

Living the Blessed Life

Learning God's Principles of Financial Blessings

Are you ready to live a life beyond your wildest imagination? Do you want to be supernaturally blessed by God? Get ready to embark on a journey that will change your heart and transform your mind into one that will be richly blessed by God.

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Givers and Takers

Gen 3:6 *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasing to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make wise, she took of its fruit, and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.*

There is no doubt in my mind that satan was out to destroy what God had created. He is also determined to keep you from living the life that God has intended for you too. He does not want you to discover God's principles concerning stewardship, giving and blessing. Why? Because, when you do, your life will be transformed for the better, and God's kingdom will be impacted. Wouldn't it be great to see our lives blessed and prosper as we apply God's simple principles? We would see churches built, missionaries fulfill their calling, and revival come to the world.

We are not natural born givers. We are born takers...When satan tempted Eve with the fruit she took it and ate. Then she gave it to her husband and he took it. We have inherited this same fallen sin nature...a tendency to be selfish. Remember, it was this same selfishness and pride that got satan cast out of heaven. Our hearts are in need of a precious transplant that can only be given through Christ Jesus.

God, on the other hand, is a generous giver. This is evident in John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

He goes beyond our wildest imaginations. He is a supernatural giver and wants to bless you in a supernatural abundant way. "Yeah right!" you might say. Well, if you believe he wants you to be blessed then you must understand that there are Biblical principles we must adhere to in order to receive these blessings. Ephesians 3:20 says "*and to know that love of Christ which passes all knowledge, that you might be filled with the fullness of God.*" To be filled with the fullness of God we must be obedient. We must be rooted and grounded in love (v.17). So that He can do the work within us according to the power within us (v.20)...this power within us comes only through obedience. The blessing comes after the obedience, not before. Just like the victory comes after the trial, not before or during it...

For those who want to experience all that God desires for them to have I invite you to partake in this study with me, as we learned together how to live the blessed life. Through this study I will attempt to teach the principles I have learned from Robert Morris' book "*The Blessed Life*". In this study I can honestly say I have repented of my own disobedience and unbelief, and I have thanked God for His favor through my obedience to Him. I will speak of a few of my own experiences where, through my obedience to the Lord, he has blessed me enough to take a year off from working a full time job. It is my prayer that you will be richly blessed and desire all that God has planned for you as you learn to be obedient stewards through giving and blessing into His kingdom.

Before I continue on I would like to pause for a moment to reassure you that I know the enemy is hitting you hard concerning this teaching. His only aim is to kill, steal, and destroy. If he can instill a spirit of fear in you then his mission is accomplished concerning the fact that God wants you to be

blessed beyond all that you could ever ask or imagine. We must rebuke the devourer (in Jesus Name) and claim the truth that the devil is a liar. That God has a plan and a purpose for your life and He is going to see to it that no weapon formed against you is going to prosper. So, may I pause for a moment and pray for you:

Father, in the name of Jesus, I thank you for the principles that have been shared with me so that they may be passed on to others. I pray Father, that their minds be cleared of the lies of the enemy, and I claim victory over their lives in the area of their finances, and their time, so that they may be blessed to be a blessing. Father, In Jesus Name, I rebuke the spirit of doubt and fear and ask for your divine wisdom and revelational knowledge to come upon those reading these lessons. For you did not give us a spirit of fear, but one of power (over the enemy), love (the ability to love others) and a sound mind (of discipline and self control). I praise you Lord and thank You; In Jesus Name. Amen.

My Unexpected Adventure

Deu 28:12 *The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.*

Deu 28:13 *And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them:*

Deu 28:14 *And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.*

As I shared some of the principles with my pastor concerning Robert Morris' book, and how much it was my desire to see people blessed according to these principles, I didn't expect to be asked to share them with you. When I prayed about this the Lord told me that I was to be an example and follow this teaching. He gave me my first instruction...I was to take a check I've had in my wallet for several weeks and give it to the church. "Wait!" I said. This check was to pay a bill that I was waiting for to come in. The Lord assured me that when the bill came in that the money would be there to pay it. Now, this is not to boast about what I do, or give. If you know me at all, you know I'm not that way. In order to be able to minister God's truths we must first experience it ourselves. So, through this teaching I hope to bring you testimonies in an effort to heighten your faith so you can see that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. For we cannot expect anything without faith; can we?

Recently I lead a women's drug and alcohol regeneration ministry that, unfortunately, was not able to make it in the fallen economy, and we had to close and merge our women with another center. During the time prior to the merge, one of my employee's and I went several weeks without pay. Even though we went without pay we both remained faithful to the giving of our tithes and offerings. After closing the center God blessed my employee with a job. I, on the other hand, couldn't find full time work *anywhere!* But, God had a plan...He made a way, through the profits of my husband's business the previous year, to bless me by doubling the money I was not able to receive through the ministry. Both of us were blessed by God because we remained obedient in our giving. Even through the year of no full time work I remained faithful in my giving and at the end of the year the Lord blessed me with my old job working for my husband...with a pay increase. You cannot out give God; you must trust Him for your provision. Even in lean times He is faithful.

