...For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land” (Deuteronomy 15:7,11).

The act of giving alms was deeply rooted in the Jewish people. They had been taught to show compassion to the poor and needy. God is concerned for the poor and needy. This is seen in His provision for them in His Law given to Moses.

- ✓ Justice to prevent favoritism (Exodus 23:3,6).
- ✓ Gleaning which allowed for the poor to gather grain that was left on the ground (Leviticus 19:10).
- ✓ Loans and the cancellation of debts after seven years (Leviticus 25: 35-37).
- ✓ Laws concerning the land (Leviticus 25: 23-24).
- ✓ Tithes of fruit and grain were to be collected every 3 years and stored to be given to the Levites, widows, strangers, and the fatherless (Deuteronomy 14:28-29).
- ✓ Voluntary servitude or the selling of ones services for seven years (Deuteronomy 15: 12-18).

The Jews understood there were blessings to those that gave to the poor and consequences for those that ignored them. Consider the following words of the Wise Man. “Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard” (Proverbs 21:13).

- ✓ “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again” (Proverbs 19:17).
- ✓ “He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor” (Proverbs 22:9). This is what the NIV says, “A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.”
- ✓ “He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse” (Proverbs 28:27).

The Bible raises a serious question about a person’s love for God when one fails to help those in need.

“But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17).

“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

To conclude this lesson, lets us review the following facts:

- 1) The tithe—a fixed amount (ten percent)—belongs to God and He has given the tithe to the ministry.
 - 2) Offerings—not a fixed amount—are given to the local church in support of the work of God.
 - 3) Alms—not a fixed amount—are given to help the poor and needy.
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1. Retell the rewards and consequences of giving to the poor as outlined by the Wise Man.
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Stewardship Part 1

Key Verses:

1 Peter 4:10 – “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

1 Corinthians 4:1 – “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

Luke 12:42-46 – “And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.”

Note: *In order to save space, many scriptures in this lesson are not printed in their entirety. It is strongly suggested that you take the time to read each scripture reference to gain a deeper understanding of the scriptural principles involved.*

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The Scriptures teach us that as Christians, we are “stewards” or caretakers of all the resources that God places in our lives.
- B. As stewards, we are responsible to utilize and manage our time, our talents, our treasure, and our testimony to the glory of God.
- C. As we have seen in our scripture texts. God promises blessings to the *faithful* steward and punishment to the *unfaithful* steward. Therefore it is important for us to know what stewardship is and how we can become faithful stewards.

II. STEWARDSHIP – WHAT IS IT?

- A. In ancient times, it was common for wealthy families to assign the management of their household and finances to the care of trustworthy stewards.

*“The steward (Greek-**oikonomos**) was the master's deputy in regulating the concerns of the family, providing food for the household, seeing it served out at the proper times and seasons, and in proper quantities. He received all the cash, expended what was necessary for the support of the family, and kept exact accounts, which he was obliged at certain times to present for examination before the master.” (Adam Clarke Commentary)*

1. Good stewards, who managed their master’s affairs wisely, were rewarded for their faithful stewardship while inferior or dishonest stewards were severely punished for their mismanagement.
- B. Stewards were entrusted with managing and caring for things that were not their own.
 - **1 Corinthians 10:26** – “For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.”
 - **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** – “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

1. In the parable of the rich man who decided to build bigger barns (*Luke 12:16-21*), the first three verses record the word “I” six times and the word “my” five times. God is never mentioned once! Yet God called the rich man into account, saying, “This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” The treasures held by the rich man didn’t really belong to him – they belonged to God!
2. We must understand this fundamental principle if we are going to fulfill our role as faithful stewards of God’s heritage. God will someday ask to see our “books” and will require us to give account of how we have utilized those things that He has loaned to us and placed in our care.
3. God has placed many things under our care for the advancement of His kingdom. He allows us to enjoy these things, but we must not enjoy them selfishly – we must use them for His glory! Christian stewardship is using temporal goods to accomplish an eternal purpose.
 - **1 Timothy 6:17-19** – *“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded [arrogant], nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute [give], willing to communicate [be openhanded]; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”*

