

The Nature of Giving

*God is the first giver and has therefore
established the true nature of giving.*

by

Rev. D. Scott Ross

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

The author has emphasized some words in Scripture quotations in bold face type.

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Kenneth S. Wuest, *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961

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Contents

	Introduction	5
<i>Chapter 1</i>	What is Giving?	7
<i>Chapter 2</i>	The Nature of Giving	11
<i>Chapter 3</i>	Why Giving Fails to Return	15
<i>Chapter 4</i>	The Law of Action and Reaction	21
<i>Chapter 5</i>	Mysteries of the Kingdom	31
<i>Chapter 6</i>	Is There Such a Thing as Good Ground?	37
<i>Chapter 7</i>	What is the Hundredfold Return?	47
<i>Chapter 8</i>	Giving that Gets the Attention of Jesus	53
<i>Chapter 9</i>	Willingness in Giving	59
<i>Chapter 10</i>	How Does Return Come	69
<i>Chapter 11</i>	Why Do We Struggle?	75

Introduction

I have written this book in obedience to the Lord. It will no doubt challenge much of the established thinking about the subject of giving. I am certain this is the Lord's intention in His instruction to write this book. I pray you read it with an open mind and open heart.

Here is a summary of the Nature of Giving.

(Amplified Translation, Ephesians 5:1) "THEREFORE BE imitators of God [copy Him and follow His example], as well-beloved children [imitate their father]."

God is the first giver and has therefore established the true nature of giving. As we imitate God in our giving, we will be pleasing to Him as His dear children. No father could ever resist blessing a child like that.

Chapter 1

What is Giving?

You can only give something that belongs to you. It has to be your property in order to give it. We need to be clear in our minds as to what exactly is our property. At first thought, we would presume it to be anything that we have in our possession.

What do we truly own?

(Psalms 24:1) “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”

(Psalms 89:11) “The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.”

(1Corinthians 10:26) “For the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof.”

(Psalms 50:7–12) “Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. For every beast of

the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.”

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

Man owns nothing - God owns everything. The above five scriptures are just a few of the many making these claims. God has blessed mankind in giving him dominion over the works of His hands and allowing mankind to possess many things, but the ownership of creation was not given to mankind to be his owned property.

The Apostle Paul understood this very well.

(1Corinthians 10:26) “For the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof.”

(1Timothy 6:7) “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out”.

The very fact that the Apostle Paul quoted the Old Testament Psalms 24:1 is proof he believed that God is the owner of everything. Paul clearly told Timothy that we brought nothing into the world and we carry nothing out of it, illustrating that man is only the possessor of something for a time.

God laid claim to ten percent of the increase of the earth.

*(Leviticus 27:30) “And **all the tithe** of the land, whether of the*

seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD."

This means that the tithe is not the property of mankind - it is God's property. While the tithe is in our hand, it remains the property of God. God clearly instructed man to "return" the tithe to the Lord. You can only return something that already belongs to someone else. If the tithe were your property, God would tell you to "give" it but He did not say that.

(Malachi 3:7-8) "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."

You cannot be accused of robbing someone of something that already belongs to you. You have legal rights to your own property, and, in some states, you can protect it with deadly force. The tithe is returned because it belongs to God - it is His property.

This means that the tithe is not given, and it is not an offering. Therefore, the tithe is not considered "giving" as we view giving. One of the biggest mistakes in Bible interpretation is the failure to understand this truth. People use scriptures concerning giving when speaking about the tithe and they simply do not apply. How many people have been misled by ministers failing to understand this difference? You cannot claim a scripture for giving while receiving the tithe because the tithe is not giving. The tithe is something that belongs to God, and returning it absolves us from being thieves. Also, returning the tithe is the

covenant assurance that when we do give, it will be blessed and produce.

What is giving? Giving is something we willingly give of ourselves, or have been asked by God to give, that is after the tithe and is part of our possessions.

Chapter 2

The Nature of Giving

Giving that is of God has a nature about it. God was the first giver and He established the nature of how giving ought to be. We think that anything that leaves our hand and goes to another without charge is considered giving. In function that is true, but in nature it is not. The giving God established has His fingerprint on it.