So, before we begin, we should understand what is meant by "the blessed life." What exactly does this life look like?

Robert Morris defines "blessed" in his book as follows:

Being "blessed" means having supernatural power working for you. In contrast, being 'cursed' means having supernatural power working against you.

To be blessed does not mean we will necessarily be millionaires according to the world's standards. But a blessed person will agree they are filled with divine "coincidences" with heavenly meaning. They enjoy a quality of life that most wealthy people envy.

There are 4 points in Deuteronomy where God tells those who obey Him that He will bless everything they set their hands to (see 14:29, 15:10, 23:20, 28:8,12). This is the blessed life. Everything that you touch will do well. When you are blessed it shows in every area of your life – health, relationships, work, family, emotions and thoughts. If this sounds good to you then you are about to embark on an adventure you will not regret and enjoy the bounty of God's blessings.

God Must Be First

Mat 6:33 *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.*

Here are a few statistics that were gathered from Robert Morris' book:

There are 500 verses in the Bible concerning prayer and nearly 500 verses concerning faith, but more than 2000 verses on the subject of money and possessions. Jesus talked about money in 16 of His 38 parables. It is evident that we need to understand money and how to handle it.

As we begin our journey we must first learn that our tithe is the first and foremost in God's eyes. God will test us with our money to see where our priorities and loyalties lie. What we don't understand is that what we do with our money dictates whether we get our blessing from God or not. So, for those who are new at this 'giving thing', the first thing we must learn about is our tithes...our firstfruits. Remember, before I get started, the enemy is already trying to get you to check out...press on mighty warrior of God...you are about to learn how God will rebuke the devourer for your sake.

To give a little history here is appropriate as we must learn the purpose of sacrifice, redemption, and the first born (firstfruit). I must ask that you be good stewards of His Word and read and study the scriptures I reference as I must try to be brief:

God claimed in Exodus 13:2 that the first born is His. He referenced this 16 times in the Bible. According to Old Testament law the first born was to be sacrificed or redeemed (See Exodus 13:12, 13). The firstborn of all livestock was to be sacrificed. If the animal was considered unclean, they were to redeem it by sacrificing a spotless lamb.

Do you see the parallel? Jesus Christ was God's firstborn Son, and He was born clean. Every one of us is born unclean; therefore Jesus was sacrificed to redeem us. When he was sacrificed, we were brought back to God (redeemed). He was the firstfruits offering. Jesus was literally the tithe. Before we ever knew Him, He sacrificed His Son Jesus in faith. This is made evident in Romans 5:8:

Rom 5:8 *But God commends His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.*

According to Romans 8:29: God gave Jesus in faith '*that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*' God didn't wait to see if we would repent, or change our ways, or make ourselves worthy. He followed His principle of the firstfruit, and put first things first. He sacrificed the firstborn to redeem us, the unclean fallen man. Now that's what I call Love!

We give to God first; this is what tithing is all about. We trust Him to provide for the rest...this requires faith. When we give of the first fruits of our time and our finances we are saying "God, I am trusting you as I give you the first of my time or my money, that you are going to take care of things for me this week." We give of the first so the rest can be redeemed.

Are you setting aside the first part of your week for Jesus? When you pay your bills do you write your tithe check first then pay your bills and buy your groceries? If not...your money is not blessed.

Remember, God required the firstborn to be sacrificed and this redeemed the rest of the flock.

Proverbs 3:9 says: "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase."

We will cover next time how we must offer to God the first of our first...Be blessed and know that I am praying that God blesses and strengthens you as you grow in His Word.

The First of the First

Exo 23:19 *The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of Jehovah your God...*

There is a story I would like to share with you from Joshua 6. This is the story of the fall of Jericho. God was clear in this account that He did not want anyone to keep the spoils. He wanted everything from this battle to go to Him. Why, you ask...because this was the first city conquered in the Promised Land...the firstfruits. I believe you may remember in this story that there was someone who decided not to take God seriously and kept a relic for himself, his name was Achan. When he took this relic for himself he became accursed (Josh 6:18). When all the spoils were taken and given to God they became “consecrated”, or set apart for God’s house; but when Achan took for himself, he placed a curse on Israel’s efforts to take the Promised Land.

