

The Joy of Giving

Compiled by Dr. Harold Bollinger, D.D.

Table of Contents

| | | |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Forward | | 3 |
| Chapter 1 | Purpose and principles of giving | 4 |
| Chapter 2 | Giving is a natural response to love | 8 |
| Chapter 3 | What our attitude should be in giving | 12 |
| Chapter 4 | Our giving shows our priorities | 15 |
| Chapter 5 | Don't give only to receive | 19 |
| Chapter 6 | Jesus uses what ever we give | 22 |
| Chapter 7 | The spirit of giving | 25 |
| Chapter 8 | Why Abraham couldn't accept a gift | 29 |
| Chapter 9 | King Ahaz relied on money | 33 |
| Chapter 10 | Using your money for God | |

Forward

Giving to God immediately focuses our attention on him.

It also reminds us that all we have belongs to him. A habit of regular tithing can keep God at the top of our priority list and give us a proper perspective on everything else we have. Deut. 14:22-23;

Throughout this study, we will understand the purpose and principles of giving.

Giving is a natural response to God's love and helps us keep our priorities straight. Jesus uses what ever we give him.

If you find it difficult to give, we may find it difficult to receive. Some even live in poverty because of being unable to give and receive.

God has promised prosperity to those who rely upon him. Our attitude in giving and receiving will make us a useable vessel, or a vessel that can't be used.

Some have taken a poverty vow. That is not necessary. The Lord wants to bless his people with abundance in money, just as he wants to bless his people with an abundance of love.

Give your tithe, or what ever you determine to give and thank God for his blessing.

You are blessed. Be a blessing.

TITHING Brings Joy



Chapter 1

Purpose and principles of giving

The Bible makes the purpose of tithing very clear—to put God first in our lives. We are to give God the first and best of what we earn. For example, what we do first with our money shows what we value most.

Giving the first part of our paycheck to God immediately focuses our attention on him.

It also reminds us that all we have belongs to him. A habit of regular tithing can keep God at the top of our priority list and give us a proper perspective on everything else we have.

Deut. 14:22-23;

The Corinthian church had money, and apparently they had planned to collect money for the Jerusalem churches a year previously (see also 2 Cor. 9:2).

Paul challenges them to act on their plans. Four principles of giving emerge here:

- (1) Your willingness to give cheerfully is more important than the amount you give;
- (2) You should strive to fulfill your financial commitments;
- (3) If you give to others in need, they will, in turn, help you when you are in need;
- (4) You should give as a response to Christ, not for anything you can get out of it.

How you give reflects your devotion to Christ.

How do you decide how much to give? What about differences in the financial resources Christians have?

Paul gives the Corinthian church several principles to follow:

- (1) Each person should follow through on previous promises
- (2) Each person should give as much as he or she is able (2 Cor. 8:12; 2 Cor. 9:6);
- (3) Each person must make up his or her own mind how much to give (2 Cor. 9:7); and
- (4) Each person should give in proportion to what God has given him or her (2 Cor. 9:10). God gives to us so that we can give to others.

Paul says that we should give of what we have, not what we don't have.

Sacrificial giving must be responsible. Paul wants believers to give generously, but not to the extent that those who depend on the givers (their families, for example) must go without having their basic needs met.

Give until it hurts, but don't give so that it hurts your family and/or relatives who need your financial support. 2 Cor. 8:10-15

Tithes are to be given first.

The Israelites were to be prompt in giving God their offerings. The first of the harvest was to be dedicated to him.

Since God doesn't send payment overdue notices, it is easy to take care of other financial responsibilities while letting our gifts to him slide. Giving to God first out of what he has allowed you to have demonstrates that he has first priority in your life. Exodus 22:29

Supports community's spiritual needs.

Even the Levites, who were ministers, had to tithe to support the Lord's work. No one was exempt from returning to God a portion of what was received.

Though the Levites owned no land and operated no great enterprises, they were to treat their income the same as everyone else did by giving a portion to care for the needs of the other Levites and of the tabernacle.

The tithing principle is still relevant. God expects all his followers to supply the material needs of those who devote themselves to meeting the spiritual needs of the community of faith. Numbers 18:25-26

Give in proportion to what you have been given

Three times a year every male was to make a journey to the sanctuary in the city that would be designated as Israel's religious capital.

At these festivals, each participant was encouraged to give what he could in proportion to what God had given him.

God does not expect us to give more than we can, but we will be blessed when we give cheerfully. Deut. 16:16-17

Giving your best.

The fact that this command was included probably indicates that some Israelites were sacrificing imperfect or deformed animals to God. Then, as now, it is difficult and expensive to offer God our best. Deut. 17:1

Hezekiah reinstated practice of tithing.