Often, the giving mankind participates in has the smell of flesh on it. Much of the giving in the world today, and even in the Body of Christ, is politically motivated to garner favor. That makes it selfish. I often wonder if the Body of Christ in America would tithe and present offerings if there were no tax deduction for it. The United States is unique in this privilege. As I travel the world and teach on tithes and offerings, I am very aware I am speaking to people that receive no benefit from their government for contributing, and all they contribute is done so after they pay taxes higher than ours.

Most of the giving in the United States occurs with the quiet understanding that there is a dual benefit to it. First, they are

promised extraordinary returns for their giving to ministries. Second, they are granted a significant tax deduction for doing it. I am glad that the United States grants tax deductions for charitable contributions, but that should never be the motive for giving! The nature of giving that is of God has a different motive about it.

Simply stated, the nature of giving that is of God is giving so that someone else will have something. The focus of this giving is on the recipient and not on yourself. This is something very hard to find these days.

2Corinthians chapter nine has long been the primary scripture used to teach and inspire giving. However, it has been misapplied and misunderstood.

*(2Corinthians 9:5) "Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and **make up beforehand** your bounty, whereof **ye had notice before**, that the same might be ready, **as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.**"*

Most ministers do not take the proper time in preparing people in giving offerings. Paul gave notice beforehand so that the people could be prepared to give. This would also allow the people to give willingly. These days there is little planning from the pulpit concerning offerings. Consequently, excessive pressure and promises are made at the moment to motivate a people who are not prepared to give.

God wants our giving to be willing, generous and from the heart.

*(ESV - 5) "...so that it may be ready as a willing gift, "not as an **exaction**"*

An "exaction" is a gift expecting something in return as though due from the receiver. A person giving as an exaction is one who is expecting something in return for their giving - specifically from the one given to. Paul said this was not to be the motive for our giving. This is very contrary to what is being taught but it is right here in the Bible.

Let's look deeper at the nature of giving.

(2Corinthians 9:6) "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

This scripture has been used so much in receiving offerings that I know people who can quote it but do not know where it is in the Bible. The emphasis is always on the measure you give with - either sparingly or bountifully. The thought is, "The greater the measure, the greater the harvest." The problem is, that is only partly true.

*(2Corinthians 9:6 Amplified Translation) "[Remember] this: he who sows sparingly and grudgingly will also reap sparingly and grudgingly, and he who sows generously [that **blessings may come to someone**] will also reap generously and with blessings."*

The above translation is more accurate to the original language of Greek, as is the translation below.

*(2Corinthians 9:6 Kenneth Wuest) "he who sows in a beneficent, generous spirit, with a **view to the blessing of the recipient.**"*

Paul is telling us that the motive and purpose for giving is to be a blessing to others, not to ourselves. If we are focused on “our harvest” when we give, then we are focused on self, and that makes our giving selfish. We are to give because we want someone else to have something. The difference is unidentifiable in the action but known entirely by God. Also, a person who gives “sparingly” then is a person who does not want someone else to have something. He wants himself to have something. Ouch.

God is looking for His nature in our giving. God is love and He gave to satisfy His love (1John 4:8, Ephesians 2:4). God is not some sort of machine that we turn on at our convenience, for our need and for our purposes. If I were God, I would be offended because many of His children treat Him like He is a personal butler. This is not about you; it is about others.

God’s nature in giving is entirely about other people, and this is what He puts His blessing on.

Chapter 3

Why Giving Fails to Return

In my over thirty years of full time ministry, I do not know of one person that has not failed to receive their expected return on their giving at one time or another. That tells me there is something wrong with our believing. Of course, there are those who would never admit the failure and will insist that they are continuing to stand in faith no matter how long it takes. I admire their persistence. However, the law of sowing and reaping itself should tell us that there is something wrong if the desired result is not achieved in a reasonable amount of time. It's time to look deeper.

One of the primary scriptures used for sowing and reaping is a **warning** - and a promise.

(Galatians 6:7-8) "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Faith is not the issue in this scripture. This scripture doesn't even mention the use of faith. Notice that it warns that sowing to the flesh shall reap corruption. No one uses their faith to reap corruption - it just happens under the circumstances because of the law. The issue is not faith for receiving - the issue is the right attitude of the heart in giving.

