

What Do I Have that God Wants?

Part Two – Our Possessions

Scripture Focus

Acts 20:35 "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Introduction

Last week we spoke of giving God “Our Person.” Giving God our spirit, soul and body as an act of worship. We talked about being a “living sacrifice” and willingly giving ourselves over to the will and work of God. This week we are continuing in the series “What Do I Have that God Wants?” Today we are talking about giving God “Our Possessions.” God is interested in how we handle the “things” He gives us.

In everything we do – everything – we must always check our motives. We must examine our attitude – our heart and determine if what we are doing is merely for selfish pleasure or for the betterment of others. In no other area in our life are we prone to wrong motives than in the area of giving. Usually we are motivated to give out of:

1. Guilt – “I have to give.”
2. Responsibility – “I ought to give – it is my duty.”
3. Need – “I want to give because I see the need before me.”
4. Thanksgiving – “He has done so much for me why not give.”
5. Worship – “I will honor God and bring Him glory by giving.”

C.S. Lewis the famous Christian author said, *“I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare.”* Giving is not a matter of saying, “I will give from what is leftover!” Giving is about trusting God and taking Him at His word. Giving is an act of faith – it is an act of worship! Many people have a lot of ideas about giving but there is one proven method given to us in scripture that never fails to bring the blessings of the Lord into our lives – TITHING. Tithing is “God’s Economic Plan” to grow His kingdom and to support the work of the ministry. This morning let’s look at this simple way of giving that pays HUGE REWARDS!

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 8:7 that we are to excel in some things...*“But just as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us – see that you also excel in this grace of giving (NIV).*

The Lord wants us to excel in faith, knowledge, speech but He also wants us to excel in GIVING. Something that must first be grasped when we are checking our motives about giving is this – God is only asking us to share what He has already given to us.

Bob McCune, a member of the US Congress (parliament), tells the story of the time he took his kids to eat at a local fast-food establishment. As he and his kids sat down to eat, Bob smelled the chips in front of one of his sons and reached over to get one. To his surprise, the young boy grabbed his dad's hand, pushed it back and said, "Dad, Dad, don't take my fries!" McCune was stunned. He sat in front of his son in silence and wondered, "What happened?" Then the meaning of this moment became clear to him. He thought, "My son doesn't know where those chips came from. He doesn't realize that about five minutes ago, I went to the counter, put my hand in my pocket, pulled out the money and bought those fries for him. I am the source of those chips. My son doesn't understand that if I wanted to, I could go over to the counter and by a dozen orders of chips and cover him with them. He doesn't know that I don't even need his chips. If I wanted to I could go over to the counter and buy my own. What I really wanted from my son was his willingness to SHARE with me what I had already given Him!"

When we are unwilling to share what we have already been given it's like we are slapping God in the hand and saying, "Don't take my money!" More importantly the scripture declares that when we fail to give our tithe we are ROBBING God!

Are We Taking God At His Word?

Consider these scriptures:

Acts 20:35 *"I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"*

When was the last time you were blessed by giving something away? The real question here is this – Do we really believe Jesus when He says, "It's more blessed to give than to receive." Are we taking Jesus at His word?

Joshua 1:8 *Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful (NIV).*

What does God say we must do to become prosperous and successful? To do everything that has been written in His book. Again, do we really believe this? Are we taking God at His word?

Malachi 3:8 - 10 *"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. 9 You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. 10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.*

We are robbing God when we fail to give our tithe (a tenth of our income) each and every time we get paid. I want you to notice one phrase in this passage of scripture:

1. TRY ME (verse 10)!

- a. This simple means “to examine, to prove.” The Lord is saying to us – go ahead and give your tithe and offering and see if I won’t pour out a blessing you won’t have room enough to receive. Go ahead “put God to the test” and see if He is not faithful. You have tried every other way of saving money and it only seemed to slip through your hands so why not try honoring God with your possessions – your money!

Are we taking God at His word?

Proverbs 3:9 *Honor the LORD with your possessions (wealth), And with the firstfruits of all your increase; 10 So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.*

The word HONOR means to “be heavy.” Are we weighing God down with our tithe and offering? But there is an important question you have to ask yourself – am I giving God my leftovers or the first fruits? In other words, do you trust God enough that you are willing to HONOR Him before you HONOR anyone else? When we tithe we are to give of the FIRST FRUIT...today we would call that GROSS EARNINGS. This is what you earn before taxes and deductions. Are we giving God a tithe of all of our increase or just whatever is left over at the end of the month?

I have made a practice of taking my tithe out of my pay FIRST – before I do anything else – because if I don’t I will use that money and that money belongs to God. LET’S LOOK AT ONE MORE SCRIPTURE...

Luke 6:38 *"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."*

HOW MUCH OF A BLESSING DO YOU WANT IN YOUR LIFE? Sounds like a crazy question – because we all want God’s biggest and best blessing to be upon our lives. Well, maybe we should ask another question – if I am only giving God the left over does that mean my blessing will be based on the left over? The answer – YES! Whatever measure you give – that same measure will come back too you. So if you are generous with your measure – then generous blessings will come back too you!