Consecrated or cursed – this is what tithing is all through the Bible. When we take our tithe to the Lord’s house it is consecrated (set apart) to the Lord. When we take it for ourselves; it becomes a curse because it is stolen. We are actually robbing God when we keep the tithe to ourselves, and Malachi 3 makes that clear:

Mal 3:8,9 *Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me. But you say, In what have we robbed You? In the tithe and the offering! You are cursed with a curse; for you are robbing Me, the nation, all of it.*

But I’m Under Grace

There are those who try to justify by saying, “I’m under grace now. I’m not under the law, and those were established under the law.” The tithe belongs to God. The firstborn belongs to God. And firstfruits belong to God. In my search through the scriptures I reflected on the one where Jesus said:

Mat 5:17 *Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to destroy but to fulfill.*

Jesus came to fulfill the principle of the firstfruits of the firstborn by being God’s tithe to us. Not to end it...but to fulfill a promise to redeem sin laden man. I’ll say it again: the firstfruits, the firstborn and the tithe all belong to God.

I asked you in the previous devotion whether you write your tithe check as soon as you get paid, or do you wait until Sunday morning after you’ve paid your bills and bought your groceries. If you wait until Sunday morning, have you tithed on the first of your increase? No! You must act on faith...and to do that you must trust Him with the firstfruits and allow Him to provide for the rest. We must examine our priorities if we pay everyone else first and then pay God His portion last. Remember, the first portion is the redemptive portion. It has the power to redeem the rest so it can be blessed. Isn’t that amazing? Paul, in Romans 11:16, tells us that *“For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.”* When we act on the principle of faith and put God first, this initiates the blessing. It is the first portion that redeems the rest and carries the blessing.

I carry a burden for the church body because so many people don't understand these principles. Instead of living with God's blessings they are living under a curse because their unbelief, or lack of knowledge, has left them robbing God. It takes faith to give the firstfruits and make Him first in your lives. If the enemy has placed fear in your heart when it comes to giving to the Lord, remember this: than when you tithe God will rebuke the devourer for your sake (Mal. 3:11)...if only you will trust Him and obey.

It's a Heart Matter

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

For those of us who are FaceBook 'savy,' some of us ladies love to pass around hearts to each other. It's a game where you can accumulate 'heart' beats; and as you accept a heart from a friend you can then share with others by passing another heart to them. It's an interesting theory, that as we accumulate hearts, and we give more away, our heart beats stronger.

I have learned that our treasure doesn't follow our hearts...if it did then we'd not only be a church that loved people...we'd be a church that gave because it was from our hearts. Just like the game of hearts, as we give of our tithes, and time, we in turn become blessed. In essence, our hearts beat stronger for Jesus. Instead we love people, but we hold back our hearts when it comes to tithing and our time.

In the Bible, the word "tithe" means 'a tenth' (H4643). Did you know that the number 10 represents testing in the Bible? For instance there were 10 Commandments, right? Ten plagues on the people of Egypt...and in the New Testament there were 10 virgins that were tested for preparedness. You can consider tithing as the ultimate 'heart' test.

Mal 3:10 *Bring all the tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house. And test Me now with this, says Jehovah of Hosts, to see if I will not open the windows of Heaven for you, and pour out a blessing for you, until there is not enough room.*

You heard it! God said to test him on this. This is the only area where God said to test Him. Go ahead and honor the Lord with your firstfruits – your tithes – and see what happens.

When we give to our church, we are essentially giving to God. It must be with a grateful heart and not a legalistic mindset. In Genesis 28, Jacob made a vow to God to tithe the first 10 percent of his firstfruits (v. 22). It was Jacobs's way of blessing God for the goodness He had shown him. Can you think of some ways that God has blessed you that changed your heart (and life)? This is a good time to stop and thank Him from a grateful heart.

Deu 26:13 *then you shall say before the LORD your God, 'I have removed the sacred portion out of my house, and moreover, I have given it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all your commandment that you have commanded me. I have not transgressed any of your commandments, nor have I forgotten them.*

The sacred portion is the tithe and this is the portion God considers Holy. According to Webster's Dictionary the word "holy" means 'separated' and "set apart." Understand here that the tithe is holy. The tithe belongs in the House of God. Remember, when we keep it for ourselves we are essentially robbing God: "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed you?' In tithes and offerings." (Mal 3:8) We are not being faithful stewards with God's money when we choose to keep it so we can take that vacation, or buy that new barbeque grill. Or what about that Sunday you couldn't make it...did you send in your tithe?

Mat 25:29 *For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.*

Just like in the story of the 10 talents in Matthew 25 where the man who was afraid took the money and hid it. His master didn't reward him. In fact he took the talents away from him and gave it to the man

who had 10. Why? Because the man with ten talents had proved himself to be a good steward to what was given to him.

As Christians, God has left us in charge of His Bride, the Church. He only asks that we give 10 percent to His House, and the remaining 90 percent we can spend as we wish.

