



Global College of Ministry

EMPOWER
The Christian & Giving

Hands Go! Hands Come!

“And all that believed were together, and had all things common: And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need”
(Acts 2:44-45).

The morning after the Day of Pentecost, a crisis arose in the new Church. With 3000 converts added to the 120 who were in the Upper Room, there was now the problem of where to have church and accommodate the new converts. They could not all go back to where they came from. They stayed together to fellowship, pray, and grow in the Apostles’ doctrine. All these converts represented a huge need for housing and feeding. Furniture needed to be moved from available homes. People started selling their belongings so everyone’s needs would be met.

During those early days of the Church, those converted knew they would have to sell everything they had on this earth. Through selling everything, the need of everyone was met. People with jobs likely gave their wages, and not just their tithes so everyone would have food to eat. Money and property were turned over to the Apostles to use where it was most needed. (Notice who held the money.) Years later, once the needs of everyone were being met, the church in Jerusalem returned to a more normal way of life. Even this system of “common-ism” had its problems as seen in Acts 5:1 and Acts 6:1. It was temporary. It was a system of mutual ownership. God does not require this today. What He does require is a willingness to do this, if necessary. Would you be willing to sell all you have and give it to the needs of others?

They sold all they had because of two basic reasons:

1. Their brothers and sisters had needs and they had blessings to share with them.
2. There was a conviction that Jesus Christ was coming soon. Therefore, there was not a continuing need for material things. Jim Elliot, a missionary who gave his life reaching people said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose!” When we give we are making investments in the Bank of Heaven. Norma S. Scholl said, “Everything we have is really loaned to us. We cannot take anything with us when we depart. If we have no use for a thing, we should pass it on to someone else who can use it now.”

Paul speaks of the Macedonian churches that were willing to give, out of their poverty, not only according to their power, but beyond. Paul said we should excel in giving. We are to give according to what we have, not according to what we do not have (2 Corinthians 8:12).

“But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: As it is written, He that hath gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack” (2 Corinthians 8: 14-15).

In these verses, Paul was saying our plenty will supply what they need so there will be equality (everyone having what they need). This is like the Akan proverb, "Hands Go! Hands Come!" (Nsa kô na nsa aba!) When we have a need others will help.

Other proverbs include: (Some of these have been used in a previous lesson).

- The left arm washes the right arm, and the right arm washes the left arm.
- When two arms wash each other, they both become clean.
- The fingers of the hand are not equal in length. (Individual capabilities are not all equal.)
- One finger alone cannot lift a thing. (It requires all five fingers in cooperation.)

"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).

There was a preacher in a church who said, "This church, like the crippled man, has got to get up and walk!" The members shouted, "That's right. Let's walk!" "This church," he continued, "like Elijah on Mount Carmel, has got to run!" "Let it run, preacher!" thundered the people in response. "This church has got to mount on wings like eagles and fly!" And they said, "Let it fly!" But when the preacher said, "If it flies, it takes money" the people shouted, "Let it walk!"

"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 giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse" (Proverbs 28:27).

"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).

In this world filled with people in need, and many times living in poverty yourself, it is easy to say, "I cannot help everybody!" You may be poor but you help somebody.

Remember
HANDS GO! HANDS COME!

I wonder what reward the poor churches of Macedonia received because of their sacrificial, selfless giving? Their giving came up before the Lord as "a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God" (Philippians 4:18). What else happened? They prospered because of their giving.

The Blessings of Giving

“I have shown you all things, how that so laboring 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” (Acts 20:35).

When we think of “blessings”, we usually think in terms of “getting” or “receiving”. Much emphasis is put on “prosperity” by modern church movements and it is the desire of many Christians. The “Full Life Study Bible” mentions, “The measure of blessing and reward we receive will be in proportion to our concern and help given to others.” It is a biblical principle mentioned in 2 Corinthians that if we “Give Generously Reap Generously.” However, if we “Give Sparingly ...Reap Sparingly.”

“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: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:6-7).