If all of these verse we have read are true (and they are) then why don’t we as Christians give more? And why don’t more Christians give? One reason is this – we don’t trust that God will keep His word! We’re not sure that He will bless us when we give! Again, we have to always check our motivation – I don’t give just to GET. I give to be a blessing to the Kingdom and in return the Kingdom blesses me in ways I can’t always predict. God wants to work THROUGH us in our giving, but first we have to trust that He is our provider!

Does Tithing Apply To Me?

Tithing was common in the Book of Acts church. As a matter of fact you will discover that as you read the second chapter of Acts that after the Holy Ghost was poured out the first thing the people did was give. Look at...

Acts 2:44 *Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.*

They were so changed by the power of God that the things of this world no longer mattered and they were willing to do whatever it took to be a blessing to others in the Kingdom. So, we today who have received this same experience should consider that God desires for us to SHARE the blessings that He has given us. The easiest way to do this is by committing to give your tithe regularly and faithfully.

Tithing should be our starting place and it certainly should not be our stopping place. In other words tithing is the minimum requirement. Even people who don't believe in God understand the practice of tithing and giving. Egypt, Babylon and Assyria tithed to their false god's. They gave of their tithe, not because a religious law commanded it, but because of the great spiritual significance that comes from giving.

Tithing shows an attitude of gratitude for the Lord. When you give a tenth (tithe) of your income to the work of the Lord, you are actually confessing that God is the owner of everything I have and that He is in control. When you tithe you demonstrate your faith in God to be in control of your possessions and money. When you tithe of your first fruits – not your leftovers – you show gratitude to God for giving you your financial blessings. We can see the principle of “first fruits” throughout the entire Bible: (HAVE READERS READ)...

2Ch 31:5 *As soon as the commandment was circulated, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of grain and wine, oil and honey, and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything.*

Proverbs 3:9 *Honor the LORD with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; 10 So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.*

Bringing the “first fruit” tithe proved that the people were confident that God would provide for all their needs. Tithing will strengthen our commitment to the things of God – why? Because we are investing! I do not know anyone who puts money into an investment who is not concerned about the growth of that investment. When you give your tithe to the work of the Lord you are investing in His kingdom and thus you are helping the kingdom grow and prosper. Then as the kingdom grows and our influence spreads then more people come to know Jesus Christ! Matthew recorded the words of the Lord...

Matthew 6:21 *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

One man said it like this – “Where your pleasure is, there is your treasure; where your treasure is, there is your heart; and where your heart is, there is your happiness.”

Several times through the years I have been asked, “Where should I give my tithe?” The answer is simple – wherever you eat. Paul said that since the Pastor feeds you in spiritual things he then

ahs the right to reap of you the carnal things. What is he saying? It's simple – if I go to KFC and order a streetwise meal – (then wait 30 minutes to get it) – the cashier says, “That will be R19.95.” Then I say, “Well I will go give the R19.95 to Nando's.” They are going to look at me like I am crazy. Why? Because when they feed my body they expect me to feed their till!! As the leader of the church we are charged with feeding you the Word of God and helping you to develop in strong, mature Christians. Then we can expect to be cared for financially – at least that is what the scripture declares.

What Can I Really Expect As I Give God My Possession?

I can say this with all confidence and boldness – when you tithe the Lord will pour out blessing upon your life. God not only promises financial blessings but he also promise physical blessing in abundance. Jesus told us that if we would seek Him first that our physical needs would be cared for! Do we trust the Word of God – more importantly – do we trust the God of the Word? Imagine what would happen if everyone tithed into the work of the Lord. I'll tell you what would happen – the church would thrive!

The average Christian gives only 2.5% of their income to the Kingdom. Can you imagine the impact if every Christian would quit robbing God and give their full tithe – the first fruit! If everyone here who earns money – by a job, pension, social grant – any money that is earned – would begin to tithe our income would go up by 400%. There is an awesome thing that happens when a church gets caught up in a spirit of giving. That spirit falls over on everything we do...we find that a generous church is a growing, thriving and healthy church.

We have got to shake off this “POVERTY MENTALITY” that has gripped our thinking. It doesn't matter if you earn R50 per month or Rand 50,000 per month the tithe is the same 10%. And, whether you earn Rand 50 or 50,000 you are still required to give to the work of the Lord. Sure the amounts are different but the blessing is the same! Why? Because we are giving the same in the eyes of God! I have made this statement over and over – as a church we will not be takers – we will be givers! **We are not poor!** Sure we may not have everything we WANT but I guarantee that if you will begin to invest in the Kingdom of God by giving your tithe and offering you had better watch out – because the Lord is going open up the windows of heaven and give you a blessings you will not have room enough to receive!

It's A Clear Choice!

The promises of God are clear regarding tithing: it is more blessed to give than receive. When we give our first fruits, we will be abundantly blessed. When we tithe to God He will open the windows of heaven and bless us in unimaginable ways. Even in this modern time – tithing is still God's plan for supporting the ministry and funding the mission of the church. Tithing is the beginning of giving to God. As we seek to please him with our offerings, and thank Him for His guidance in our life, we should begin our gifts with the tithe.

God has purposed and planned for all us to share equally in financing the work of the Lord. Sure we don't all give the same amount of money but we should all be giving the same percentage. So what do you have that God wants – God wants you to give of your possessions. To come to the

realization that money is not in control, things are not in control but that God alone is control of all things.