“For those who obey, they will be blessed. Those who go above and beyond will be blessed even more. But for those who refuse to do even the minimum (10 percent), He is going to take away what they have and give it to someone who will be a good steward with it.”

Remember in Malachi 3:6 God says He doesn't change. If you have the faith to trust Him you will be blessed abundantly. These foundations you have learned so far are principals upon which the remaining you are about to learn are built.

The Principle of Multiplication

Luk 9:16 *And He took the five loaves and the two fish. And looking up to Heaven, He blessed them and broke, and He gave to the disciples to set before the crowd.*

Luk 9:17 *And they ate and were all filled. And there was taken up twelve hand baskets full of fragments of that left over to them.*

God is the master of multiplication. Remember the widow and her son for whom God multiplied the oil and their meal? This principle of multiplication is also given in the account of the feeding of the 5,000 in Luke 9.

When the disciples began to worry over how all these people were going to be fed Jesus told them to feed them. Jesus was busy ministering the Word to the people and didn't take this issue of feeding them as a top priority. After all, it didn't appear that the people were complaining. So the disciples set out on a search party of their own to find food to feed these 20,000 plus people. Arriving back later they take a look at what was scrounged together...2 fish and 5 loaves of bread.

They take their findings to Jesus and He instructs them to organize the people into groups of 50. Jesus then takes the 5 loaves and 2 fishes and blesses them. Giving them to His disciples He instructs them to break the bread and pass out the food to the people. The more they broke, the more God supplied. When they were finished there were 12 baskets of leftovers.

In this story we have learned 2 keys to multiplication. The first being that something must be blessed before it can multiply. Before our finances can multiply it must be given to God first. We've already learned in the previous lessons that when we give to God the first of our increase, the rest is blessed (See Romans 11:16). Only Jesus has the power to bless our tithes so it can multiply.

The second principle of multiplication is: Only what is given away can multiply. If the disciples had eaten the bread and fish themselves then it would have only been nothing more than 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread. When they gave it away it multiplied to feed 20,000 people with leftovers to spare.

Now you might say, "Well, I tithe and I've never seen my money multiply." The question back is; "Are you giving over and above your tithes, or are you just tithing?" The tithe belongs to God. So when you tithe you are giving God what is His. Remember Malachi 3? We give our firstfruits so that what is ours will be blessed. The remaining 90 percent is ours to keep. It is when you give above our tithes that it is considered an offering.

Tithing is where we start when we begin to give. This first step is where the curse is removed and the blessing begins on our finances. It is through tithing that causes God to rebuke the devourer and open the windows of heaven.

In Malachi 3:8 God mentions that it's more than the tithes that removes the curse...it's also the offerings that brings the blessings and rebukes the devourer. Just as God multiplied the two fish and the 5 loaves of bread that day, He also wants to bless and multiply your finances too.

Don't sell yourself short here with these principles. God wants you to be blessed. But you must understand these 2 keys to achieve these blessings:

1. We give to the Lord first so that our finances are blessed.
2. We give over and above our tithes because only that which is shared can be multiplied.

God hasn't changed. Remember? His principles of multiplication hold the same power today as they did that day on that Galilean hillside.

Breaking the Spirit of Mammon

Mat 6:24 *No one can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*

I have been anxiously waiting to teach this chapter because there were quite a few eye opening revelations for me as I learned how the spirit of mammon entraps us and sends us into a frenzy of unbelief.

The spirit of mammon tells us that we don't need God. That we can trust in our own riches. It tells us that money is the answer to all our problems...that we can have it all if we just follow its simple rules. Greed, selfishness and covetousness are all manifestations of the spirit of mammon. The spirit of mammon wants us to think that wealth comes from hard work. This is the spirit of pride. The spirit of mammon also says, through the spirit of poverty, that wealth comes from the devil.

Spirit led giving however, diminishes satan's kingdom and makes us more like our Heavenly Father. It is not a get rich quick scheme; it's a lay down your life challenge. It's a die to your flesh, take up your cross and follow Me experience.

Our God is a jealous God. He states this in His ten commandments (Exodus 20:5). What we fail to recognize though is that when we allow money to rule us to the point that it becomes an idol, we end up serving it and not God. Jesus said in Matthew 6 that it is impossible to serve both God and mammon (riches, or money).

When we hold back, and we don't give God His portion of our increase, it is not blessed. Therefore it has the spirit of Mammon on it. Why; because money has either the spirit of mammon or the Spirit of God on it. When our money is submitted to God for His purpose it has His Spirit on it and it cannot be consumed by the devourer. Remember He said He will rebuke the devourer for our sake. Money not submitted to God is not blessed and therefore has the spirit of mammon on it by default. Mammon is – in essence – the spirit of the world.

Money can operate like an addiction. It will promise you everything and deliver you nothing...It will leave you in fear of where your next fix will come from. It will leave you longing for more. It will take the very place of God. This is why Jesus said you cannot serve both God and mammon (Matt. 6:24). It will rule you and make you its servant.