Hezekiah reinstated the practice of tithing—giving a tenth of one's income to the priests and Levites so they could be free to serve God and minister to the people.

The people responded immediately and generously. God's work needs the support of God's people. 2 Chron. 31:4-8

Chapter 2



Giving is a natural response of love.

2 Cor. 8:7-8

Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

The Corinthian believers excelled in everything—they had faith, good preaching (speech), much knowledge, and much earnestness, much love. Paul wanted them to also be leaders in giving.

Paul did not order the Corinthians to give, but he encouraged them to prove that their love was sincere.

When you love someone, you want to give him or her your time and attention and to provide for his or her needs. If you refuse to help, your love is not as genuine as you say.

Deciding how much to give.

How do you decide how much to give?

What about differences in the financial resources Christians have?

God gives to us so that we can give to others. 2 Cor. 8:12

Lack of faith in giving.

People may hesitate to give generously to God if they worry about having enough money left over to meet their own needs. Paul assured the Corinthians that God was able to meet their needs.

The person who gives only a little will receive only a little in return. Don't let a lack of faith keep you from giving freely and generously. 2 Cor. 9:6-8

Other benefits of giving

Paul emphasizes the spiritual rewards for those who give generously to God's work. We should not expect to become wealthy through giving. Those who receive your gifts will be helped, will praise God, and will pray for you. As you bless others, you will be blessed. 2 Cor. 9:12-15

Churches must also tithe.

The church should support those who have no families and should also help the elderly, young, disabled, ill, or poverty-stricken with their emotional and spiritual needs.

Often families who are caring for their own helpless members have heavy burdens. They may need extra money, a listening ear, a helping hand, or a word of encouragement.

Interestingly, those who are helped often turn around and help others, turning the church into more of a caring community. Don't wait for people to ask. Take the initiative and look for ways to serve them. 1 Tim. 5:3

Principles of tithing

There were several boxes in the temple where money could be placed. Some were for collecting the temple tax from Jewish males; the others were for freewill offerings. These particular collection boxes were probably in the court of the women.

In the Lord's eyes, this poor widow gave more than all the others put together, though her gift was by far the smallest.

The value of a gift is not determined by its amount, but by the spirit in which it is given. A gift given grudgingly or for recognition loses its value.

When you give, remember—gifts of any size are pleasing to God when they are given out of gratitude and a spirit of generosity.
Mark 12:41-44

Don't give expecting something in return.

Love means action. One-way to put love to work is to take the initiative in meeting specific needs.

This is easy to do with people who love us, people whom we trust; but love means doing this even to those who dislike us or plan to hurt us.

The money we give others should be considered a gift, not a high-interest loan that will help us more than them. Give as though you are giving to God. Luke 6:35

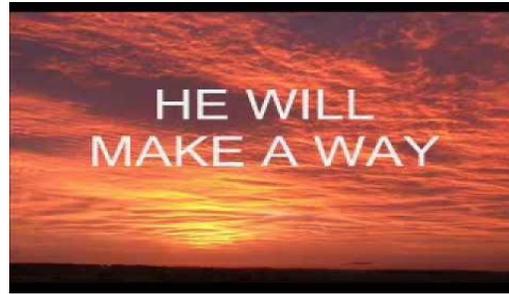
What goals do you have for your giving?

The rich man in Jesus' story died before he could begin to use what was stored in his big barns. Planning for retirement—preparing for life *before* death—is wise, but neglecting life *after* death is disastrous. If you accumulate wealth only to enrich yourself, with no concern for helping others, you will enter eternity empty-handed.

Why do you save money? To retire? To buy more expensive cars or toys? To be secure?

Jesus challenges us to think beyond earthbound goals and to use what we have been given for God's kingdom. Faith, service, and obedience are the way to become rich toward God. Luke 12:18-20

Chapter 3



What our attitude should be in giving?

A shepherd's staff was commonly a three- to six-foot wooden rod with a curved hook at the top. The shepherd used it for walking, guiding his sheep, killing snakes, and many other tasks. Still, it was just a stick.

But God used the simple shepherd's staff Moses carried as a sign to teach him an important lesson.

God sometimes takes joy in using ordinary things for extraordinary purposes.

What are the ordinary things in your life—your voice, a pen, a hammer, a broom, a musical instrument, a computer?

While it is easy to assume God can use only special skills, you must not hinder his use of the everyday contributions you can make.

Little did Moses imagine the power his simple staff would wield when it became the staff of God. Genesis 4:3-5

Commitment to God and generous giving are closely related.

Those whose hearts were stirred gave cheerfully to the Tent of Meeting (also called the tabernacle). With great enthusiasm they gave because they knew how important their giving was to the completion of God's house.