When we give cheerfully and generously, we are planting a seed and will reap greater blessings. Perhaps this is why in some of our churches, we shout “Offering Time...” and hear the response, “...Is Blessing Time.” Some churches also call the time for offering and/or payment of tithes “SEED TIME.” We are giving our tithes (one tenth of our income) and offerings, praising God for His blessing and expect more blessings in the future (sowing the seed knowing that we will reap the harvest in the future.) It is truly more blessed to give than to receive, because when you give you will receive again. If we give we will never lack.

“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).

The Bible teaches us that “the love of money is the root of all evil.” Money is not the root of all evil BUT the love of money. However, the Bible also says, “money answereth all things” (Ecclesiastes 10:19). Some people become trapped in living for money rather than using money to live. Obadiah 1:17 tells us to “Possess our Possessions.” We must be careful not to allow our possessions to possess us. We should love people and use our possessions (material things we acquire) but often we love our material things and use people to achieve the things that we want in life. It seems that people are always looking for ways to get money but money is only useful if you do something (useful) with it.

It has been said, “People will do almost anything for money and money will do almost anything for people.” God is really the one that owns all of our possessions, including money (Exodus 19:5; Psalm 24:1; 50:10-12).

“The silver is mine and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts” (Haggai 2:8).

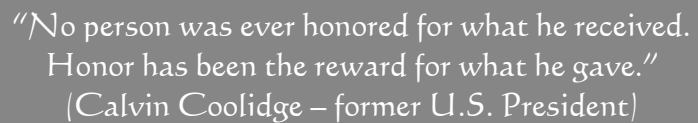
We just manage the resources that He provides for us. We are His stewards. A “steward” is one who manages, conducts, or directs the business of another.

We, as Christian stewards, exercise our responsibility over all God entrusts into our care including our time and money. A steward, according to 1 Corinthians 4:2, is required to be faithful.

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

Faithfulness in handling money is necessary if we want God to give us more blessings.

The way we spend our money is a true indicator of our priorities and the condition of our heart (Matthew 6:21). Only when we are faithful will we hear Him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things” (Matthew 25:21).



“No person was ever honored for what he received.
Honor has been the reward for what he gave.”
(Calvin Coolidge – former U.S. President)

Rev. Michael Ntume, in his book *Financial Breakthrough: Discovering God’s Secrets to Prosperity*, suggests three main aspects in the use of money: upward to God; inward to your family (1 Timothy 5:4,8); and outward to society. In this lesson I would like to look at only the first one mentioned.

Upward to God

The word “Tithe” means, “a tenth part.” The “tithe” is one tenth of a person’s income. However, “tithing” does not stop at our income. In Bible times the “tithe” was also one tenth of a person’s crops and the fruit of trees (Leviticus 27:30-32; Numbers 18:21,26; Deuteronomy 14:22-29). According to Deuteronomy 14:22, the “tithe” was one tenth of all increase that the people received. You can “tithe” on your income, crops, animals, and even your time. Cain and Abel offered firstfruits unto the Lord (Genesis 4:3-4). When we pay our “tithes” we are recognizing that God has blessed us.

Michael Ntume states that one of the major causes of “Poverty Bondage” is the failure to tithe properly. “The tithe belongs to the LORD. Failure to give the tithe to God is tantamount to robbery that attracts serious consequences. This sets in motion the vicious cycle of poverty that brings one from one degree of bondage to another.”

The focus on paying the “tithe” is for our blessing (Deuteronomy 14:29). “Tithing” is part of God’s plan of blessing man. However, failure to pay our tithes will bring a curse into our life instead of blessing. Many people are concerned about receiving deliverance from all types of

curses but it seems that little thought is given to curses that we bring upon ourselves through disobedience to God's Word. If we OBEY the Word of God by paying our tithes we will receive a BLESSING. On the other hand, if we DISOBEY the Word of God and do not pay our tithes we will receive a CURSE.

Things to Learn From Malachi

John Hopkins in his book entitled "Christian Giving" lists six things we can learn from Malachi 3:8-10.

1. We can rob God by not giving our tithes and offerings to His work.
2. If we do not give to God we forfeit (cancel) His blessings.
3. We should bring tithes into the storehouse (church treasury).
4. The purpose of the tithe is to provide for the ministers of the gospel who work in the House of God.
5. We should PROVE God to see if His Word is true when He promises blessings to those who give to His work. Here is one of the few places in the Scriptures where God challenges us to try Him in something.
6. God promises to bless that entire tithe.