If faith is not necessary to reap corruption, why is it necessary to reap life everlasting? Some would have us believe that a failure to reap after a seed is sown is a lack of faith. Yet, no one believes for corruption after sowing to their flesh, but they are promised it will happen if they do.

Laws work. If you fall off of a building, the law of gravity will work whether you believed to fall off the building or not. I know this sounds too simple, but why do we make this hard when it comes to money?

The above scripture does not promise a financial return on a financial seed. It tells us very specifically what will be reaped - life everlasting. Life everlasting is more than money but will produce money. I will deal with this in great detail later. For now, realize that a harvest of money is not being spoken about. Because of what has been taught, this may be difficult to accept, but just read it. The law of sowing and reaping is being used to illustrate that the law works under every circumstance. It then tells us that what we sow to is what we will reap from - either the flesh or the Spirit. Money is not mentioned as the harvest.

There is no question that the believer should walk in faith and live in faith daily. That's what believers do - they believe. Every action of ours should stem from our faith in God's Word. However, failing to reap a financial harvest is not an issue of

weakened faith or a lack of faith. If it were, then reaping would be a product of our works rather than because of the spiritual law governing it. The Bible is filled with people who God prospered that never sowed a seed, never prayed for money and never released faith for it. There was even a person that God said did not know Him, but God prospered him for a purpose (Isaiah 45:1-5). If I recall correctly, Jesus told Brother Kenneth E. Hagin that if he would be careful about money, then He would make him wealthy. As I stood in front of Brother Hagin telling us this story, he gave testimony that Jesus had in fact made him wealthy. He did not say he believed for it.

The issue in giving and receiving a harvest - is love.

*(1 Corinthians 13:1-3) "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and **though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.**"*

The foundation of giving is love. Without love, giving does not profit or produce. People tend to look at God and His Word as a mechanical thing that is to be worked when needed. This scripture shows us that God is looking at our heart and its motive. A person can give the ultimate sacrifice (their life), and it will profit nothing if it isn't given in love.

Love motivated God to give

*(John 3:16) “For **God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**”*

Just about everyone knows this scripture, but many miss the point. It was God’s love that moved Him to give His everything to us. This scripture reveals that God loved us so He gave, but people miss that love is the motive of true giving. Love sees the need and then is moved to meet the need. The love for the object of the love is the reason for the giving, not the harvest. This love gave so that the recipient would have something, not so that the giver would receive a harvest.

*(Ephesians 2:3–5) “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, **for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)**”*

*(Amplified Translation) “Because of and **in order to satisfy the great and wonderful and intense love with which He loved us,**”*

Love can only be satisfied in giving. Giving is the means whereby love is satisfied. Love has to give or it isn’t love. God gave to satisfy His love for us, not because He was looking for a harvest and thought He better work the law of sowing and reaping to get what He wanted. The law of sowing and reaping

works every time but it was not the motive for God's giving - and it shouldn't be ours.

Our giving should be motivated by the love of God in us. Love should be the reason we give. If we are truly the people of God then we have to give to satisfy the love of God within us because it cannot be satisfied another way. If our focus is on the return, then it is not motivated by the love of God within us and therefore will profit nothing. We have bred a generation of selfish givers who are thinking only about their own harvest. No wonder promises of "good ground" produce huge offerings. People are giving for themselves, and the promise of an exceptional return motivates them rather than the love of God.

Love forgives

(Matthew 5:23–24) "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

God doesn't want us to give until we are walking in love. Forgiveness is always an issue of walking in love. Love is such an important issue with God that He won't receive the gift until there is love. This scripture reveals very clearly what God is looking for from givers. How many times have we sown seed while at the same time were not walking in love toward someone? That "someone" doesn't have to be in our presence and doesn't have to be the one we are giving to. Notice Jesus said, "go thy way" revealing the offended brother was not at the meet-

ing. “Out of sight, out of mind” may temporarily work for us but it does not work with God.

Perhaps we should be a lot more careful about our giving. Are we walking in love and are we giving because of love?

Chapter 4

The Law of Action and Reaction

The law of sowing and reaping is a natural illustration of what I will call the spiritual law of action and reaction. Natural laws do not always translate directly to spiritual laws but rather illustrate them in natural application. Such is the case with sowing and reaping.