C. On several occasions Jesus used the subject of stewardship in His parables.

1. The Parable of the Talents (or pounds) teaches us several principles (*Luke 19:12-27; Matt. 25:14-30*).
 - Whatever God has given us, whether little or much, it should be put to use for His Kingdom. (*Luke 19:26; Matthew 25:27*)
 - We will be rewarded for correctly using the gifts with which God entrusts us. (*Matthew 25:23*)
 - We will be punished for not correctly using the gifts with which God entrusts us. (*Matthew 25:30*)
 - As we prove ourselves to be good stewards over little, we will be given more. (*Matthew 25:29*)
2. The Parable of the Wasteful Steward also teaches some important principles (*Luke 16:1-13*).
 - If we have been wasteful or “wicked” stewards, we should repent while we have the opportunity.
 - He that is faithful in little is faithful in much; he that is unfaithful in little is unfaithful in much. (*Luke 16:10*)
 - Before we can be counted worthy to be entrusted with spiritual riches (true riches) we must demonstrate that we are faithful in earthly riches (unrighteous mammon). (*Luke 16:11*)
 - No steward can serve God and wealth; he can be faithful to only one. (*Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13*)

III. FAITHFULNESS

- **1 Corinthians 4:2** - *“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”*

A. Faithfulness is the first requirement of stewards. The American Heritage Dictionary defines “faithful” as *“Adhering strictly to the person, cause, or idea to which one is bound; dutiful and loyal. Worthy of trust or credence; consistently reliable.”*

B. The scripture is filled with examples of men and women who earned the distinction of being called faithful.

- Moses was faithful “in all his house”. (*Numbers 12:7; Hebrews 3:2*)

Third Quarter Lessons

Prosperity & Stewardship

- Abraham was faithful “before God”. (*Nehemiah 9:7-8*)
 - The ancient treasurers were appointed because they were faithful. (*Nehemiah 13:13*)
 - Daniel was faithful. (*Daniel 6:4*)
 - Timothy was “faithful in the Lord”. (*1 Corinthians 4:17*)
 - Tychicus was a “faithful minister in the Lord”. (*Colossians 4:7*)
 - Onesimus was a “faithful brother” in the Lord. (*Colossians 4:9*)
- C. Faithfulness in stewardship means being “true” to our duty, being loyal and adhering strictly to our purpose; being trustworthy in our responsibility to utilize the things that God has loaned to us for the benefit of His kingdom.
- **Proverbs 28:20** – “*A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent [unpunished].*”
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Stewardship Part 2

IV. STEWARDSHIP OF OUR TIME

- A. The Scriptures teach us that the span of our lifetime is short and will pass quickly. We are told to use wisely whatever time God has allotted to us.
- **Psalm 90:9-12** – *“For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”*
- B. Most of us lead busy lives, and unless we specifically *plan* to give a portion of our time to God, the demands and pressures of our hectic schedules will keep us from giving God the time He deserves.
- **Ephesians 5:16** – *“Redeeming [making proper use of] the time, because the days are evil.”*
1. Personal Devotion to God. Before attempting to be faithful in service, duty, and work unto the Lord, we must be faithful in our personal relationship with Him. Each day of our lives should include time set apart for prayer and personal devotion.
 2. Service to the Kingdom. Scripture teaches us that we should be faithful to the House of the Lord. This includes activities such as CARE fellowship meetings, revivals, special church services; fellowships for men, women, singles, or youth; fund raising events; evangelistic efforts; church work days; prayer and fasting efforts; discipleship classes; and teaching seminars.
 - **Hebrews 10:25** – *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”*
 3. We must make sure that an acceptable portion of our time each week is used in personal devotion and in doing “our Father’s business”.

V. STEWARDSHIP OF OUR TALENT

- A. Everyone has been given talents and abilities. We often think of talent in terms of artistic or musical ability, but talents can be expressed in many different areas of life. *Anything* you can do to help the kingdom of God is a talent that God has given you to bless and edify His kingdom.
- B. A church can only use a limited number of preachers, teachers, singers and musicians in public worship services – but there are many other ways to use the talents we have been given.
- Dorcas (Tabitha) used her talents to make coats and garments for the needy (*Acts 9:39*).
 - The household of Stephanas “addicted themselves” to serving the saints (*1 Corinthians 15:16*).
 - Anna exercised her talents in prayer and fasting unto the Lord (*Luke 2:36*).
 - The first deacons exercised their talents in ministering to widows and orphans (*Acts 6:2-3*).
- C. There is always something we can do to serve the kingdom. Using our talents is not about “ministering on the platform”; it is about “serving” and “working”. Everyone wants to volunteer to sing, teach, or play an instrument – but few people volunteer to serve God in other ways. God has placed many abilities in our hands and He expects us to utilize them as we have the opportunity to do so. Remember, when we have proven ourselves faithful in small things, the Lord will allow us to be entrusted with greater things.
- **Ecclesiastes 9:10** – *“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no*

work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”