Generous people aren't necessarily faithful to God. But faithful people are always generous. Exodus 35:21

Cheerful giving versus reluctant giving

Many of the principles regarding sacrifices and tithes were intended to encourage inward attitudes as well as outward actions. If a person gives grudgingly, he shows that he has a stingy heart. God wants us to be cheerful givers (2 Cor. 9:7) who give with gratitude to him. Leviticus 27:33;

War plunder rightfully belonged to the victorious army. These soldiers, however, gave their portion of all the plunder to the temple to express their dedication to God. Like these commanders, we should think of what we *can* give, rather than what we are obligated to give. Is your giving a matter of rejoicing rather than duty? Give as a response of joy and love for God. 1 Chron. 26:27;

There were serious food shortages during the reign of the Roman emperor Claudius (A.D. 41-54) because of a drought that had

extended across much of the Roman Empire for many years. It is significant that the church in Antioch assisted the church in Jerusalem. The daughter church had grown enough to be able to help the established church.

The people of Antioch were motivated to give generously because they cared about the needs of others. This is the “cheerful” giving that the Bible commends (2 Cor. 9:7). Reluctant giving reflects a lack of concern for people. Focus your concern on the needy, and you will be motivated to give. Acts 11:29

How money deceives us.

Because money represents power, authority, and success, often it is difficult for wealthy people to realize their need and their powerlessness to save themselves. The rich in talent or intelligence suffer the same difficulty. Unless God reaches down into their lives, they will not come to him.

Jesus surprised some of his hearers by offering salvation to the poor; he may surprise some people today by offering it to the rich. It is difficult for a self-sufficient person to realize his or her need and come to Jesus, but “What is impossible with men is possible with God.” Luke 18:24-27

Take seriously Jesus’ warnings about money.

Because the Pharisees loved money, they took exception to Jesus’ teaching. We live in an age that measures people’s worth by how much money they make. Do we laugh at Jesus’ warnings against serving Money? Do we try to explain them away? Do we apply them to someone else—the Pharisees, for example? Unless we take Jesus’ statements seriously, we may be acting like Pharisees ourselves. Luke 16:14

Chapter 4



Our giving shows our real priorities.

The fact that this command was included probably indicates that some Israelites were sacrificing imperfect or deformed animals to God. Then, as now, it is difficult and expensive to offer God our best (i.e., the first part of what we earn).

It is always tempting to shortchange God because we think we won't get caught. But our giving shows our real priorities. When we give God the leftovers, it is obvious that he is not at the center of our lives.

Give God the honor of having first claim on your money, time, and talents. Deut. 17:1

A true sacrifice is giving something of value.

When David wanted to buy Araunah's land to build an altar, Araunah generously offered it as a gift. But David refused, saying, "I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing."

David wanted to offer a sacrifice to God. The word *sacrifice* implies giving something that costs the giver in terms of self, time, or money. To give sacrificially requires more than a token effort or gift. God wants us to give voluntarily, but he wants it to mean something. Giving to God what costs you nothing does not demonstrate commitment. 1 Chron. 21:22-24

Giving to God first to God first

The *firstfruits* refers to the practice of giving to God's use the first and best portion of the harvest (Deut. 26:9-11).

Many people give God their leftovers. If they can afford to donate anything, they do so. These people may be sincere and contribute willingly, but their attitude is nonetheless backward. It is better to give God the first part of our income.

This demonstrates that God, not possessions, has first place in our lives and that our resources belong to him (we are only managers of God's resources). Giving to God first helps us conquer greed, helps us properly manage God's resources, and opens us up to receive God's special blessings. Proverbs 3:9-10;

God's law required that only perfect animals be offered to God (see for example, Leviticus 1:3).

But these priests were allowing the people to offer blind, crippled, and diseased animals to God. God accused them of dishonoring

him by offering imperfect sacrifices, and he was greatly displeased.

The New Testament says that our lives should be living sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1).

If we give God only our leftover time, money, and energy, we repeat the same sin as these worshipers who didn't want to bring anything valuable to God. What we give God reflects our true attitude toward him. Malachi 1:6-8

The reasons we should give generously.

As the temple reconstruction progressed, everyone contributed freewill offerings according to his or her ability. Some were able to give huge gifts and did so generously.

Everyone's effort and cooperation were required, and the people gave as much as they could. Often we limit our giving to ten percent of our income. The Bible, however, emphasizes that we should give from the heart *all* that we are able (2 Cor. 8:12; 2 Cor. 9:6).

Let the amount of your gift be decided by God's call to give generously, not by the amount of your leftovers. Ezra 2:68-69

Jesus gave the disciples a principle to guide their actions as they ministered to others: "Freely you have received, freely give." Because God has showered us with his blessings, we should give generously to others of our time, love, and possessions. Matthew 10:8;

Our attitude when we give is more important than the amount we give. We don't have to be embarrassed if we can give only a small gift.