1 Timothy 6:10 tells us: *"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil."*

Notice here it doesn't say that money is evil. It says that the *love* of money is the root of all kinds of evil. When covetousness, greed, and selfishness take the place of love, faith, self-control, just some of the Fruits of the Spirit, then you are being lead by the spirit of mammon.

One example of the spirit of mammon I'd like to share is one I have experienced myself, and that Robert Morris also shared in his book; this is multilevel businesses. This spirit works very subtly and throws the pitch of: Just think of what you could do for your church if you were rich...you can give to your favorite ministry and have everything you need when you become a millionaire.

I have seen people actually stare in awe at the successful people who had everything they wanted or needed in these organizations. They are making these people idols and they are making an idol out of

mammon. You cannot help people without money...and you can't do it without God. When you start thinking that some of our problems are going to be solved by more money, then it's possible that you've fallen under the spirit of mammon.

Another example that we all can relate to is when we're under pressure to have enough money to pay a bill. We think at that moment that something needs to happen...Quick! We think we need a miracle from God, a truckload of money or to win the lottery. What we've just done is substituted money (mammon) for God.

Please understand that I'm not saying that money is evil. Jesus only stated that you can't love both. If you love God, you will hate mammon. God and mammon are both talking to us. Every time we pray about giving sacrificially to our church the spirit of mammon tries to talk us out of it.

There is so much in this chapter I would love to cover, but I don't want to overwhelm you. The last point I would like to share is how the spirit of mammon loves to bring its two favorite friends with it every time...the spirit of pride and the spirit of poverty. These two spirits will keep you from living the blessed life just like the spirit of mammon. We need to get these spirits out of our lives so we can experience the blessings that God has in store for those who tithe and give offerings.

The spirit of poverty will cause you to be ashamed of what God has blessed you with. When we are faithful generous stewards we will be blessed. The enemy can't stop your being blessed, but he will try to make you feel guilty. He'll try to make you apologize for what God has blessed you with. Never apologize for what God has blessed you with.

Now, be careful here, because satan's next step if you're wise to his schemes about poverty is he will try the opposite approach – the spirit of pride. Pride will tell you “You've earned this new car. You've worked hard for what you have. If it wasn't for your talent and abilities you wouldn't have all this. You should be proud of your blessings.” Both of these spirits focus on the ‘stuff’ and not the Blessor (God). Let me give you a couple of examples:

When someone says, “Wow, you have a nice house!”

Pride says, “We are going to build a bigger one.”

Poverty says, “It was a foreclosure.”

Gratitude says, “Thank you. The Lord has blessed us.”

When you think about your situation in life...

Pride says, “I deserve more!”

Poverty says, “I should feel guilty.”

Gratitude says, “Thank you!” (Gratitude is an attitude of thankfulness that always acknowledges God's provision.)

When we recognize either one of these spirits on us they should be replaced by a heart of gratitude. Pride wants others to think we paid more. Poverty wants others to think we paid less. Gratitude doesn't care what people think; it only cares about what God thinks.

Deu 8:18 But you shall remember Jehovah your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, so that He may confirm His covenant which He has sworn to your fathers, as it is today.

Always remember that it is God who gives us the power to get wealth. It's His grace that has done a good work in us, because we were once slaves to sin. If you feel convicted over allowing any one of these to control you, God is gracious and allows room for repentance. As you seek His forgiveness you may also want to break this off of not only your life, but the lives of your family and your descendents. Ask God to help you to become an extravagant and loving giver to His kingdom.

The Motives of the Heart

Luk 6:38 *Give, and it shall be given to you, good measure pressed down and shaken together and running over, they shall give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you measure, it shall be measured to you again.*

Recently I learned a principle about giving that I would like to share with you. In this scripture, Luke 6:38, do you think that Jesus was talking about money? No, He wasn't. If you read the scriptures before it (v. 36, 37) He was unveiling a principle that was to be used in every area of our lives. It is this scripture and the ones before it that we are going to focus on.

So what does this verse mean – pressed down, shaken together, and running over? In the times when Jesus was ministering the primary occupation was farming. So it only stood to reason He would give a farmers explanation of how much these people would be blessed if they would only follow God's principal of giving. In the Old Testament the harvesters in the field were instructed to leave the corners of the fields un-harvested for the poor. The poor would then come and fill their baskets with the grain. Keep in mind that this was the only time the poor had to provide food for their families. So they would fill their baskets as full as they could. They would press it down to make room for more and then they would shake it so the loose grain would fall to the bottom for more grain to fit into the basket. If this had been you, wouldn't you want to a make sure you got a good portion...a good measure, not a partial one? You would press it down and heap the grain over the top until it began to spill over the top.