The natural law of sowing and reaping reveals to us that what is sown is what is reaped. If a man sows a corn seed, he will reap only a corn stalk, and the seed will be multiplied. Thank God for that; now we know what to do if we want corn. This is not how it is with the spiritual law of action and reaction. What sowing and reaping shows us in natural form is that there will always be a harvest, or reaction, to every action. Also, we are to choose what action to take to arrive at the desired result. What I call the spiritual law of action and reaction governs the natural law of sowing and reaping, but it is broader than the natural law.

If the law of sowing and reaping were a definitive spiritual law, Jesus would have sunk to the bottom of the Sea of Galilee when He walked on it. Everyone knows that if you try to walk

on water, you will reap from your stupidity and sink to the bottom. But Jesus didn't. Neither did Peter, until he started looking at the waves and considering the natural laws. When Peter had his eyes on Jesus, he was fine. Jesus was acting in obedience to His Father in going to the other side of the sea. He had no boat, so He walked. His action of obedience produced a reaction that suspended the natural laws of gravity and displacement that allowed Him to walk on the water. His obedience to the Father reaped a spiritual intervention into the laws of nature.

In the law of action and reaction, what is sown is not always what is reaped. However, every action will cause a reaction. I will give some examples.

(1 Corinthians 9:11) "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?"

Here, Paul used the terminology of sowing and reaping. Again, sowing and reaping is a known, visible and natural example representing a spiritual law. But notice, Paul says that he had sown spiritual things but he expected to reap their carnal things. In other words, **what** Paul sowed **was not the thing he reaped**. However, because of the spiritual law of action and reaction, he expected to reap natural things because he had in fact sowed to them. According to this spiritual law, he was due to receive from them. As a minister of the Gospel, the Word of God declares the minister is to reap financial support for ministering spiritual things to the people as stated in the following scripture.

(1 Corinthians 9:13–14) "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?"

Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”

The above scripture is a direct New Testament reference to the minister receiving the tithe and offerings from the people in return for preaching the Gospel. The minister sows the Word of God into the hearts of man and is to reap the tithe and offering as a response. I am always amazed when people say that tithing is not in the New Testament. Here it is. They must not be looking for it or don't want to find it.

I cannot find a scripture that directs us to sow the thing we need to get the thing we need. Yet, if you listen to many ministers, you cannot and will not get more money unless you sow money - and a lot of it. Well, we should sow finances for the advancement of the Kingdom of God, and, as a result, we will be blessed of God. But, what will we be blessed with?

Let's look closer at the scriptures.

*(Galatians 6:6-9) “Let him that is taught in the word **communicate** unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but **he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting**. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”*

Paul tells us to “communicate” with the one that teaches us. The Amplified Bible says, “contributing to his support.” Let's look at what Paul did not say. He **did not say to sow** and he **did not say to give**. Communicate is a relational, partnering word. It goes much deeper than a person giving money to a teacher. If you communicate with a teacher, it is because you are in an es-

established relationship with your teacher, like an apprentice is to a carpenter, and you are contributing to his support in response for his teaching you. This could be no other person than your pastor and those he is in relationship with that minister to you regularly as did Paul to the Galatians. This is not a casual exchange - it is personal. While everyone would say that this is in fact giving or sowing, Paul chose to use a much more personal word to make his point.

Paul does refer to the natural law of sowing and reaping to illustrate the point that your action will produce a reaction. However, he explains very clearly what the reactions will be based on our actions.

Look closely at *what is sown* and *what Paul says will be reaped*. We have two choices. We can sow to our own flesh, and the reaction or reaping will be corruption. We can sow to the Spirit, and the reaction or reaping will be life everlasting. Did you get that? Communicating with the one teaching you is considered sowing to the Spirit. Not communicating with the one teaching you is considered sowing to the flesh. Every believer participates in sowing - either to self or to the Spirit. What is promised for communicating with the one teaching you? Life everlasting! We sow financial support to the one teaching us, but the promised reaping is life everlasting - not money. What is sown is *not* what is reaped. However, if you are walking in life everlasting, you will have not only money but everything else you need in life. Life everlasting is better than and more than money but it includes money.

Life everlasting is an eternal word, as is destruction, in the Bible. Paul is talking about a life practice here leading to eternal life, rather than giving an offering to one guest speaker that

comes by. Furthermore, everyone committed to a church is in the process of reaping life everlasting every time they attend. The Word of God is the Word of Life and it brings life everlasting to you every time you hear it. Without you “communicating” with the one that teaches you, it would not be possible to reap life everlasting in this fashion because there would be no church.