God is concerned about *how* we give from the resources we have (see Mark 12:41-44). According to that standard, the giving of the Macedonian churches would be difficult to match 2 Cor. 9:6-8

No one can buy special power from God.

“Everything has a price” seems to be true in our world of bribes, wealth, and materialism. Simon thought he could buy the Holy Spirit's power, but Peter harshly rebuked him.

The only way to receive God's power is to do what Peter told Simon to do—turn from sin, ask God for forgiveness, and be filled with his Spirit. No amount of money can buy salvation, forgiveness of sin, or God's power. These are only gained by repentance and belief in Christ as Savior. Acts 8:18-23

Money cannot bring true happiness.

Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, most people still believe that money brings happiness. Rich people craving greater riches can be caught in an endless cycle that only ends in ruin and destruction. How can you keep away from the love of money?
1 Tim. 6:6-10

Chapter 5



Don't give only to get something in return.

When Jesus says not to let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, he is teaching that our motives for giving to God and to others must be pure.

It is easy to give with mixed motives, to do something for someone if it will benefit us in return. But believers should avoid all scheming and give for the pleasure of giving and as a response to God's love. Matthew 6:3

What you may have to give up to follow Jesus.

Following Jesus is not always easy or comfortable. Often it means great cost and sacrifice, with no earthly rewards or security. Jesus didn't have a place to call home.

You may find that following Christ costs you popularity, friendships, leisure time, or treasured habits. But while the cost of following Christ is high, the value of being Christ's disciple is even higher. Discipleship is an investment that lasts for eternity and yields incredible rewards. Matthew 8:19-20

Jesus assured the disciples that anyone who gives up something valuable for his sake will be repaid many times over in this life, although not necessarily in the same form. For example, his or her family may reject a person for accepting Christ, but he or she will gain the larger family of believers. Matthew 19:29

How money makes one less dependent on God.

Jesus said it was very difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. This is true because the rich, with most of their basic physical needs met, often become self-reliant. When they feel empty, they can buy something new to dull the pain that was meant to drive them toward God. Their abundance and self-sufficiency become their deficiency. The person who has everything on earth can still lack what is most important—eternal life. Mark 10:23

Necessity of money versus love of money

James proclaims the worthlessness of riches, not the worthlessness of the rich. Today's money will be worthless when Christ returns, so we should spend our time accumulating the kind of treasures that will be worthwhile in God's eternal kingdom.

Money is not the problem; Christian leaders need money to live and to support their families; missionaries need money to help

them spread the gospel; churches need money to do their work effectively. It is the *love* of money that leads to evil (1 Tim. 6:10) and causes some people to oppress others in order to get money. James 5:1-6

You cannot take money to eternity.

God's people should not live for money, because money will be worthless in eternity. And they should keep on guard constantly against greed, a sin that is always ready to take over their lives. Rev. 18:11-19

Chapter 6



Jesus uses whatever we give him.

Jesus multiplied five loaves and two fish to feed over 5,000 people. What he was originally given seemed insufficient, but in his hands it became more than enough. We often feel that our contribution to Jesus is meager, but he can use and multiply whatever we give him, whether it is talent, time, or treasure. It is when we give them to Jesus that our resources are multiplied.

The text states that there were 5,000 men present, *besides* women and children. Therefore, the total number of people Jesus fed could have been 10 to 15 thousand. The number of men is listed separately because in the Jewish culture of the day, men and women usually ate separately when in public. The children ate with the women. Matthew 14:19-21;

Giving is better to give than not to give.

The disciples are contrasted with the youngster who brought what he had. They certainly had more resources than the boy, but they knew they didn't have enough, so they didn't give anything at all. The boy gave what little he had, and it made all the difference. If we offer nothing to God, he will have nothing to use. But he can take what little we have and turn it into something great.

In performing his miracles, Jesus usually preferred to work through people. Here he took what a young child offered and used it to accomplish one of the most spectacular miracles recorded in the Gospels. Age is no barrier to Christ. Never think you are too young or old to be of service to him. John 6:8-9

Believer should support ministers in the church.

Jesus told his disciples to accept hospitality graciously because their work entitled them to it. Ministers of the gospel deserve to be supported, and it is our responsibility to make sure they have what they need.

There are several ways to encourage those who serve God in his church.

First, see that they have an adequate salary.

Second, see that they are supported emotionally; plan a time to express appreciation for something they have done.

Third, lift their spirits with special surprises from time to time. Our ministers deserve to know we are giving to them cheerfully and generously. Luke 10:7

It is necessary to be obedient in every area.

