

Discipleship 09:

A SCRIPTURAL BASIS REGARDING GIVING

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FELLOWSHIP the body in union

If you want to experience anger, dissonance, or heated theological debate this is the topic to broach. Giving is the bread and butter of ministry. It is support for a man and his message. It is the financing of the Gospel to world. It is the support of both the local church missionary outreaches. Because men and women go forth with good intentions and have devoted a large part of their lives to preparing for "ministry" they proceed believing that they are now prepared to live by the Gospel. "*The Lord hath ordained that those preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.*" (1Corinthians 9:14)

Professional Ministry

The concept of the clergy, professional ministry is a well establish and unquestioned paradigm. ([See the power of paradigms.](#)) The concept of **Ministry** has been traditionally connected to career or occupation. The concept of clergy as a professional career extends into the dim past of Christendom. The traditional church operates in accord with, and is enabled because of **the professional clergy concept**. The question of institutionally accredited, "professional ministry" appointed to churches and church giving is something that I believe each of us has to examine in light of Scripture and draw our best personal conclusion in the light of the Word. It is not my desire to subvert a system that you may believe in for your own best reasons, but rather to encourage each person to strive to know God as fully as possible and to experience the potential of Christ's Gospel, even if it means setting aside certain long held traditions. Every person should support the **Kingdom of God** as we judge it to be **best expressed**. We need to see the life of God as a Divine promise and a human potentiality. We need to see ministers bringing others into this potentiality. Once that criterion is met, we can go on to other matters concerning Giving. It is not my desire to subvert a system that you may believe in for your own best reasons, but rather *to encourage each person to strive to know God as fully as possible* and to experience the potential written of in the Gospel, even if it means setting aside certain long- held traditions. Every person should support the Kingdom of God as we see it best expressed. We need to see the life of God as a potentiality and the people who minister bringing others into it. Once that criterion is met, we can go on to other matters concerning Giving.

Giving: Giving & Sharing is Blessed by God

There should be no laws (rules) for giving in the Kingdom of God. God has set us free from rules including rules about giving. Giving is good. Giving supports the man of God and also supports people who are not necessarily "ministers" of churches but who God wishes to bless through us. Various kinds of worldly commitments which touch upon the Kingdom of God need support, whether it be church buildings, outreach expenses, travel or any of a wide variety of needs which can only be met by others sharing the cost. God wants his will to be done through selfless sharing and contributions of money resources. Yet we need to be able to hear God leading us in these gifts so that it is truly a work of God for the Gospel sake and not just another good sound cause or charity.

Some basic principles identified on the pages of the Bible shed light on the subject of giving.

*It is more blessed to Give than to receive
Give and it shall be given unto you
Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven
Those who give to the poor lend to God
The Tithe is the Lord's - (Old covenant principle)
In the measure you give it shall be given to you
Sow sparingly, reap sparingly
Give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven
Give as you purpose in your heart, Let no one give out of obligation
God loves a cheerful giver*

The above scriptures are a few of many references to money and giving as introduced in the Bible. When we become more spiritual when are able to discern that God wants us to give to special ministries or to special servants of God. But we would miss God will if we only gave to ministry professionals and not to individuals and especially the poor. God love is about giving. Ministry is about sharing. Koinonia is also about mutual support. This whole world thrives in the light of a generous heart. **"God so loved the world that he gave -" "God so loved the world that he gave -"**

Christians who have a reborn or redeemed nature do not resist giving and sharing. The unredeemed do not want to let go of anything. The world thinks that their well being and survival are threatened by releasing necessary assets and resources. Believers know that when they give they are really investing in returns that are certain to come back to them, either now or later.

The Tithe

The doctrine of the tithe (a tenth of one's increase) is taught in churches often not just as a principle but as an obligation. Very few congregations actually enforce the giving of tithes by recording all receipts and maintaining scrupulous records of the income although some come very close to this. Mostly what we hear is teaching which explains that tithing is a practice pre-dating the Christian era and the era of law. We find Abraham tithing before the era of law in the Book of Genesis. Thus with Abraham giving to Melchisedek we have a type of giving which all Christians should wish to embrace. The Book of Malachi supplies the greatest picture of God's displeasure at those who withhold the tithe. God calls it robbing Him. "*The Tithe is mine,*" says the Lord, therefore to withhold it is to rob him. Malachi describes the "storehouse" where we are supposed to bring our tithe to God. Pastors love to teach that the storehouse is the local church, where all of the sheep are fed. This model has some problems associated with it, as follows:

Is God there?

Is his presence manifested?

Is His Word being taught?

Is the Spiritual life a reality and accessible?

Are the needs of the poor and needy being met?

Are important voices for the Kingdom of God being supported who also edify us individually?

The storehouse - is associated with a view of the Levitical priesthood which existed in early Israel. The Levites were the tribe chosen to minister as priests to the house of Israel. It was only the tribe of Levi (Levites) who were the designated priesthood.

This tribe, had no other source of livelihood and were sustained by the sacrifices and offerings of the rest of the tribes of Israel.

With the ascension of Jesus Christ into the heavenly temple of God, the nature of the storehouse has changed as radically as the priesthood.