If you have not been faithful in paying your tithes, it is a good time for you to repent, offer restitution (where possible) and start obeying the Word of God so you can reap the blessings attached.

Tithing should be the very first thing that you do when you receive your salary/income. If you postpone paying your tithes for a month or two you will find it is very difficult to pay them. You should pay your tithes each time you receive your salary. It is said, "Life is hard, yard by yard. Life is easy, inch by inch." So, don't allow your tithes to add up with the intention of one day paying it. The slightest deed done is better than your greatest intentions.

You are also exhorted in God's Word to give offerings. God does not determine the amount you are to give. The amount you give should be according to your income. The more you earn the larger the amounts that you give. I once read, "Give according to your income or God will make your income according to your giving." If you give like a poor man don't be surprised if God makes you a poor man.

"But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:" (2 Corinthians 8:14).

We came naked into this world and we will leave the same way. The only wealth/money that you can take with you will be that which is sent ahead and is invested in the "First Bank of Heaven" (Matthew 6:19-20; Philippians 4:17). Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep in order to gain what he cannot lose.

You may feel like the member who complained to his pastor, “In this church there is so much emphasis on give, give, give.” The pastor responded, “You have just given one of the best descriptions of Christianity that I have ever heard.” (Lucille Goodyear)

Study Questions

1. What is the root of all evil? _____

2. What is the Bible principle concerning giving in 2 Corinthians 9? _____

3. Who owns all money according to Haggai 2:8? _____

4. What is meant by the “Tithe”? _____

5. What should we possess according to Obadiah 1:17? _____

6. What is a “steward”? _____

7. According to Michael Ntuny, what are the three uses of money? _____

8. What should we tithe besides money? _____

9. What is one of the major causes of poverty bondage? _____

10. Failure to pay tithes is described as what in Malachi 3:7? _____

Giving Is a Blessing

“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”
(Acts 20:35).

Admit it or not we live in a prosperity-seeking society. Few, if any, possess a desire for poverty (me included). What is the secret to prosperity? Sorry. There are no quick fixes that effortlessly transport you from rags to riches or poverty to prosperity.

Prosperity and blessings are based on God’s unchanging principles. He provides the promises and the conditions. He stands ready to act or should I say, “react.” God is waiting for us to act in obedience. Like any other contract, two parties are involved. Both have responsibility to fulfill.

Rev. Nick Sisco mentions two facts in his lesson “Pursuing Principles; Possessing Promises.”

1. God promises. Man possesses.
2. Most of God’s promises are conditional.

He goes through an impressive list of scriptural promises where he shows if we do our part, then God fulfills His promises now. Check it out with 2 Chronicles 7:14-15.

“IF my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; THEN will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. NOW mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attentive unto the prayer that is made in this place.”

Someone has offered this advice.

If you wish to be poor—grasp.
If you wish to be needy—hoard.
If you wish to be rich—give.

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:6-8, *NIV*).

The principle: “it is more blessed to give than to receive” is a close brother to “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

Our world and culture thinks, "It is more blessed to receive than to give." God's wisdom is the opposite. Paul quoting the words of Jesus in Acts 20:35 provokes a question. Why is it more blessed to give than to receive?

"Lord, bless those that have to give and those that have not..." Ever hear anyone pray over the offering like that? It is a deficient, pointless prayer. God does not promise to bless those that give and those that do not give the same. He blesses those that give.

Try: "Lord, bless those that have given, and for those that do not have to give; bless them so that they can give."

Giving releases the *flow* of God's blessings on the giver. A stream that is not flowing will become stagnant. In giving, there needs to be an *outflow* before there can be an *inflow*. Your generosity flows out, and God's blessings flow in.

Consider this. A person must *breathe out* in order to *breathe in*. It's the only way to stay alive. There is only so much breathing in you can do before you'll explode, smother or collapse. *Outflow* determines *inflow*.

David Holdaway in his book *Never Enough: How to Achieve Financial and Spiritual Breakthrough* explains we are born "with fingers curled and grasping, crying and clutching for what we want." He advises that we "walk through life with *open hands*, learning to give, so we are in a place to receive. *Clenched fists* make it impossible for us to receive what God wants to give us. Only to the extent that we open our hands will we be in a place to receive." After all, poverty is keeping what we have with clenched fists, fearing that if we give, we will have nothing. To break out of the poverty bondage the opposite spirit must be employed.