- D. The opportunities to serve are endless: church cleaning and maintenance, (painting, carpentry, electrical work, plumbing), prayer ministries, children’s ministries, discipleship ministries, home bible study ministries, deaf ministry, senior citizens ministry, prison ministry, hospital visitation, tape ministry, bookstore ministry, tract ministry, CARE ministry, youth ministries, singles ministries, marrieds ministries, charity ministries, ushers and greeters ministry, fund raising ministry, office and clerical work, etc., etc.
- **Galatians 6:10** – “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

VI. STEWARDSHIP OF OUR TREASURE

- **Matthew 6:21** – “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”
- A. According to scripture, stewardship of our “treasure” involves three distinct areas: tithing, giving and alms.
- B. **TITHING**. This word literally means “*the tenth*”. It refers to the principle of returning to God a tenth, or ten percent, of all of our increase. It is also known as “the Lord’s portion”.
1. The principle of tithing, or “the Lord’s portion”, is first seen in the Garden of Eden. One tree in the garden was reserved for the exclusive use of the Lord; it was not to be used by man even though Adam was assigned by God to “dress” and “keep” the tree and help it bring forth fruit. (*Genesis 2:15-17*) It was mankind’s mistake of taking what belonged to God that brought death into the world.
 2. Tithing is first mentioned by name in Genesis 14 in Abram’s encounter with Melchizedek, King of Salem, the priest of the most high God. (Abram is the original name of Abraham)
 - **Genesis 14:20** – “And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he [Abram] gave him [Melchizedek] tithes of all.”
 3. Over a hundred years later, tithing was still the practice of God’s people. Genesis 28 records Jacob’s (Abraham’s grandson) encounter with the Lord at Bethel.
 - **Genesis 28:22** – “And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.”
 4. Some people have mistakenly thought that the principle of tithing originated under the Law of Moses. This is not true. Tithing was a practice of God’s people nearly 500 years before the Law of Moses was given. Tithing did not begin with the Law and it was not eliminated with the Law.
 - a. Matthew 5:27-48 reveals that the grace of the new covenant does not demand less of the servants of God than did the legalism of the old covenant. On the contrary, love always requires more than law.
 - b. The Pulpit Commentary states, “The practice of paying tithes, primarily a tax for the servants of the sanctuary, appears to have obtained its origin from the remotest antiquity.”
 - c. However, when the Law was later given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, the principle of tithing was specifically incorporated into it.
 - **Leviticus 27:30** – “And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD’s: it is holy unto the LORD.”
 - **Deuteronomy 14:22** – “Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year.”
 5. Jesus did not criticize the Pharisees for paying tithes; He actually commended them (*Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42*). He reprimanded them for ignoring law, judgment, mercy and faith; but He praised their tithing. He said tithing was something they “ought” to have done. The word “ought” expresses an obligation or duty, and Jesus said that the paying of tithes is something that “ought” to be done.
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Stewardship Part 3

Stewardship of our treasure continued...

