

Giving – A Faith Response to God

11-13-11

Although I don't preach on this topic very often, maybe once a year, it is an extremely vital truth that needs to be incorporated into our lives.

It's too easy to let fear grip our hearts when we don't know about what the future holds, and especially when we are aware that the economy is suffering a recession.

This morning I want to assure you that I know the person who holds the future and during tough times the Lord Almighty wants you to walk in **faith**, not **doubt**; to **succeed**, not **fail**; to actually **prosper** by learning to trust and obey His holy Word.

In the kingdom of God, Jesus said, blessings are poured out by God without you having to earn them. He said, "Freely you have received, freely give." And since we came into this world with nothing, therefore, everything we accumulate is something that we have received.

The reality is we are stewards of the resources that God has given to us; so it's vital that we learn how to **steward** *God's resources* with His eternal perspective in mind.

Having lived in Kenya, East Africa for over 3 years and traveled to South America and the Orient, I have noticed that personal contentment and happiness is not dependent upon material wealth or physical possessions. There are people who live in mud huts without electricity that are happy in the Lord and truly content with their life.

We need to ask ourselves: "Do I believe money to be the means of achieving happiness or is my relationship to God the source of my happiness and contentment? You cannot live in this culture without being exposed to the messages advertized in the media, which tell us that our happiness is directly tied to owning the biggest, brightest, newest, whatever, that we can afford or think we deserve. But the question is: Does that kind of thinking reflect God's perspective?"

I. What does our heavenly Father teach us about Wealth and Giving in His Word?

Scripture clearly teaches us that all the wealth deposited in the earth was placed here by God. And in reality, it still belongs to Him. Remember Noah and the Flood? Job said it this way, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

A. It ALL belongs to God!!

Psa. 24:1 – "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it."

Haggai 2:8 – "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of Hosts." In other words, God is telling us that ALL money belongs to Him.

Now, because **productivity** and **increase** are directly related to **diligence** and **hard work**, our tendency is to take the credit for whatever blessing and prosperity comes our way.

Even though we don't declare it out loud, we think: "This is my achievement! I have gained all this by my labors."

Daniel 4:28-37 – That's exactly what Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, said before spending 7 years under the disciplinary judgment of God. And that's exactly **the attitude** that prompted God's warning through Moses to the nation of Israel.

Deut. 8:15-19 – "He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. He gave you manna to eat in

the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.' But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today. If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed." (NIV)

1 Cor. 4:7 - The apostle Paul asks the question, "And what do you have that you did not **receive**? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?"

In other words, **all money belongs to God**; He simply entrusts it to us. So, how do you regard money? The **wrong way** is to love it and put our trust in it to us through the tough times.

Do you have any money on your person? Who does it belong to?

Do you ever act as though the money in your pocket or purse is your own? Whose is it really? Not only do **you** belong to the Lord, but **all you possess** belongs to the Lord.

B. Father teaches us that money can be a BLESSING or a CURSE. The key is our **attitude** toward it.

1 Tim. 6:9-10 – "But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows." (NLT)

We have only to look at the Biblical examples of Achan, Balaam, Delilah, Ananias & Sapphira, Judas and Solomon, to see this truth.

- ☞ For the love of money, **Achan** brought defeat to the armies of Israel and death to his family.
- ☞ For the love of money, **Balaam** tried to curse Israel and betrayed them to the Moabites.
- ☞ For the love of money, **Delilah** betrayed Samson to the Philistines and caused the death of thousands.
- ☞ For the love of money, **Ananias** hid his covetousness with a lie causing he and his wife's death.
- ☞ For the love of money, **Judas** betrayed Jesus to the Jewish Sanhedrin and death on a cross.
- ☞ For the love of money, **Solomon** forsook the Living God to worship idols.

Solomon was rich beyond belief, but he got trapped in his lust for more riches. He kept marrying foreign wives to bring in more treasure and the end result of taking on 700 wives, was that he turned away from the Lord, the very God who had appeared to him twice. So, what was the result of his greed? "Then the Lord raised up an adversary against Solomon." (1 Kings 11:14)

Mark 4:19 – Describes the plight of the Eternal Word of God that is sown into the heart of a believer who has been deceived by riches. It says, "The **worries** of this life, **the deceitfulness of wealth** and **the desires for other things** come in and **choke the Word**, making it unfruitful."

You see, the deceitfulness of riches chokes God's Word, stifling the believer's growth and fruitfulness. This scripture perfectly describes the backsliding path of King Solomon.

The love of money has a way of obscuring one's vision of eternal values, that's why Paul instructed Timothy in **1 Tim. 6:17-19** to teach and "**command** those who are rich in this present world

not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”

“**Command** them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.” (NIV)

Matt. 6:21 - “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

If we love money, we won’t obey the instruction of Scripture and learn to give God’s way. But if we love God, we will learn to give as He instructs us in scripture and then experience the blessing that is a direct result of our obedience.

Living within his budget, John Wesley was eventually one of England’s most wealthy citizens. Yet, as his income sharply increased, look at what happened to his spending habits:

	Income	Living Expenses	To the Poor
First year:	30 pounds	28 pounds (93%)	2 pounds (7%)
Second year:	60 pounds	28 pounds (47%)	32 pounds (53%)
Third year:	90 pounds	28 pounds (31%)	62 pounds (69%)
Fourth year:	120 pounds	28 pounds (23%)	92 pounds (77%)
Later:	over 1,400 pounds	30 pounds (2%)	over 1,400 pounds (98%)

From *The Accountability Connection* by Matt Friedman, (Victor Books), New Man, July/August 1994, p. 12.