Holdaway tells of a farmer known for his giving. The man said, "I just take my shovel and shovel into God's barn, and He takes His shovel and shovels into my barn. I have discovered that God has the bigger shovel."

Speaking of barns: "Honor the Lord with your capital and sufficiency [from righteous labors] and with the firstfruits of all your income; [Deuteronomy 26:2; Malachi 3:10; Luke 14:13,14.] So shall your storage places be filled with plenty, and your vats shall be overflowing with new wine [Deuteronomy 28:8]" (Proverbs 3:9-10, AMP). Give and your barns will be filled with plenty and your vessels will be overflowing. No wonder churches proclaim, "Offering time is blessing time!"

Get the picture? Outflow determines inflow. Open hands beat clenched fists. You have a little spoon. God has a huge shovel. You are blessed to be a blessing. When you bless, you receive a blessing.

“If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted...Rather be openhanded and freely lend him whatever he needs...Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then *because of this* the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to” (Deuteronomy 15:7-10, *NIV*). I hoped you noticed the: if, then, and now promised in those verses. It’s all in the contract.

God will fully supply and satisfy our needs. Take a look at the following Scriptures that prove this.

“And my God will liberally supply (fill to the full) your every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19, *AMP*).

“Will a man rob or defraud God? Yet you rob and defraud Me. But you say, In what way do we rob or defraud You? [You have withheld your] tithes and offerings. You are cursed with the curse, for you are robbing Me, even this whole nation. [Leviticus 26:14-17.] Bring all the tithes (the whole tenth of your income) into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove Me now by it, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. [Malachi 2:2.] And I will rebuke the devourer [insects and plagues] for your sakes and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground, neither shall your vine drop its fruit before the time in the field, says the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you happy and blessed, for you shall be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 3:8-12, *AMP*).

“The wicked borrow and never repay, but the godly are generous givers. Those blessed by the LORD will inherit the land, but those cursed by him will die” (Psalms 37:21-22, *NLT*).

“I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the [uncompromisingly] righteous forsaken or their seed begging bread. All day long they are merciful and deal graciously; they lend, and their offspring are blessed” (Psalms 37:25-26, *AMP*).

“How blessed is he who considers the helpless; The LORD will deliver him in a day of trouble. The LORD will protect him and keep him alive, And he shall be called blessed upon the earth; And do not give him over to the desire of his enemies. The LORD will sustain him upon his sickbed; In his illness, You restore him to health” (Psalms 41:1-3, *NASU*).

“His children shall be honored everywhere, for good men's sons have a special heritage. He himself shall be wealthy, and his good deeds will never be forgotten. When darkness overtakes him, light will come bursting in. He is kind and merciful- and all goes well for the generous man who conducts his business fairly. Such a man will not be overthrown by evil circumstances. God's constant care of him will make a deep impression on all who see it. He does not fear bad news, nor live in dread of what may happen. For he is settled in his mind that Jehovah will take care of him. That is why he is not afraid but can calmly face his foes. He gives generously to

those in need. His deeds will never be forgotten. He shall have influence and honor” (Psalms 112:2-9, *TLB*).

“But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly” (Matthew 6:3-4, *NKJV*). See also Matthew 10:42; 19:21.

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

Study Questions

1. Prosperity and blessing are based upon what? _____

2. What two facts does Nick Sisco mention, as recorded in this lesson? _____

3. What is the advice someone offered in this lesson? _____

4. What happens when one sows sparingly? _____

5. Clenched fists make it impossible for God to do what? _____

6. What did the farmer (in this lesson) say about giving? _____

God's Plan for Prosperity

(Adapted from *Path to Righteousness* by Linda Poitras)

“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 2:10).