What God was communicating here was that when you give you are going to get more back in return. If you give judgment, you will receive judgment in return. If you give forgiveness you will receive more back.

This principle is telling us that when we give our reward is to get the same in return. This is why Jesus said at the beginning of this verse, that if we don't judge, don't condemn, or if we forgive, the same will come back to us. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. If you sow love, an overabundance of love will come back to you.

We cannot, however, allow this to be our motive for giving. I have mentioned earlier that we are natural born takers, not givers. God wants us to capture the vision of giving, not getting. Believe me God wants to see us blessed, and he wants us to have nice things. But He wants our motives to be pure. Such is evident in Proverbs 16:2:

All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord (NIV).

Have you ever asked God for something, and didn't receive it. Maybe it's because you asked with the wrong motives. James 4:3 confronts this:

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with the wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures (NIV).

The position of our heart is what matters to God. In order to operate in His kingdom what motivates our heart is what matters.

The Conditions of the Heart

Luk 6:30 (AMP) *Give away to everyone who begs of you [who is in want of necessities], and of him who takes away from you your goods, do not demand or require them back again.*

Luk 6:31 *And as you would like and desire that men would do to you, do exactly so to them.*

God wants us to capture the vision of giving. He desires us to be cheerful givers, not takers. And if your heart has the right focus then it gets more excited when it gives than when it gets. In Luke 6:30-35 Jesus talked about giving without expecting anything back. Give mercy to those who have wronged you. Give love to those who don't deserve it. Give...give...give...This is what our Heavenly Father command us. Not to get back something in return. When we do this our Father will give back to us. It looks like reckless abandonment to the world, but to God you're being obedient and following His example. Let's take a look at our heart conditions when we give:

There are two things that can attack us before and after we give. The first is selfishness, the second is grief. Selfishness can attack us before we give. Grief can attack us after we give.

The Selfish Heart

Deu 15:9 *Beware that there is not a thought in your wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand, and your eye may be evil against your poor brother, and you give him nothing. And he may cry to Jehovah against you, and it is sin to you.*

We have to understand that we are going to have to deal with a selfish heart – ours – This heart tells us we won't have enough if we give, or how can I know God will be faithful to meet our needs? God's Word tells us not to think this way. Joshua 1:8 tells us to not only mediate on the word day and night so we will be prosperous; it says that we are to do 'everything' it says to do! We can't be selfish; this is our old fallen nature, not our new nature in Christ Jesus. We cannot make deals with God.

The Grieving Heart

After we deal with our selfish nature we must move on to the emotion of grief after we give.

Deu 15:10 *You shall surely give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing Jehovah your God shall bless you in all your works, and in all that you put your hand to.*

When we give our emotions get stirred and we feel excited over what we've just done. Not a prideful excitement, but a Holy Spirit elation. God says in Deu 15 that he will bless you in everything you put your hand to and in all your works.

Too many times grief tells us what we could have done with that money if you just would have kept it for yourself. Or what about your time? This is always a biggie in this fast-paced hurried world we live in. You have to guard your heart before and after you give.

We must understand that it isn't our money or time to begin with, it's God's. He made us stewards over it. If we have a problem with money then we need to understand these principles of stewardship.

The Heart of Love

There are 2 more heart conditions: The Generous Heart and the Grateful Heart. These two heart conditions are what God is looking for and is trying to work within us.

The Generous Heart

Deu 15:14 *You shall richly bestow on him from your flock, and from your grain floor, and from your winepress; with what Jehovah your God has blessed you, you shall give to him.*

Deu 15:15 *And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Jehovah your God redeemed you.*

Can you look back when you gave your life to Jesus for a moment? Our old nature was so self focused. We became pretty good at manipulating circumstances in our favor. That was the old nature of the taker. But God gave us a new nature; a nature of a giver. Our minds were renewed:

Rom 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, in order to prove by you what is that good and pleasing and perfect will of God.*

As we grow in God's Word our minds are transformed. Our new man, inside of us, wants to be generous. However we have to learn to renew our minds in this area. We have to trust God to take care of us.

When you reflect on the goodness of God and where He brought you from, you develop a liberal-heart who gives generously because you know it all belongs to God anyway. You learn to trust Him to provide and take care of you and bless you.

The Grateful Heart

Deu 15:15 *And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Jehovah your God redeemed you*

Why do you think God wanted the people to remember they were slaves? He wanted to fill their hearts with gratitude for what He did for them. There may be times where God does this to you. Not to produce a guilt trip, or condemnation, but to develop a heart of gratitude. When I think of what He has delivered me out of I am filled with an awesome love and reverence for Him – a thankful, grateful heart.