Here is another reference to the fact that Paul is speaking about a relationship with the one teaching you.

*(Galatians 6:9) “And let us not be **wear**y in well doing: for in **due season** we shall reap, if we faint not.”*

You cannot and do not get “weary” doing something one time. The exhortation to not be weary is an indication that this is something you do continuously and forever. You do that in a relationship. All the references to “be not weary” in the New Testament are referring to remaining steadfast unto the return of the Lord. God expects you to support the one who teaches you until the day you go to be with the Lord.

Also, the Greek words for “due season” are words used in reference to God intervening into the affairs of mankind and thus changing them. This is not talking about time on a clock. If you buy a packet of corn seeds, it will tell you how many days it takes to get to the harvest. This is NOT the use of this word. Sorry folks, the use of this word indicates the reaping is squarely in the hands of God. Better buckle down and be a doer of the Word.

These scriptures in Galatians are written to believers - not to unbelievers. This spiritual law of action and reaction is applicable only to believers. Many years ago, I heard brother Kenneth

E. Hagin say that the law of sowing and reaping does not apply to unbelievers and I now understand why he said that.

A believer sows whether he wants to or not. He has no choice whether or not to sow. If he chooses to sow to the one teaching him, he will reap life eternal. If he does not choose to sow to the one teaching him, he is still sowing but to his own flesh. There is no neutrality here.

I have heard people say that the unbelievers in the world will reap for all they have sowed because of the law of sowing and reaping. Let me show you how wrong that is. Read again the scripture in Galatians.

*(Galatians 1:1–2) “Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) And all the brethren which are with me, **unto the churches of Galatia:**”*

First, this book was written to believers - not unbelievers. Actually, this book was written by the Spirit of God to born again, Spirit filled believers. We know that without the Spirit of God this book cannot be accurately understood (1Corinthians 2:10-13). Therefore, unbelievers cannot comprehend what it is saying.

Second, it is not possible for an unbeliever to reap life eternal.

(Galatians 6:7–8) “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption;

but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

The letter is addressed to the believer. The context of this scripture is the one taught sowing either to his flesh or to the Spirit. An unbeliever is not a person who is being taught the Word of God. An unbeliever cannot reap life eternal simply by contributing to a Bible teacher or minister, and life eternal is what the Bible says will be reaped. If you could contribute to a minister and reap life eternal, you wouldn't need Jesus - would you? Only a believer has life eternal and is promised a continual reaping of life eternal as they come into a relationship with the one teaching them by sitting under that ministry and supporting that ministry.

Unbelievers will be judged based upon what they have done concerning God's provision for eternal life - Jesus (John 16:8-11). No matter what they have done in life, if they submit to Jesus, they will be received by God, and if they reject Jesus, they will be condemned to hell. If you want to call that sowing and reaping - have fun - but the Bible does not say that. I sure don't want to upset your personal doctrine.

Let's look at another instance of sowing and reaping.

*(2 Corinthians 9:6-8) “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And **God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:**”*

In previous chapters I have dealt with the subject of giving that blessings may come to someone else, which is the explanation of verse six. God is looking for the right motive. Look closely at what Paul says will be reaped. He does not say you will reap the thing that you have sowed. He does not say you will reap money. He does say you will reap “all grace”. “All grace” is far better than money or any other thing we could give. The Amplified Translation says it this way:

*(2Corinthians 9:8) “And God is able to make all grace (**every favor and earthly blessing**) come to you in abundance, so that you may always and under all circumstances and **whatever the need be** self-sufficient [possessing enough to require no aid or support and furnished in abundance for every good work and charitable donation].”*

If you want to hang onto the doctrine of reaping only the thing that you have sown, you are going to seriously miss out. This is telling us straight up that if we give (whatever is needed) so that someone else will have something, God will make **every favor and earthly blessing** come to us in abundance. Every means **every** - more than the thing sowed. Again, the thing sowed is not the thing reaped. The reaping is much more than what has been sowed but includes what has been sowed.

We will have to also look at Philippians when it comes to giving and receiving.