It's possible to obey the details of the laws but still be disobedient in our general behavior. For example, we could be very precise and faithful about giving a percent of our money to God, but refuse to give one minute of our time in helping others.

Tithing is important, but giving a tithe does not exempt us from fulfilling God's other directives.

The Pharisees strained their water so they wouldn't accidentally swallow a gnat—an unclean insect according to the law. Meticulous about the details of ceremonial cleanliness, they nevertheless had lost their perspective on inner purity. Ceremonially clean on the outside, they had corrupt hearts.
Matthew 23:23-24

Gaining a proper perspective of giving.

What does your money mean to you? Although Jesus wanted this man to sell everything and give his money to the poor, this does not mean that all believers should sell all their possessions.

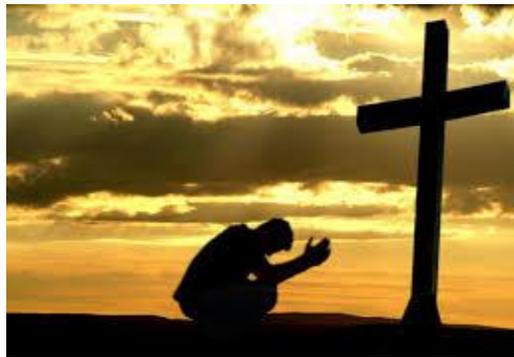
Most of his followers did not sell everything, although they used their possessions to serve others.

Instead, this story shows us that we must not let anything we have or desire keep us from following Jesus. We must remove all barriers to serving him fully..

Jesus showed genuine love for this man, even though he knew that the man might not follow him.

Love is able to give tough advice; it doesn't hedge around the truth. Christ loved us enough to die for us, and he also loves us enough to talk straight to us. but because his love is complete, he gives us life-changing challenges. Mark 10:21

Chapter 7



The spirit of giving

In the Lord's eyes, this poor widow gave more than all the others put together, though her gift was by far the smallest. The value of a gift is not determined by its amount, but by the spirit in which it is given. A gift given grudgingly or for recognition loses its value. When you give, remember—gifts of any size are pleasing to God when they are given out of gratitude and a spirit of generosity. Mark 12:41-44

God honors sacrificially giving

Jesus was in the area of the temple called the court of women. The treasury was located there or in an adjoining walkway. In this area were seven boxes in which worshipers could deposit their temple tax and six boxes for freewill offerings like the one this woman

gave. Not only was she poor; as a widow she had few resources for making money. Her small gift was a sacrifice, but she gave it willingly. Luke 21:1-4;

Meat bought in the marketplace was likely to have been symbolically offered to an idol in one of the many pagan temples. Animals were brought to a temple, killed before an idol as part of a pagan religious ceremony, and eaten at a feast in the idol's temple or taken to butchers who sold the meat in the marketplace. The believers wondered if by eating such meat, they were somehow participating in the worship of pagan idols.

Love is more important than knowledge. Knowledge can make us look good and feel important, but we can all too easily develop an arrogant, know-it-all attitude. Many people with strong opinions are unwilling to listen to and learn from God and others. We can obtain God's knowledge only by loving him (see James 3:17-18). And we can know and be known by God only when we model him by showing love (1 John 4:7-8). 2 Cor. 8:2-5

Giving tests our integrity.

Our integrity often meets its match in money matters. God calls us to be honest even in small details we could easily rationalize away. Heaven's riches are far more valuable than earthly wealth. But if we are not trustworthy with our money here (no matter how much or little we have), we will be unfit to handle the vast riches of God's kingdom. Don't let your integrity slip in small matters, and it will not fail you in crucial decisions either. Luke 16:10-11

Has money become your first priority?

Money has the power to take God's place in your life. It can become your master.

How can you tell if you are a slave to Money?

- (1) Do you think and worry about it frequently?
- (2) Do you give up doing what you should do or would like to do in order to make more money?
- (3) Do you spend a great deal of your time caring for your possessions?
- (4) Is it hard for you to give money away?
- (5) Are you in debt?

Money is a hard master and a deceptive one. Wealth promises power and control, but often it cannot deliver.

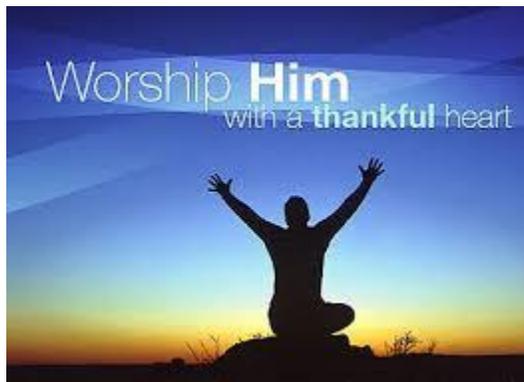
Great fortunes can be made—and lost—overnight, and no amount of money can provide health, happiness, or eternal life.