Introduction

There are many new doctrines circulating in our world today, and millions of people are following them (Matthew 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. These speakers use the Bible in a twisted and perverted sense to accomplish their aims. They have forgotten one very important passage of Scripture, in their desire to see 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 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, the wisest of men, wrote in Proverbs 30:8-9: *“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 keep these verses 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:

- ☞ Being exalted (Deuteronomy 7:14; 28:13)
- ☞ Being successful in the home and workplace (Deuteronomy 28:3, 8-12)
- ☞ Having sound health for the whole family (Deuteronomy 7:15; Malachi 4:2)
- ☞ Enjoying protection and victory over one’s enemies (Leviticus 26:6-8; Deuteronomy 28:7)
- ☞ Childbearing and soundness (Psalm 113:9; Deuteronomy 7:14)
- ☞ Having favor with God and man (Leviticus 26:11-12; Deuteronomy 28:9-10)

How do we go about finding the prosperity that is God’s plan for our lives?

What About Tithes?

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 at the time of Abraham. How do you suppose Abraham knew 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. Genesis 14:20 says Abraham gave the priest *“tithes of all.”* Some say that tithing is no longer necessary because we are not under the Old Testament Law. Abraham paid tithes *before* the law.

Abraham is not the only example of tithing before the practice was 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 does not record this, but traditions were taught by the father of the family. The fact that Jacob knew about the practice tells us he had seen or heard of it before – probably from his father, Isaac, who had in turn learned it from his father, Abraham.

What are tithes?

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

- 📖 When God set up the laws and ordinances that ruled His people, He established tithing as a means of financial support for the priesthood.
- 📖 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 to 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).

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

- 📖 At harvest time, the tithes were brought to the Tabernacle, and later, to the Temple in Jerusalem.
- 📖 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.”

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

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. In order to perform their duties properly, God provided a living for them in the tithe. When Israel

forsook God, tithing stopped. Then the Levites had to make a living somewhere else, so 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).

What were the first fruits?

Not only did God expect a tenth of all the increase in Israel, He required the first fruits. 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 leftovers. He demands the best we have. We should give the Lord the first fruits of our labor too. We should pay tithes *before* other bills are paid. It will amaze us how God blesses our increase if we 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.”
(T. F. Tenney)

What About Tithing Today?

Tithing was considered as a tax in some of the early churches. In the real sense, tithing expresses the character and personality of God, demonstrated by 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).

The writer of Hebrews tells us how it all fits together to become the special practice that God intended.

- 📖 His plan was for us to honor Him with our first fruits in the understanding that He gave us what we have and 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).
- 📖 In return, He planned to bless His people in a way they could not contain – true prosperity (Malachi 3:10).
- 📖 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 this verse is simple, yet easily overlooked. When we tithe to the “King of Righteousness,” He is also, after that, called the “King of Peace.” Most people clamoring for wealth are not happy, and do not have peace. When we give our tithe as God intended, we are giving them to the One who grants us peace.
- 📖 Tithing, which comes from the spirit of giving, invokes the blessing of God to ensure genuine prosperity. *“The blessing of the LORD maketh rich and addeth no sorrow”* (Proverbs 10:22).

A Commitment to Obedience

1 Samuel 15:22 is a special Scripture whose principle is followed throughout the 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.”*

God is still looking for people who will obey His Word. He tells us the true test of our love for Him will be proven by 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”* (Luke 14:23-24). This is a strong statement. No matter what we say, if we do not obey God’s sayings, we do not love him.

The unfortunate idea of millions of people is that “tithing” is a voluntary relinquishing of something valued. In the sight of God, it is the key to free His children from financial and health problems. God has *always* wanted His children to be happy, healthy, and full of the good things they need. But they persist in disobedience.

God continues to call 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).

When you study God’s relationship with the children of Israel, it is clear the source of their woes and suffering. Most people blame their mishaps, tribulation and upheavals on the devil. God claims responsibility in His Word for these perils and explains His actions as 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?

- Because of self-seeking lives, and
- Because of very little interest in God’s goals and purposes

Why Give Tithes?

It already belongs to God. The key to prosperity is given to those who believe that what they give comes from God. Everything, even our breath, is given 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).

We do not 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 by demonic powers. How many of us understand about the curse we place on *ourselves* when we fail to obey God's Word?

- 📖 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 we "cannot afford" to pay tithes. We cannot afford NOT to. Haggai 1:6 tells us what happens when we fall into this "I cannot 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."*
- 📖 When God branded His people as robbers:
 - He was drawing their attention to the fact that all they had was from His divine treasury.
 - They had no right, even as His children, to disburse these funds without recognizing Him as the owner.
 - 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.
 - All God wants is for His children to demonstrate His quality of giving, as He did when He gave His blood for our redemption.
 - 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).

