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## CHAPTER 9 : FINANCES AND GIVING

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*'Engage in business until I come.'*  
(Luke 19:13(b))

### **A. Prosperity: For The Whole Man**

"Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul" (3Jn 2, ESV) "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." (3Jn 2, KJV) In this text the word "prosper" (in Greek, "evodoo") literally means "to help on the road" or "succeed in reaching." It clearly implies that divine prosperity is not a passing phenomenon but an ongoing state of success and well-being. It is intended for every area of our lives: the spiritual, the physical, the emotional and the material. However, God does not want one to unduly emphasise any one area, one must maintain a balance.

#### **A.1. Spiritual Prosperity**

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

#### **A.2. Mental Prosperity**

See Php 4:6.

#### **A.3. Physical Prosperity**

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

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

### **B. Giving**

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

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

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

" 'But you ask, "How are we to return?"

" '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. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit,' says the LORD Almighty. 'Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,' says the LORD Almighty." (Mal 3:7-12)

There is a universal law of reciprocity: when you plant a seed the ground yields a harvest, when you put money in the bank the bank returns interest. How can you expect God to honour your desire when you have not honoured His command to give, according to Mal 3?

There are various expressions of giving in Scripture.

### **B.1. Tithes**

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

One can see from the above that tithing is not a law issue, that it predated mosaic law, was enforced by the law and was approved by Jesus.

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

Jesus was supported by grateful people such as women in Luke 8:2-3 and Mt 27:55. He did not provide for His and His disciples needs by supernatural means. Judas was His treasurer and looked after gifts given to Jesus and His ministry. Jesus said that the worker is worth his keep (Mt 10:9-10). In Acts 4:35 we see that money was laid at the apostles' feet for distribution.

Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel." (1Co 9:1-15).

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

We must tithe to the place where we receive our spiritual blessing. The New Testament's teaching is that in normal circumstances each church should be self supporting. The tithe was given on an annual basis in the Old Testament while on a weekly basis in the New Testament. It depends on when you are paid and should be the first-fruits (that is, the first deduction you make). See, for example, Ex 23:19a, Nu 18:12 and Ne 10:35-38.

## **B.2. Offerings**

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

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

So giving an offering is free-will giving, and it is given over and above tithing. The Bible teaches that God demands our tithes whereas He deserves our offerings. Offerings are not demanded in Scripture.

In summary, we use offerings for “things” while tithing is used for “people.” An example of where offerings are used is the purchase of sound equipment and the maintenance of our church’s building.

### **B.3. Mercy Giving**

Almsgiving or mercy giving is giving specifically to the poor.

“All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.” (Gal 2:10)

“For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.” (Ro 15:26)

There are numerous other scriptures supporting this category of giving:

- Mt 6:1-4 Giving to the needy.
- Mt 19:21 Selling your possessions and giving to the poor.
- Lk 3:11 Those with much sharing with those who have none.
- Ac 2:44-45, Ac 4:32 All believers sharing their possessions with each other.
- Ac 11:27-30 Giving gifts to the elders to administrate.
- Ro 12:8 Contributing to the needs of others.
- Eph 4:28 Working to have something to share with those who have none.
- Jas 2:14-17 Giving as an expression of good deeds accompanying our faith.
- 1Jn 3:17 Having pity on those who are in need.

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

### **B.4. Apostolic Giving**

This is giving our money towards the extension of God’s kingdom into the nations. We should contribute generously to His purpose of world evangelism. We are co-workers with God (1Co 3:9). We are to be helping Him carry out His plan of redeeming the world. We should see our giving going out all over the world, carrying the truth to the nations.

Paul the apostle said to the Philippian church in Php 4:18, “I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.”

Live The Life, as a church, gives to New Covenant Ministries International (NCMI) and other translocal ministries, and each member is encouraged to do the same, including blessing those who plant churches.

### **B.5. General Giving (Lifestyle Of Generosity)**

We serve a wonderfully generous God. We need to reflect this in living a lifestyle of generosity. There are numerous passages in Scripture exhorting us to live generously.

“It is more blessed to give than receive.” (Ac 20:35b) The early believers in Ac 2:45 shared all their possessions and no one had any need.

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

### **B.6. God Is Not In Need**

“I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. “I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine. “If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it.” (Ps 50:9-12)  
“ ‘The silver is mine and the gold is mine,’ declares the LORD Almighty.” (Hag 2:8)

God does not need our money. The gold is His, the silver is His, the cattle on a thousand hills are His, and, as it so happens, God says that even the thousand hills are His. When we give, we give to the Lord, not to men (2Co 8:5), not because the Lord needs it, but to remind ourselves that it belongs to Him (Dt 8:18, Dt 15:15, Dt 24:17).

We work because God created us to work, not because God is unable to provide or because God is desperate for our finances.

(Even if you feel that God desires you to be in the business world at this time, you do not need to compromise your spiritual involvement in the church so that you can “earn more to tithe more,” as if God needed your money more than your heart. God does not need rich people to advance His kingdom, He needs available people.)

### **B.7. Practical Hints**

- Tithe 10% of your gross salary (taxable income) to your local church.
- The tithe must be first-fruits. Tithe when you receive your salary, wages or other income.
- Mark your contribution clearly with one of these four categories, using a note or envelope: tithe, offering, mercy or apostolic. (For example, you may mark an envelope put into the offering basket to indicate that half the amount in the envelope is offering whilst the other half is for mercy.)
- Never give out of manipulation, but rather out of conviction. God loves a cheerful giver (2Co 9:6-8). Don't give reluctantly.
- Think before giving a pledge as this should always be honoured.

### **B.8. Summary**

The spirit of the New Testament is to be generous givers on all occasions (a mindset and lifestyle of giving).

“I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.

“They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed. (Ps 37:25-26) “Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice.” (Ps 112:5)

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

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

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

### **C. Giving And Christian Finances**

When we give our lives to Christ, He becomes our Lord and saviour. This means not only has He saved us from eternal damnation but He is Lord<sup>6</sup> of our lives. In other words, everything we have is His: all we have belongs to the Lord, we are stewards<sup>7</sup>.

Scripture says a lot about our responsibilities in dealing with our finances and material possessions. Money is mentioned more than 750 times in the Scriptures and half of Jesus' parables involve money. Approximately 1/6 of the New Testament deals with money, greed and related issues. God's care and provision for those He loves is seen in numerous ways (Mt 6:25-33). We believe that God is our provider and not man.

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

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Mt 6:25-33).