6. In Jesus Christ, the Mosaic (Aaronic) order of priesthood was fulfilled and made obsolete, but the priesthood of Melchizedek was reestablished. The New Testament teaches us that Jesus Christ is a High Priest after the order of Melchizedec (*Hebrews 7:15-17*) and that we are the children of Abraham through faith (*Galatians 3:7,29*). Therefore, just as our father, Abraham, paid tithes unto the High Priest, Melchizedec, we, the children of Abraham, pay tithes unto Jesus Christ, our High Priest after the order of Melchizedec.
 - **John 8:39** – *“They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.”*
7. The writer of Hebrews confirms that it is Jesus Christ, our High Priest, who receives and acknowledges our tithes in heaven.
 - **Hebrews 7:8** – *“And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.”*
 - a. It is important to remember that it is Jesus Christ who receives our tithes. He accepts them for the use of His ministers.
 - b. When we pay our tithes we are not giving to a pastor, a church or a ministry – we are paying our High Priest, Jesus Christ, what is already rightfully His.
 - **Colossians 3:23** – *“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.”*
8. The prophet Malachi likened the withholding of tithes and offerings to grand larceny against God.
 - **Malachi 3:8, 10** – *“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”*
 - a. In scripture, the tithe was not considered as a gift to the Lord – it was considered His rightful due as Lord of all creation.
 - b. When we withhold our tithe, we actually rob God. You cannot rob someone of something that does not already belong to them! The tithe belongs to God whether we pay it or not.
9. Tithing is God’s plan for providing for the needs of those who serve in the house of God. Both in the Old and New Testament, the tithe was for the use of the ministry.
 - a. In the Old Testament the tithes supported the Levites whose fulltime service was that of ministry and service in the Tabernacle.
 - **Numbers 18:21** – *“And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.”*
 - b. Likewise, the apostle Paul teaches that under the New Covenant our tithes also support the ministers and ministries of the Church.
 - **1 Corinthians 9:7-14** – *“Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we*

rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

- **Galatians 6:6** – “Let him that is taught in the word communicate [share, distribute] unto him that teacheth in all good things.”
10. Tithing is also God’s way of helping us order our priorities. It has been said that no man really trusts God until he trusts Him with money. When we tithe unto the Lord, it establishes God’s order in our financial lives and teaches us that the first and the best belongs to God.
 - **Deuteronomy 14:22,23,29** - “Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase ... that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always ... that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.”
 - a. The Living Bible paraphrases verse 23 as follows: “The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives.”
 - b. Tithing is a matter of priorities, of putting first things first – paying our tithes first and then managing the rest of our income in a responsible manner so that we may also meet our other obligations.
 11. Once we see God at the very center of our lives, nothing less than tithing is appropriate. In the highest sense, tithing is directly related to the depth of our consecration and obedience to God and His Word.
 12. As a measure of our devotion, tithing is not the end of the stewardship of our “treasure” – it is only the beginning. We have not reached the high point of stewardship when we tithe; we have just taken the first step. Only after we have “paid” what we already owe, can we actually begin to “give”.
 13. Some have asked, “Am I to tithe on my gross or my net earnings?” Scripture instructs us to pay our tithes on all our increase and to bring our firstfruits to the Lord. This means that we are to pay God what is His first –before taxes, before Social Security, before investment withholdings, or any other financial obligations to which we are indebted. These other withholdings are classified as bills – and we don’t pay our tithes based on what is left over after we have paid all our bills.
 14. Tithing has very little to do with just a mathematical formula – it has everything to do with a right relationship with God.
 - a. The amount of our income or the number of our financial obligations have relatively little to do with our ability to tithe. In reality, everyone can tithe in one way or another.
 - b. It is a mistake to wait until we have “enough” to tithe. The time for obedience is always now. As we obey God’s Word now, He blesses us and increases our ability to tithe more in the future.
 - c. We must trust God, enter into a covenant relationship with Him in regard to our finances, and believe that nine-tenths with God’s blessing will go further than the full ten without His sanction.

When William Colgate was a young boy, he worked in a soap-making shop. When he became sixteen years old, he left home to find employment in New York City. While traveling on a canal boat, Colgate told the canal boat captain that he planned to establish a soap manufacturing company in New York. The captain gave Colgate this advice: "Someone will soon be the leading soap maker in New York. You can be that person. But you must never lose sight of the fact that the soap you make has been given to you by God. Honor Him by sharing what you earn. Begin by tithing on all that you receive." William Colgate took the advice of the canal boat captain and became a tither. He not only paid tithes on his personal earnings, but he also paid tithes on the total earnings of his company. Soon he began to pay two-tenths, then three-tenths, and then four-tenths. By the time of his death, William Colgate was paying five-tenths of his personal earnings and five-tenths of the total profits of his business in tithes to the Lord.