To have this genuine gratitude to God is a powerful thing. When we are grateful we are generous. We must be careful that we don't begin to think we're entitled to His blessings. Because when we are tested...and believe me, we will be tested...we can get offended and mad. Our heart of gratitude can easily become a heart of greed. God doesn't reward a greedy heart, only the grateful ones.

God will bless His givers so they can continue to bless His kingdom – but it takes a heart transplant. I pray that you desire a heart to give unselfishly with a liberal heart toward God. For when you do you will have it in return 'pressed down, shaken together, and running over.

Can You Measure Up?

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

Matthew 19:16-22 tells us the story of a man who approached Jesus and wanted to know what he needed to do to have eternal life. This man had many possessions, and Jesus knew this. Jesus informed him he must keep God's Commandments. "That I already do. What more do I lack?" He replied. The answer Jesus gave him sent him away sorrowful because he had many possessions. He wasn't willing to give up what he had. His possessions meant more to him than obtaining eternal life.

Your attitude toward your possessions has a powerful ability to expose the true nature of our hearts. Learning to tithe is an important principle to learn. It helps God to be able to perform the work of his kingdom. It allows God's people to reach to multitudes, the lost, and the hopeless. As we practice these principles taught we may see God starting to do a work in our lives in the area of giving. We may begin to see that we have extra cash when there use to be lack. God wants to work miracles in your life, but before He can start He must first work a miracle in your heart regarding financial obedience. At some point in your faithfulness to give, God is going to test your obedience.

With that said, let me give you a scenario: Let's say there is a couple in your church who is in need. God instructs you to give them a certain amount of money. You know you have the funds and can write them a check today. What would you do? Or, better yet, what if that was all the money you had and the Lord is asking you to give it to them? Would you do it?

If you respond immediately to the Lord's prompting then you know that your treasures are stored up in heaven, and not here on earth. You are telling God that you trust Him with your possessions and know that He will restore back what you have given away.

If you hesitate and allow fear to talk you out of it then Satan wins and you've just displayed to God the true value of your relationship with Him.

If God speaks to you, do it. Don't hesitate, just trust and obey, and do it now. Satan would love to rationalize another course of action. God honors the faithful. If we are going to live the lifestyle of a giver we must make adjustments that allow us to give (I'll share more on this later).

I shared part of a testimony early on in these lessons that I will now conclude. I had a check in my checkbook that I had written out to pay a bill that I was expecting in the mail. When I started this series of lessons the Lord told me to give that check to the church as a seed of my faithfulness. He assured me that the money would be there when the bill came in. I obeyed the Lord with full faith that He would provide when the time came. When the bill came in it was for half of what I had written the original check for. I called and inquired of the amount, certain there was a mistake. But the favor of God overruled, and I had the money to pay the bill at half the amount I had expected.

Now THIS is what I'm talking about! Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also...we have to trust Him. He is the author and finisher of our faith. Did He not provide a ram for Abraham when He told him to go sacrifice his son Isaac? Did He not provide for the widow of Zerephath? And what about Job; did God not double his blessings? God is not a respecter of persons. What He will do for one, because of their faithfulness, He'll do for you. Just trust and obey.

Good Stewardship Principles

Heb 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

God has entrusted us with gifts and talents that we are to use for the use of His Kingdom. What would you say if I told you that how we handle these gifts and abilities determines how we will spend eternity? If we are good stewards with what He has given us, then our reward will be greater. God does not give His miraculous powers to poor stewards.

In Luke 19:13 Jesus told a story of a nobleman who went to a foreign country and gave 10 of his servants 10 pounds and told them to "Occupy until I come". In other words, "Operate with this until I return". When he returned he called the servants to him to collect. The first servant reported he not only had the 10 pounds, he had 10 more, and the master rewarded him by allowing him to govern over 10 towns. The second servant made a 50% profit and the master placed him over 5 towns. The next servant bowed his head and said "I hid your money in the cellar". Now did the master reward him for his faithfulness? No, he did not. Why....because he didn't do anything with what was given to him.

We see here that God is a rewarder. If we are poor stewards with our time and our money there will be no gain. A good steward is the one who will receive more. If Jesus returned unexpectedly what would he find you doing with what he has given you? Jesus asked in Matthew 24:45: "Who then is a faithful and wise servant..." What if this is asked of you today? Will He find you being a faithful steward? Are you doing the best with what He has given you? Are you tithing, witnessing, and praying?

Keep in mind now that God doesn't want us to give with the intent of being rewarded in return. It's not wrong to think that God will reward us when we give. When we give in simple childlike faith, we must be sure that we don't allow the reward our motive for giving. When we give it's out of the abundance of our hearts...just like God would give. We imitate God and His love. We are honoring God, and in return He honors good stewardship.