How much better it is to let God be your Master. His servants have peace of mind and security, both now and forever.

God was against the Jews' charging interest (usury) or making a profit on loans to needy, fellow Jews (see also Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:35-37), although charging interest on loans to foreigners was allowed (Deut. 23:20). Interest was also allowable for business purposes, as long as it wasn't exorbitant (Proverbs 28:8).

Some people are so obsessed with money that they will change their God-given standards and life-style to get it. If money is a controlling force in your life, it must be curbed, or it will harm others and destroy your relationship with God. Psalm 15:5

Chapter 8



Why Abraham couldn't accept money from Sodom's king.

Abram gave one-tenth of the booty to Melchizedek. Even in some pagan religions, it was traditional to give a tenth of one's earnings to the gods. Abram followed accepted tradition; however, he refused to take any booty from the king of Sodom.

Even though this huge amount would significantly increase what he could have given to God, he chose to reject it for more important reasons—he didn't want the ungodly king of Sodom to say, "I have made Abram rich."

Instead, Abram wanted him to say, "God has made Abram rich." In this case, accepting the gifts would have focused everyone's

attention on Abram or the king of Sodom rather than on God, the giver of victory.

When people look at us, they need to see what God has accomplished in our lives. Genesis 14:20

Choosing God over money.

Although Balaam's motives were not correct, in blessing Israel he acted with integrity. God's message had so filled him that Balaam spoke the truth. In so doing, he forfeited the reward that had lured him to speak in the first place.

Staying true to God's Word may cost us promotions and advantages in the short run, but those who choose God over money will one day acquire heavenly wealth beyond measure (Matthew 6:19-21). Numbers 24:11

Returning a portion to God and others.

Moses told the Israelites to give a portion of the war spoils to God. Another portion was to go to the people who remained behind. Similarly, the money we earn is not ours alone.

Everything we possess comes directly or indirectly from God and ultimately belongs to him. We should return a portion to him (a "tribute") and also share a portion with those in need. Numbers 31:25-30

Don't be stingy with those in God's work.

Just as the people of Israel did not notice God's care for them along their journey, we sometimes do not notice all of the ways that God takes care of us—that all of our daily needs have been supplied and we have been well fed and well clothed. Worse yet, we mistakenly take the credit ourselves for being good providers instead of recognizing God's hand in the process. Deut. 25:5

Because the Levites were no longer supported, they had returned to their farms to support themselves, neglecting their temple duties and the spiritual welfare of the people.

Spiritual workers deserve their pay, and their support ought to be enough to care for their needs. They shouldn't have to suffer (or leave) because believers don't adequately assess and meet the needs of their ministers. Neh. 13:10

Why Elisha refused Naaman's.

Elisha refused Naaman's money to show that God's favor cannot be purchased. Our money, like Naaman's, is useless when we face death. No matter how much wealth we accumulate in this life, it will evaporate when we stand before God, our Creator. It will be our faith in Jesus Christ that saves us, not our bank accounts.
2 Kings 5:16

Trying to obtain money in the wrong way.

Gehazi saw a perfect opportunity to get rich by selfishly asking for the reward Elisha had refused. Unfortunately, there were three problems with his plan:

- (1) He willingly accepted money that had been offered to someone else;

- (2) He wrongly implied that money could be exchanged for God's free gift of healing and mercy;
- (3) He lied and tried to cover up his motives for accepting the Money.

Although Gehazi had been a helpful servant, personal gain had become more important to him than serving God.

This passage is not teaching that money is evil or that ministers should not get paid; instead, it is warning against greed and deceit.

True service is motivated by love and devotion to God and seeks no personal gain. As you serve God, check your motives—you can't serve both God and money (Matthew 6:24). 2 Kings 5:20-27

Chapter 9



Ahaz relied on money more than God

Evil King Ahaz copied pagan religious customs, changed the temple services, and used the temple altar for his personal benefit. In so doing, he demonstrated a callous disregard for God's commands.

We condemn Ahaz for his action, but we act the same way if we try to mold God's message to fit our personal preferences. We must worship God for who he is, not what we would selfishly like him to be. 2 Kings 16:10

Don't let Money affect your decisions.

Amaziah made a financial agreement with Israelite soldiers, offering to pay them to fight for him (2 Chron. 25:6). But before they could go to battle, Amaziah sent them home with their pay

because of the prophet's warning. Although it cost him plenty, he wisely realized that the money was not worth the ruin the alliance could cause.

How would you have reacted? Money must never stand in the way of making right decisions. The Lord's favor is priceless, worth more than any amount of money. 2 Chron. 25:9-10

How people use money reveals much about their character.