Stewardship Part 4

- C. **GIVING**. This second area of the stewardship of our “treasure” involves giving freely and willingly to the Lord – voluntarily offering to God with an enthusiastic spirit. After we have “paid” to God what is rightfully His (tithes), then we have the opportunity to decide what we are going to freely and joyfully “give” to Him (offerings).
1. In the Bible there are 1539 passages that refer to *giving* while there are only 523 passages that refer to *praying*.
 - **Luke 6:38** – “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”
 2. As early in scripture as the fourth chapter of Genesis, we see that Adam and Eve’s sons, Cain and Abel, prepared offerings to the Lord.
 - **Genesis 4:3-4** – “And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering.”
 3. The apostle Paul confirms that the giving of voluntary offerings is also a New Testament principle.
 - **2 Corinthians 9:6-7** – “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity [*obligation*]: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”
 4. From the earliest times in scripture, both tithes and offerings consisted of the fruits of harvest, livestock, or whatever rewards a particular individual would generate as part of his or her labor. Even today, individuals tithe and give offerings of their gardens, harvests, and livestock.
 5. However, in modern society, most of our “increase” comes in the form of money, and likewise our tithes and offerings are generally given in monetary means.
 6. We give freewill offerings for many worthwhile needs and ministries: Home and Foreign Missions, Youth Ministries, Children’s Ministries, Ladies Ministries, Building Fund Programs, etc., etc.
 7. Giving, like tithing, is a matter of the heart. God judges our giving based not upon a specific amount, but upon the motive of our hearts. Ananias and Sapphira gave an offering, but they gave with a deceitful heart and God rejected their offering and punished them. (*Acts 5:1-11*) Giving must not be an act of “duty” (grudgingly), but an act of “love” (willingly).
 8. How much should we voluntarily give to the Lord? We should give generously as though Jesus Christ Himself were the secretary-treasurer of the church. We must let the Lord be our bookkeeper.
 - **Proverbs 11:25** – “The liberal [generous] soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.”
 9. How long should we voluntarily give? We should continue to give until Jesus stops giving to us.
 10. The New Testament gives us specific principles that instruct us as to how we should manage the stewardship of our “treasure” in the area of voluntary offerings:
 - We should give regularly – systematically, methodically. (*1 Corinthians 16:2*)
 - We should give bountifully – liberally, generously, openhandedly. (*2 Corinthians 9:6*)
 - We should give cheerfully – willingly, happily, hilariously. (*2 Corinthians 9:7*)
 - We should give in simplicity – in selfless humility, not seeking acclaim. (*Romans 12:8*)
 - We should give according to our ability – based upon how we have been blessed. (*Acts 11:29; 1 Cor. 16:2*)

11. Our God is a giver; giving is His nature – and God is looking for generous givers. As we endeavor to develop His nature within us, we must make sure that we cultivate the nature of a giver.
 - **Deuteronomy 8:18** – *“But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth...”*
12. John Oxenham, the 17th century English theologian, directly connects our *giving* to God to our *love* for God: “Love’s prerogative is not only to give, but to give again, and then to give still again.”

D. **ALMSGIVING.** This third area of the stewardship of our “treasure” involves giving to the needs of others. Sometimes this area of stewardship is neglected or overlooked, but scripture reveals that the giving of “alms” is an important part of true Christian stewardship.

- **Acts 20:35** – “I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”
- **Luke 14:13-14** – “[Jesus said] But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”
- **Romans 12:13** – “Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.”
- **Ephesians 4:28** – “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”
- **Galatians 2:10** – “... we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward [diligent] to do.”
- **Galatians 6:10** – “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.
- **Luke 11:41** – “[Jesus said] But rather give alms of such things as ye have;...”

1. In the Bible, the word “alms” is translated from the Greek word “eleemosune”, which means to show compassion, (as exercised towards the poor) beneficence, charity, to offer kindhearted support or assistance to the needy.
2. Jesus placed extreme importance on giving alms; helping the hungry, thirsty, the homeless, the destitute, the sick, the imprisoned, etc. He said when we have helped and ministered unto “the least of these” needy individuals we have done it unto Him. (Read Matthew 25:31-46)
3. This area of stewardship, the giving of alms, is the area in which the Lord instructs us to be discrete and private. Privacy is not demanded in tithes and offerings, but it is required in almsgiving.
 - **Matthew 6:1-4** – “[Jesus said] Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.”
4. Assisting the needy was the custom, practice and tradition of the early church.
 - **Romans 15:26** – “For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.”
 - a. Aristides, the famous Athenian philosopher, sent a letter to the Emperor Hadrian in Rome about the year AD 135. This letter is an enlightening commentary upon the generous and unselfish almsgiving and almsdeeds of the early Christians.