Seed Time and Harvest

2Co 9:6-8 (MSG) *Remember: A stingy planter gets a stingy crop; a lavish planter gets a lavish crop. I want each of you to take plenty of time to think it over, and make up your own mind what you will give. That will protect you against sob stories and arm-twisting. God loves it when the giver delights in the giving. God can pour on the blessings in astonishing ways so that you're ready for anything and everything, more than just ready to do what needs to be done.*

These verses pretty much speak for themselves. If we give little we'll get little in return. Now keep in mind here that Paul was speaking to a church of givers who were about to make a sacrificial offering. It is not to make the reward our motivation for giving, but to free us from the fear of lack and show us that there is a reward to giving. Paul talks in verse 7 that "each person was to give as God purposes in his heart". He would never ask you to give above what you could afford. He does not want you to give out of reluctance or compulsion. It's the heart of a cheerful giver that is blessed. In order to be a cheerful giver you must allow God to work on your heart.

It's only natural for our hearts to give grudgingly. Remember, it's our natural tendency to be takers, not givers. But, if we've had that heart transplant I talked about earlier, we become unselfish, grateful, and generous givers.

We must believe that God is able to pour out blessings on you. Why? So you can be a blessing to others. We must believe He will make all grace abound toward you (v.8 NKJV). When we sow bountifully, God's grace abounds towards us. Our cup overflows...The result of the overflow of His grace is we begin to have sufficiency in all things. Verse 8 links up with verses 6 and 7: "*God can pour on the blessings in astonishing ways so that you're ready for anything and everything, more than just ready to do what needs to be done*"...when we give from a cheerful heart.

Sufficiency can relate to our needs. It's one thing to have just enough to meet your bills, but what about when you get that little extra? You know that bonus you didn't expect. Do you tithe on it? If you do then you're being a good steward. But what about after you tithe, do you decide to spend it on something you've really wanted. Or do you decide to take that money and apply it to a debt you might owe? This is a test of our need verses our greed. We trust God to meet our need and he meets it. That is sufficiency...having enough to meet our need. The greed test comes when we move beyond sufficiency and into abundance.

Take a little advice from little ole Lea... If you want to be blessed exceedingly and abundantly above all that you could ever ask or imagine, get out of debt. Make it a priority to pay off all your debt. Make changes in your lifestyle to help you achieve this. Make a budget, and place goals for yourself to see your debit paid by a certain time. Then ask the Lord what He would have you do with your abundance once your debt is paid.

God provides seed to the sower, and bread for food (2 Cor. 9:10). He knows what you have need of and He will provide it. But you must scatter that seed in order to be supplied, and you can't do it if your

heart is not right. God supplies your seed and He is the one who can multiply it..."good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over" (Luke 6:38).

The Extravagant Blessing

2 Chr. 16:9 (NLT) *The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him*

If you have made it this far in this teaching I commend you. You truly have a heart to see God's Kingdom changed. You have allowed God to go through your treasure and get to your heart. Giving does a supernatural work in your hearts, and that is what God is after – our hearts. Our God is not a God that He should lie...He will back up His Word.

There are many more examples and principles to follow, and perhaps I will share them in future devotions. My final nugget to pass on to you in this series is to review the 3 types of giving:

Tithing

Offerings

Extravagant giving

Most people struggle to remain at the level of the giving of their tithes. But for those who tithe regularly, usually end up moving quickly into the next level - giving offerings as the Lord leads. They soon realize that tithing removes the curse and opens the windows of heaven over them (Again, I ask you to study Malachi 3). Very few make it to the extravagant giving stage. Oh, we'd like to...but usually something else captures our hearts attention. This doesn't justify it or make it okay. 2 Chronicles 16:9 says that "The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him" (NLT). The more we allow God to do the work in our hearts the more He can trust us with His wealth and resources.

The most extravagant gift we can give to the Lord is our selves. After all, did he not give us His most extravagant gift...His Son? God is not after our money. He has all the resources of the universe at His disposal. What He is after though is our treasure – which is tied to our hearts. But while we hold back He sees poor people who need fed, willing missionaries who need to be equipped and sent out, and churches that need to be built. This is why His eyes are roaming the earth; He's looking for faithful-hearted stewards whom He can work with.

Is this your heart? Are you willing to experience a reckless abandonment to serve as He leads? We were made to receive love and then give it away. As we give it away, more comes back to us, which allows us to give more away. The evidence that God has your heart is when you give without expecting anything back in return. We give because we want to bless people and help enlarge the Kingdom of God.

John 2 tells the story of Jesus and His mother while at a wedding feast, the hosts ran out of wine. After Mary informed Jesus of the situation she told the servants: "Whatever He says to you, do it." Jesus took the natural (water) and turned it into something supernatural (wine). This is what God wants to do with our finances.

This is the key. As soon as you hear God tell you to do something – do it. My heart pounds with anticipated excitement when I think about what He could do with a people who were extravagantly blessed.