*(Philippians 4:10–19) “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last **your care of me** hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all*

*things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye **did communicate with my affliction**. Now ye Philip-pians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church **communicated** with me as **concerning giving and receiving**, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God. But my **God shall supply all your need** according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”*

Take a deep breath because you will need to collect your thoughts. Paul talks about their “care” of him. This is not an offering - it’s a responsibility. Paul again uses the word “communicate” rather than “giving” or “sowing” because they are in a relationship of partnership together. He says that within the relationship of partnership, giving and receiving occurred, but other churches did not enter this relationship with him. We know from the Bible that the Corinthian church specifically did not, and they were a mess receiving every false prophet and false teacher that came along.

What is the giving and what is the receiving Paul spoke of? We know that Paul told the Corinthians the following:

(1Corinthians 9:11) “If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?”

Paul was sowing spiritual things to all those he ministered to, including the Philippian church. So, we know this is the

“giving” he did. According to the Word, he should then receive their financial support. The Philippian church was giving carnal things, and, according to the Word, they were receiving Spiritual things. The “giving and receiving” was not them giving money and then receiving money. The Philippians were reaping life eternal through the ministry of Paul. Paul then says that they will have the supply of God in their lives because of their partnership - not money.

Paul says that God will **supply all** their need. This was their reward. A supply is continual, but reaping, or a harvest, is a one time event. The promise was not a harvest - it was a continual supply in response to the continual partnership of the Philippians with Paul. Also, “supply” includes any and every thing that is needed. A harvest is only the thing that was sowed. A corn seed gets a stalk of corn and nothing else. Again, the thing sowed by the Philippians was not the thing promised as a harvest. They were promised more than a harvest. They were promised a continual supply of whatever they needed.

The Bible says what it means and it interprets itself. I am constantly amazed at the things that people come up with when dealing with financial matters. I guess desperate ministers are compelled through their own need to exaggerate and extrapolate the scriptures in order to get the saints to give to the ministry. God help us. The nature of giving is not a system that we work to get a desired result. The nature of giving is relational, first with God and then with others.

Chapter 5

Mysteries of the Kingdom

It is often taught that the parables are mysteries of the Kingdom that contain hidden truths revealing how the Kingdom of God works. A person that discerns the hidden truths can then work them to their advantage. These teachings are used predominantly on how to increase in finances. They have also been used extensively to teach the subject of faith. The thought is that the Kingdom of God is governed by certain spiritual laws that, when understood and worked, will produce financial and material increase. These truths are held in a mystery to be kept from those in the world who are not Godly people but are available to those who are in the Kingdom. I have found that these teachings invariably declare a system to be worked and remove the person of the Creator out of the equation. God is not a system; He is a person. Any principles of the Kingdom work because the person of God is involved.

There are no secret or hidden truths about giving or sowing and reaping that, if known, will produce a greater return for the giver. All of these teachings have their origin in humanly ex-

trapolated presumptions of parables. Jesus told parables because people refused to hear the truth, not because He was hiding some truth for us to figure out and use. This thinking is very close to that of Christian Science. Jesus did not come to reveal a science. He came to redeem mankind and open the way to God through His blood.

What is the mystery?

The story of redemption, how it occurred and who it was for, is part the mystery of the Kingdom. All the Jews thought that righteousness was only through the Law and only for the decedents of Abraham through Isaac. They could foresee no other plan coming other than a system of works under the Law of Moses. The idea of a man being born again was foolishness to them (John 3:1-10). Even the disciples of Jesus were looking for a political deliverer rather than a spiritual one (Acts 1:6). The Jews were blind to what God was doing in Christ - it was a mystery to them.

*(Romans 11:25) "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be **ignorant of this mystery**, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that **blindness in part is happened to Israel**, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."*

Paul said that the mystery of salvation in Christ Jesus was a mystery to the Jews and that we were not to be ignorant of it. Israel is blind to the mystery of salvation in Christ Jesus until a set time to come.

Paul told us clearly what the mystery of the Kingdom is.