“They [the Christians] walk in all humility and kindness, and falsehood is not among them. They love one another. They do not refuse to help widows. They rescue the orphan from violence. He who has gives ungrudgingly to him who

lacks. If they see a stranger, they take him home and entertain him as a brother. When one of their poor passes from this world, any one of them who sees it provides for his burial according to his ability ... Truly this is a new people and there is something divine in them."

5. The Bible teaches that when we give to others, we are actually *lending* unto the Lord – and we can be sure that God pays His debts!
 - **Proverbs 19:17** – “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he [the Lord] pay him again.”
6. The church today provides help and assistance to those who are destitute and in need. We can give “alms” through the church by designating them as such on our offering envelopes. As the Ministry deems appropriate, these gifts are distributed from the church treasury to those who have needs.
7. We can also give “alms” individually. It is fitting for us to give personally to our brothers and sisters who are in need. However, great care should always be taken to perform these works of love in discretion and privacy so as not to embarrass others or lose our blessing from the Lord.

VII. STEWARDSHIP OF OUR TESTIMONY

- A. The Apostle Paul stated that he was a “debtor” to the “Greeks and barbarians, to the wise and the unwise”. (*Romans 1:14*) Paul was referring to his responsibility as a steward to proclaim the gospel to other people.
 1. Each of us has been entrusted with a precious gift from God that we must share with others – our testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - **Matthew 10:8** – “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.”
 2. We have been given the light of truth – we must not hide the light or refuse to let it shine in our lives.
 - **Mark 4:21-26** – *And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? ... And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear [take heed, obey] shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath. And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;”*
 3. Shine the light; sow the seed. Measure out your testimony liberally and God will reward you liberally.
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Stewardship Part 5

VIII. THE ATTITUDE OF STEWARDSHIP

- A. Greed, selfishness, and the love of money are inherent in the nature of all human beings. For most people, *self* is the absolute center of every decision and every action of life.
- **1 Timothy 6:10** – “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”
1. Our human nature tempts us to use our time, our talent, our treasure, and even our testimony for our own advantage – to fulfill our own needs and desires – to be greedy instead of generous.
 2. The appetite for money and possessions can never be satisfied by getting more. Greed is never fulfilled, no matter how much it gains (*Ecclesiastes 5:10*). A selfish person has great difficulty truly worshiping God.
 3. Greed is never blessed. If you want to enjoy your financial blessings, never put them before God. Money is a wonderful servant, but a poor master.
 - **Matthew 6:24** – “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon [wealth, avarice].”
 - **Matthew 6:19-21** – “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”
- B. While the heart of the carnal man is *greed*, the heart of the spiritual man is *sacrifice*. Sacrifice means to give up something that is important to us; something that costs, that hurts, that touches us in a real and tangible way.
1. The Bible teaches that true prosperity is not how much we have, but how much we give – and not only how much we give, but how much we have left over after we have given.
 - a. In Luke 21:1-4 and Mark 12:41-44, the story is recorded of Jesus sitting by the treasury, observing people as they offered their gifts unto the Lord. Jesus said that a poor widow who offered two small copper coins (two mites) gave more than the wealthy who gave much larger offerings.
 - b. The widow’s gift was more valuable and worthy than the larger offerings because she gave out of her “poverty” or “need”, whereas the rich gave out of their “surplus”. Her gift was not valuable for how much she gave, but for how much she had left over after she gave.
 2. Jesus commends voluntary giving that affects our lifestyle, regardless of the amount. If we give only out of our surplus, we have missed the point of giving. It is the sacrifice of the voluntary offering that makes it worthy – not the amount. (*Read the account of the Alabaster Box – Matthew 26:7-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:37-50*)
 3. It has been said that until our giving “pinches us” and affects our lifestyle, we have not yet given as the widow did. C. S. Lewis stated it well when he wrote, “I’m afraid biblical charity (giving) is more than merely giving away that which we could afford to do without anyway.”
 4. The Apostle Paul praised the sacrificial giving of the Christians of Macedonia who were experiencing affliction and poverty and yet they gave liberally, voluntarily giving even beyond their means.
 - **2 Corinthians 8:2-3** – “How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;”