You can tell a lot about a person's character by the way he or she handles money. The wicked person steals under the guise of borrowing.

The righteous person gives generously to the needy. The wicked person, therefore, focuses on himself, while the righteous person looks to the welfare of others. Psalm 37:21

Obedience to God more important than money

In today's world, people most often covet financial gain. Money represents power, influence, and success.

For many people, money is a god. They think about little else. True, money can buy certain comforts and offer some security. But far more valuable than wealth is obedience to God because it is a heavenly treasure rather than an earthly one (Luke 12:33).

We should do what God wants, regardless of the financial implications. Make the psalmist's prayer your own, asking God to

turn your heart toward his statutes and not toward making money; it's in your own best interest in the long run. Psalm 119:36

Balance between generosity and stewardship.

These verses are not a plea against generosity, but against overextending one's financial resources and acting in irresponsible ways that could lead to poverty. It is important to maintain a balance between generosity and good stewardship. God wants us to help our friends and the needy, but he does not promise to cover the costs of every unwise commitment we make. We should also act responsibly so that our family does not suffer. Proverbs 6:1-5

Money cannot provide safety.

In imagining that their wealth is their strongest defense, rich people are sadly mistaken. Money cannot provide safety—there are too many ways for it to lose its power. The government may cease to back it; thieves may steal it; inflation may rob it of all value. But God never loses his power. He is always dependable. Where do you look for security and safety—uncertain wealth or God who is always faithful? Proverbs 18:11

Money tempts us to sacrifice integrity.

A blameless life is far more valuable than wealth, but most people don't act as if they believe this. Afraid of not getting everything they want, they will pay any price to increase their wealth—cheating on their taxes, stealing from stores or employers, withholding tithes, refusing to give.

But when we know and love God, we realize that a lower standard of living—or even poverty—is a small price to pay for personal integrity. Proverbs 19:1

Saving some money for the future

This proverb is about saving for the future. Easy credit has many people living on the edge of bankruptcy. The desire to keep up and to accumulate more pushes them to spend every penny they earn, and they stretch their credit to the limit.

But anyone who spends all he has is spending more than he can afford. A wise person puts money aside for when he or she may have less. God approves of foresight and restraint.

God's people need to examine their life-styles to see whether their spending is God-pleasing or merely self-pleasing. Proverbs 21:20

How money deceives us.

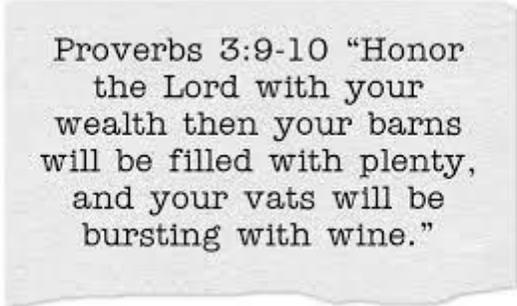
Government leaders, businesses, families, even churches get trapped into thinking money is the answer to every problem.

We throw money at our problems. But just as the thrill of wine is only temporary, the soothing effect of the last purchase soon wears off and we have to buy more.

Scripture recognizes that money is necessary for survival, but it warns against the love of money (see Matthew 6:24; 1 Tim. 6:10; Hebrews 13:5).

Money is dangerous because it deceives us into thinking that wealth is the easiest way to get everything we want. The love of money is sinful because we trust money rather than God to solve our problems. Those who pursue its empty promises will one day discover that they have nothing because they are spiritually bankrupt. Eccles. 10:19

Chapter 10



Proverbs 3:9-10 “Honor the Lord with your wealth then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.”

Using your money for God.

God’s people had allowed their love of money to lead them into sin. And for this, God would destroy them. Money has a strange power to lead people into sin. Paul said “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim. 6:10).

It is ironic that we use money—a gift of God—to buy things that separate us from him. It is tragic that we spend so much money seeking to satisfy ourselves, and so little time seeking God, the true source of satisfaction.

God gave the people silver and gold, but they used that silver and gold to make idols. The resources God gives us should be used to do his work and carry out his will, but too often we use them to satisfy our own desires.

When we abuse God's gifts or use resources selfishly, we miss the Real purpose God had in mind Ezekiel 7:19-20.

Keeping Money from controlling you.

Jesus says we can have only one master. We live in a materialistic society where many people serve money. They spend all their lives collecting and storing it, only to die and leave it behind. Their desire for money and what it can buy far outweighs their commitment to God and spiritual matters. Whatever you store up, you will spend much of your time and energy thinking about. Don't fall into the materialistic trap, because "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10). Can you honestly say that God, and not money, is your master? One test is to ask which one occupies more of your thoughts, time, and efforts.