At this time in the church age dispensation, the people of God are supported and fed by natural bread nor by the lambs and oxen of sacrifices once given up to the Levites. Now we are a different priesthood before God; we give spiritual sacrifices unto Christ who is now King and High Priest over all. (*Read Hebrews which explains the transition from the old covenant to the new.*)

From where do these blessings flow? From a heavenly place. Unto whom are our sacrifices given? To God in heaven. What is the sacrifice? It is the sacrifice of our lips; both praise and thanks giving. Who is the overseer who watches over our gifts and measures a blessing today and in the time to come? It is Jesus The Great High Priest who accounts for those things given in his name, whether money in a church collection plate or food to a hungry child, or a visit to an invalid or a drink to a thirsty man, or a visit to a person sick and alone in a hospital.

God sees every act done and the motive of every heart in which that gift is bestowed. God loves a cheerful giver. The motive of the heart touches faith. We know that Jesus sees our love and kindness to another in need. Giving as one giving to God that is faith. We know that he will also meet any of our needs in a time of lack because we did not withhold to others. We do not give out of obligation. We are not debtors to the law. We are free to give because God is a giver. Giving is sowing seeds. We sow bounteously we expect to reap bounteously. We expect something to come from our planting. Sower of seeds also believe in the crop which will come at harvest time. This is surely a part of giving to the Kingdom of God. God will meet our needs at a future time because we have planted. God stores up treasure for another day in a heavenly place, because we have given.

Tithing as an Act of Worship

The giving of tithes is not just a simple token gift placed in an offering plate or bag. Tithing in the scriptural sense relates to act of worship in presenting the "tithe" to God. ***We find the act described in Deuteronomy Chapter 26.*** "Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it."

"And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possesses it, and dwellest therein;" (- 26:1-) "That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there." (- Deuteronomy 26:2-15) Note this is during the dispensation of The LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD.

Abraham gave a tithe to Melchisedek the King Of Salem two thousand years before the Church age and prior to the Age of the Law. This tithe prefigures the law of commandments, giving, as it were, to the King of Heaven who exists outside of genealogy forever. We give as unto him. Jesus abides forever, as the high priest Melchisedek.

Now regarding tithing as worship, it is not my desire that you should memorize a ritual it to recite as a rite. But it is good to have a sense of the understanding noted in the Levitus 26 text.

The giving of such a gift or tithe should be something which touches our own understanding of our previous "captivity" and God's hand at work to take us out of that place of bondage and oppression, want and sorrow. The spiritual life acknowledges that we were also taken out of bondage. It is a faithful

saying which needs to be spoken. Notice that all of this tithing worship is spoken to God in the place which has His name written upon it. Today we are redeemed and the house of God is not a special place it is the human house where the spirit resides. The tithing worship reminds us of God's covenant with us and how he is taking further towards strength, blessing and victorious living. Speaking these things tells God that we know what he has done for us and that we are truly thankful that he knows and remembers us each and that he will continue to be with us supplying good things.

The Prosperity Message

The past several years has seen a great emphasis on the Prosperity message. Poverty and lack are seen as a curse throughout scripture. God does want us without provision. The redemption from the curse of the law also freed us want and lack. We believe that "God shall supply all of our needs according to his riches in Glory by Christ Jesus." In gaging any matter of doctrine we have to hold it up not only to common sense and scripture but to discerning what the spiritual life needs to be. Though we should not lack nor want, God wants more of us and not less of us. Therefore anything which takes our focus away from God and places it upon unfruitful things, those things which only decay, is really a stumbling block for a believer. Those who preach riches and wealth are leading people away from intimacy unless they are able to handle wealth and prosperity more graciously than I. Many are able to assume possessions of wealth and money and property without being seduced away from God's presence. But sometimes the aware of the futility and the emptiness of wealth comes too late when are already victimized by excesses, this was the case of the writer of Ecclesiastes, Solomon who realized late in life that with wealth comes other griefs and spareness of the soul. Gain is not Godliness, the apostle writes in 1 Timothy 6:5, withdraw yourselves from such doctrines. *but Godliness with contentment is great gain*, (1 Timothy 6:6) God wishes to supply our needs, to bless us in our going out and our coming in to make us fruitful in body and in all of the pursuits of our life. (Deuteronomy 28:3-6)

The doctrine of **prosperity has blessing** connected to it to be sure; but the negative side of it is its link to selfish motives both in the giver and the receiver. Many who preach the prosperity message are in a position to directly benefit by the unrestrained giving that is encouraged in sermons and in seminars. Some of those who preach the doctrine exceed the Word of God by suggesting that gifts given to their own ministries have the greatest return connected to them. Of course faith is infused into the process to insure a greater degree of return, thirty, sixty or one hundred fold according to scripture as is described and taught as a consequence of giving. (There is greater insight in the 30, 60 and hundred fold metaphor than mere cash and assets. The prospering of the soul is accounted above all, in Spiritual richness.) Giving, according to Jesus, should not be in the manner of the Pharisees who "sound a trumpet" to give notice that they are doing an alms deed. Jesus teaches to give in secret and for the left hand not to see what the right hand does. All of these teachings address anonymous giving rather than a public display in which people are applauding the giver for his excellent generosity. The Lord says of such people, they receive their reward by the act of receiving public acclaim and applause. It is far better to give when only the Father who sees in secret knows. He will be the one who insures a return in the best possible time. Any man or woman can give or contribute in any 'kind' or commodity. One can give a gift of service another a gift of a song. Another a gift of kindness. The same principle applies when the motive is right, God who is the author and overseer of every good and perfect gift knows when our giving is free from self exaltation. He will insure the return.

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the cornerstone of a Christian life

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