- C. The faithful steward also gives of his *firstfruits*. This means that the tithes and offerings that we present unto God should be the first portion we set aside, not what remains after we have satisfied other debts.
- **Proverbs 3:9** – “Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:”
1. We must always put “first things first”.
 - Abel brought the *firstlings* of his flock (*Genesis 4:4*).
 - Israel was to bring the *firstlings* of the herds (*Nehemiah 10:36*).
 - Israel was to bring the *firstlings* of their fruits and juices (*Exodus 22:29*).
 - Israel was to bring the *firstlings* of the labor (*Exodus 23:16*).
 - Israel was to bring the *first* of their dough (*Numbers 15:21*).
 - Israel was to bring the *first* of their oil, wine and wheat (*Number 18:12*).
 - Israel was to bring the *first* of their corn and fleece (*Deut. 18:4*).
 - The *firstborn* of any Jewish household was “holy” because it belonged to the Lord (*Exodus 13:2; Exodus 13:13-15; Numbers 8:16-17*).
 - The widow had to bake Elijah a cake *first* before she made one for herself and her son (*1 Kings 17:13*)
 2. We must never pay or give to God what is “leftover”. We must never pay or give to Him after we have satisfied our other needs. We must offer Him the *firstfruits* of our labor and increase.

(*Nehemiah 10:35-39*)

 - **Matthew 6:33** – “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [material needs] shall be added unto you.”
 3. We must put God first and take care of His things as well as we take care of our own. When we do this we release God to bless us abundantly, as His Word promises He will do.

IX. CONCLUSION

- A. There are three distinct attitudes of stewardship portrayed in Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37.
- The thieves had the attitude, “*What’s yours is mine, and I’m going to get it!*”
 - The priest and the Levite had the attitude, “*What’s mine is mine and I’m going to keep it!*”
 - The Good Samaritan had the attitude, “*What’s mine is yours, and you can have it.*”
- B. However, there is another attitude that is more excellent even than that of the Good Samaritan. That attitude is, “*Everything I have belongs to God, and I must be a faithful steward of His goods.*”
- **1 Timothy 6:7** – “*For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*”
- C. As mature Christians, we eventually come to the realization that everything we have actually belongs to God. It is not how much we have that is important, but how we use what we have that makes the difference.
- **Romans 14:12** – “*So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*”
1. When we consider the vast blessings and opportunities that have been given to us, we might actually tremble when we consider what the Apostle Paul would have done with our personal resources.
 - **Luke 12:48** – “*...For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: ...*”
- D. The Word promises rich rewards to the faithful steward. No matter the condition of the world economy, regardless of the state of our personal finances, if we give liberally and willingly to

God, He will reward and bless us. That which we give to God will produce guaranteed interest.

- *“A faithful man shall abound with blessings” (Proverbs 28:20)*
- *“The liberal [generous] soul shall be made fat” (Proverbs 11:25)*
- *“He that lendeth unto the Lord; he [the Lord] will pay him again.” (Proverbs 19:17)*
- *“bring the tithes into the storehouse ... I will pour you out a blessing” (Malachi 3:10)*
- *“give, and it shall be given unto you” (Luke 6:38)*
- *“give thine alms in secret: and thy Father shall reward thee openly” (Matthew 6:4)*
- *“seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33)*
- *“thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make you ruler over many.” (Matthew 25:23)*
- *“he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2 Corinthians 9:6)*

E. When it comes to stewardship, we must remember that we can never “out-give” God. Calvary makes us eternal debtors.

F. Satan’s strategy is to tempt us to fume, fuss, and stew over our responsibilities to God. But when Jesus is Lord of every area of our lives, He takes the ‘stew’ out of stewardship – and He transforms it into one of life’s greatest blessings!

*The more you give, the more you get; the more you laugh the less you fret.
The more you give unselfishly, the more you live abundantly.
The more of everything you share, the more you’ll always have to spare.
For only what we give away enriches us from day to day.*

G. The principles of this lesson affect many areas of our lives. It is advisable that you study this lesson more than once in order to gain the greatest benefit.

- Additional Reading:
“The Lord’s Portion”, Roy Moss
“Christian Giving”, John Hopkins
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