Jesus contrasted heavenly values with earthly values when he explained that our first loyalty should be to those things that do not fade, cannot be stolen or used up, and never wear out. We should not be fascinated with our possessions, lest *they* possess *us*. This means we may have to do some cutting back if our possessions are becoming too important to us. Jesus is calling for a decision that allows us to live contentedly with whatever we have because we have chosen what is eternal and lasting. Matthew 6:24

What happened to debtors in Jesus' day?

In Bible times, serious consequences awaited those who could not pay their debts. A person lending money could seize the borrower

who couldn't pay and force him or his family to work until the debt was paid.

The debtor could also be thrown into prison, or his family could be sold into slavery to help pay off the debt. It was hoped that the debtor, while in prison, would sell off his landholdings or that relatives would pay the debt.

If not, the debtor could remain in prison for life. Matthew 18:30

Money changers in the temple were motivated by money

Money changers and merchants did big business during Passover. Those who came from foreign countries had to have their money changed into temple currency because this was the only money accepted for the temple tax and for the purchase of sacrificial animals.

Often the inflated exchange rate enriched the money changers, and the exorbitant prices of animals made the merchants wealthy. Their stalls were set up in the temple's court of the Gentiles, frustrating the intentions of non-Jews who had come to worship God (Isaiah 56:6-7).

Jesus became angry because God's house of worship had become a place of extortion and a barrier to Gentiles who wanted to worship. Mark 11:15-17

Keys to using Money wisely

Jesus commands us not to worry. But how can we avoid it? Only faith can free us from the anxiety caused by greed and covetousness.

It is good to work and plan responsibly; it is bad to dwell on all the ways our planning could go wrong. Worry is pointless because it can't fill any of our needs; worry is foolish because the Creator of the universe loves us and knows what we need.

He promises to meet all our real needs, but not necessarily all our desires. Luke 12:33

Religious leaders' hungered for money

Being a religious leader in Jerusalem was very different from being a pastor in a secular society today. Israel's history, culture, and daily life centered concerning money's relationship with God. The religious leaders were the best known, most powerful, and most respected of all leaders.

Jesus made these stinging accusations because the leaders' hunger for more power, money, and status had made them lose sight of God, and their blindness was spreading to the whole nation. Matthew 23:13-14

Money motivated Judas to betray Jesus.

Why would Judas want to betray Jesus? Judas, like the other disciples, expected Jesus to start a political rebellion and overthrow Rome. As treasurer, Judas certainly assumed (as did the other disciples—see Mark 10:35-37) that he would be given an important position in Jesus' new government.

But when Jesus praised Mary for pouring out perfume worth a year's salary,

Judas may have realized that Jesus' kingdom was not physical or political, but spiritual. Judas's greedy desire for money and status could not be

realized if he followed Jesus, so he betrayed Jesus in exchange for money and favor from the religious leaders. Matthew 26:14-15

Dealing with the love of money

This young man wanted to be sure he would get eternal life, so he asked what he could *do*. He said he'd never once broken any of the laws Jesus mentioned (Mark 10:19), and perhaps he had even kept the Pharisees' loophole-filled version of them.

But Jesus lovingly broke through the young man's pride with a challenge that brought out his true motives:

“Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor.”

This challenge exposed the barrier that could keep this young man out of the kingdom: his love of money.

Money represented his pride of accomplishment and self-effort. Ironically, his attitude made him unable to keep the first commandment, to let nothing be more important than God (Exodus 20:3).

He could not meet the one requirement Jesus gave—to turn his whole heart and life over to God. The man came to Jesus wondering what he could do; he left seeing what he was unable to do. Mark 10:17-23;

This statement is the key to spiritual growth and personal fulfillment. We should honor God and center our desires on him

(“godliness,” see Matthew 6:33), and we should be content with what God is doing in our lives (see Phil. 4:11-13).

Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, most people still believe that money brings happiness.

Rich people craving greater riches can be caught in an endless cycle that only ends in ruin and destruction.

How can you keep away from the love of money? Paul gives us some guidelines:

- (1) Realize that one day riches will all be gone (1 Tim. 6:7, 17);
- (2) Be content with what you have (1 Tim. 6:8);
- (3) Monitor what you are willing to do to get more money (1 Tim. 6:9-10);
- (4) Love people more than money (1 Tim. 6:11)
- (5) Love God’s work more than money (1 Tim. 6:11)
- (6) Freely share what you have with others (1 Tim. 6:18)

It is often helpful to distinguish between *needs* and *wants*. We may have all we need to live but let ourselves become anxious and discontented over what we merely want.

Like Paul, we can choose to be content without having all that we want. The only alternative is to be a slave to our desires. 1 Tim. 6:6-10

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: New Living Bible translation.

Additional comments and charts are taken from:

***Life Application Study Bible.* Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print**