What is the Difference in Tithes & Offerings?

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 an important part of God's financial plan, but their purposes in the work of God differ. They should never be joined or confused.

- There were many types of offerings in the Old Testament – those for peace, sin, trespass (or guilt), thanksgiving, fellowship, and many more (Leviticus 1-7).
- These offerings were either fulfilled or changed by the New Covenant. In the New Testament, we find different examples of offerings, such as those taken for the needy saints in Jerusalem (Romans 15:25-27).
- Today when we give from a heart of love, our offerings support many worthy causes in the church.
- 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 your tithe and divide it, calling a portion "offerings." You are cheating God when you practice this.

Conclusion

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. The only way is to bless His work with our substance, recognizing that it all comes from Him. Then, He can open the windows of heaven and bless us as He always planned. We also receive our eternal reward joyfully, knowing we have done and given our best while on earth.

The *Full Life Study Bible* gives us a good lesson on the “Stewardship of Money.” Let us live by these seven important principles found in the New Testament church, striving to be the best stewards we possibly can of God's blessings.

- 📖 We must remember that everything we have belongs to the Lord. What we possess is not ours, but is 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).
- 📖 We must decide within our hearts to serve God and not money (Matthew 6:19-24). The Bible makes it plain that any greed is a form of idolatry (Colossians 3:5).
- 📖 Our giving must be:
 - To advance the kingdom of God, especially the work of the local church and the spreading of the gospel throughout the world (1 Corinthians 9:4-14; Philippians 4:15-18; 1 Timothy 5:17-18).
 - To help those who are in need (Galatians 2:10; 2 Corinthians 8:14).
 - To lay up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:20).
 - To learn to fear the Lord (Deuteronomy 14:22-23).
- 📖 Our giving should always be in proportion to our income. In the Old Testament the tithe amounted to one-tenth. Giving less than that was disobedience to the law of God and robbing Him (Malachi 3:8-10).
- 📖 The New Testament requires our giving to be in proportion to what God has given us (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:3, 12).
- 📖 Our giving should be voluntary and generous. This practice is taught in both the Old Testament (2 Chronicles 24:8-11) and New Testament (2 Corinthians 8:1-5, 11-12).
 - Do not hesitate to give sacrificially (2 Corinthians 8:3) for that is the spirit in which Jesus gave Himself for us.
 - The sacrifice involved is far more important to God than the monetary value of the gift (Luke 21:1-4).
- 📖 Our giving should be cheerful (2 Corinthians 9:7). Both the example of the Israelites in the Old Testament (Exodus 35:21-29; 2 Chronicles 24:10) and the Macedonian Christians in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 8:1-5) serve as models.
- 📖 God has promised to reward us according to how we have given to Him (Deuteronomy 15:4; Malachi 3:10-12; Matthew 19:21; 1 Timothy 6:18-19).

Why not follow God's plan for prosperity?

Study Questions

1. Give a brief explanation of the "Doctrine of Prosperity." _____

2. Write out one verse of Scripture (with proper reference) that proves the Doctrine of Prosperity is not biblical. _____

3. List the six (6) things included in true prosperity and all-around success. Give Scripture reference for each.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____

4. Give two (2) examples of tithing being practiced BEFORE it was actually defined and commanded for God's people. Support each example with Scripture reference.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____

5. What are tithes? Support your answer with Scripture. _____

6. Explain the difference between "tithes" and "firstfruits." _____

7. Given the following Scripture references, what does each passage tell us about how the practice of tithing and firstfruits fits together to form tithing in the church today?

Psalm 24:1 _____

Malachi 3:10 _____

Hebrews 7:2 _____

Proverbs 10:22 _____

8. List and explain two (2) reasons why we give tithes to God. Be sure to support your answers with Scripture.

1) _____

2) _____

9. List seven (7) important principles of giving as found in the New Testament church about striving to be the best stewards possible of God's blessings. Support each with Scripture.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____

10. What does "obedience" have to do with tithing? _____

Additional Notes