The Bible teaches the **righteous necessity** of both **required giving** and **freewill giving**. Under the instruction of the Law of Moses, it was legalistically demanded, but under grace, it is expected as a faith response because of the abundance of the love of God shed abroad in the hearts of true believers.

C. **REQUIRED GIVING**: The **Tithe** = What God requires of us!!

Prior to the Law of Moses, Abraham gave the tithe as a faith response to God. However, in the establishing of Israel as a nation, God instituted the tithe as a means of support for His spiritual purposes in Israel.

Lev. 27:30-34 – “A **tithe of everything**” was instituted by God and the emphasis was on **quantity** – one tenth of everything. The tithe was given in support of the priesthood. Their full-time responsibilities included ministering to God and to the people. The Levites weren’t given any land and as a result they didn’t have the opportunity to earn their own living.

Num. 18:21, 26-28 – “As for the tribe of Levi, your relatives, I will compensate them for their service in the Tabernacle. Instead of an allotment of land, I will give them the tithes from the entire land of Israel. Give these instructions to the Levites: When you receive from the people of Israel the tithes I have assigned as your allotment, give a tenth of the tithes you receive—a tithe of the tithe—to the LORD as a sacred offering. The LORD will consider this offering to be your harvest offering, as though it were the first grain from your own threshing floor or wine from your own winepress. You must present one-tenth

of the tithe received from the Israelites as a sacred offering to the LORD. This is the LORD's sacred portion, and you must present it to Aaron the priest." (NLT)

1. **Malachi 3:7-10** – “Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD Almighty. But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’ Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’ In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the LORD Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.” (NIV)

2. **Luke 18:11; Matt. 23:23** – The Pharisees obeyed the letter of the law, but missed the spirit of the law. In tithing the smallest seed, they neglected the weightier matters of the law - justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Jesus added that in fulfilling the weighty matters of the law, they should not neglect the tithe.

3. **Matt. 22:15-22** – When questioned as to whether it was right to submit to required giving - Jesus answered **yes!** “Give to Caesar” and “give to God.”

(a.) **Rom. 13:1-8** – Required giving to **Caesar** supports civil authority which in turn protects society as the servant of God.

(b.) **1 Cor. 9:7-14; 1 Tim. 5:17-18** – Required giving to **God** supports those who are preaching the gospel and teaching the Body of Christ to fear the name of the Lord.

4. **Rom. 8:4** – If we walk in the power and life of the Holy Spirit we will automatically fulfill the righteous demands of the law - without it being demanded of us.

D. FREEWILL GIVING: Offering = A thankful, faith response to God.

There are a number of Biblical principles regarding freewill giving in both the Old and New Testament. Understanding these principles makes giving an exciting and delightful experience.

1. **Ex. 35:5, 29; 36:6** – Giving with a **willing heart** will always extend beyond the immediate need.

2. **1 Cor. 16:2** – Giving is to be **planned** and **regular**. Paul established guidelines so the money would be ready at the time the need was to be met. We are not to give haphazardly.

3. **2 Cor. 8:3, 13-14** – Freewill giving is to be **willingly** given, **according to our ability**.

4. **2 Cor. 8:3, 9** – Freewill giving is to be **generous** and **sacrificial**. **King David** said, “I will not give to the Lord that which cost me nothing.”

5. **2 Cor. 8:8, 24** – Freewill giving is to be **an act of love**. Zaccheus gave 50%, plus 4-fold to those he had cheated.

Rom. 13:10 – **Love** is the fulfillment of the Law.

6. **2 Cor. 9:7** – Freewill giving is to be a **cheerful act of faith**.

7. **2 Cor. 9:6, 10-11** – Freewill giving is to be an **investment with God**.

Prov. 3:9-10 – **Firstfruit offerings**, when an Israelite honored God with the firstfruits of his crops. The beautiful thing was that he had not yet harvested the crop. He was investing with God, voluntarily, choosing to live by faith (the promise of God’s blessing)

8. **2 Cor. 9:5** – Freewill giving is **not** to be **restricted by covetousness**.
9. **2 Cor. 9:12** – Freewill giving is to go to **meet legitimate needs**.
10. **2 Cor. 8:20-21** – Freewill giving should be **guided** by the understanding of Biblical **accountability**. We’re accountable both to God and man.

God is the original Giver. The Father gave the Son, the Son gave his life, and together they gave the Holy Spirit. God is an extravagant giver. Jesus said, “Give to others, and God will give to you. Indeed, you will receive a full measure, a generous helping, poured into your hands—all that you can hold. The measure you use for others is the one that God will use for you.” **Luke 6:38** (TEV)

It is not difficult to see that God has called us to be givers. He has instructed us that we must be faithful stewards - responsible in the areas of **required** giving as well as in **freewill** giving. Just as we are growing in other areas of our spiritual life in God, so we need to grow in a faith response to God with our giving.

Conclusion:

Everything belongs to God – He is the One who gives us the ability to make money, so we are simply stewards, handling His resources.

Required giving plus **freewill** giving not only supports the work of God among men, by furthering the gospel and meeting the needs of the poor, but it also gives each of us the opportunity to **honor** God as our source.

It gives us the opportunity to express our **thankfulness** and **love** for His salvation; and in addition, it allows us to grow by exercising faith in the promises of His Word.

Prov. 11:24-25 – “Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything. The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.” (NLT)

James 1:16-18 – “So don’t be misled, my dear brothers and sisters. Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession.” (NLT)

I believe that as we obey the instruction of God’s Word and exercise our faith, we will reach new heights in our walk with God and experience His richest blessings for ourselves and for our children. We need to progress from being **occasional givers** to **regular givers**, from **regular givers** to believers who **faithfully tithe** our income, and from **tithers** to **extravagant givers**.