*(Colossians 1:23-27) "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and **be not moved away from the hope of the***

*gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; **Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:** To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of **this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:**”*

The essence of the mystery of the Kingdom is **Christ in you**. The idea of Christ being inside His followers was a severe departure from the works of the Law, and they could not see it. In Jesus' own words, He said you have to be born again to even see the Kingdom of God (John 3:3). People could not be born again until after His death, burial and resurrection. That means that the mystery of Christ in you would be held in a mystery until after the resurrection. Since Christ is now risen from the dead, the mystery is now made manifest to His saints.

We are born again by the Word of God.

*(1Peter 1:23) “Being born again, not of corruptible **seed**, but of incorruptible, by **the word of God**, which liveth and abideth for ever.”*

Notice, Peter calls the Word of God a seed, a living seed. We also know that a person has to believe in his heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead and confess with his mouth that Jesus is Lord to be saved (Romans 10:9-10). The seed of the Word of God, by which we are born again, is then sown into the

hearts of mankind where it is believed on and confessed. Now let's go back to the parables of the soils and look at what Jesus was telling us.

*(Matthew 13:37) "He answered and said unto them, **He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;**"*

*(Mark 4:14) "The sower **soweth the word.**"*

*(Matthew 13:15) "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should **understand with their heart, and should be converted,** and I should heal them."*

*(Mark 4:15–20) "And **these are they** by the way side, **where the word is sown;** but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. And **these are they** likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. And **these are they** which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. And **these are they** which are **sown on good ground;** such as **hear the word, and receive it,** and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred."*

Jesus was introducing the mystery of the Kingdom which is Christ in you. Jesus is the Word of God. He is the seed. Jesus, knowing that a man can only be born again by receiving the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, was preparing them to

receive the salvation that was to shortly be made available to them after His resurrection.

Look at the process Jesus revealed in the parable of the soils. Jesus is the sower, and the seed is the Word of God. Should they understand it with their heart, they could be converted. The seed is sown into the hearts of mankind. Those who hear the Word and receive it are the ones that bring forth the fruit the Word produces.

Think for a moment what Jesus knew was coming and think about what He could not do. He knew that after His resurrection He could live inside those who would receive Him. He is the incorruptible Word of God that lives and abides forever and by which mankind is born again. However, He could not offer all that to the people because He had not yet accomplished salvation. I cannot imagine how Jesus must have felt knowing He was to provide salvation for people but could not offer it to them at the moment - only the hope of it. In one sense people were reserved for salvation by accepting Him, but they could not yet be born again.

The mysteries of the parable of the soils and of the sower are not revealing secret truths as to how to increase finances. When I read the Bible, I can't even imagine how people came up with that doctrine. You would have to ignore what Jesus said about it and then decide for yourself what Jesus meant.

The giving that is of God gives to satisfy its love for others, and gives so that the other will have something. That IS the story of redemption. The mystery of Christ in you was beyond the comprehension of man but is now revealed in the Gospel of

the Kingdom. When Paul spoke of God's gift to mankind, here is what he said:

(Amplified Translation: 2Corinthians 9:15) "Now thanks be to God for His Gift, [precious] beyond telling [His indescribable, inexpressible, free Gift]!"

Chapter 6

Is There Such a Thing as “Good Ground?”

Good Ground. It is often taught that some places to give, or sow seed into, are considered good ground. The implication is that the seed will produce better because of the ground. Usually the good ground being spoken of is a ministry. The claims are that the particular ministry is a highly productive ministry for the Kingdom and therefore qualifies as good ground. In the natural world, every farmer knows that the soil is critical to the growth and production of what is sown. However, there is not one scripture in the Bible that can back up these claims of any ministry qualifying as good ground. It saddens me to see so many believers led astray with this kind of unbiblical teaching.

Let's look at the parable used to address the subject of good ground. After Jesus told the parable of the soil, He was asked why the parable was told. In Jesus' own words, He states that this parable was used because people refused to understand.

(Mark 4:9–12) “And he said unto them, He that hath ears to

*hear, let him hear. And when he was alone, they that were about him with **the twelve asked of him the parable.** And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.”*

If Jesus states why He told the parable, then that is the reason for it and nothing else. Jesus spoke in parables because the people were “dull of hearing.” This means that they could see but they would not see. It was their choice, but, because of their hardness of heart, they chose not to see. Look at this in the Amplified Translation:

*(Matthew 13:13–15) “**This is the reason** that I speak to them in parables: because **having the power of seeing, they do not see; and having the power of hearing, they do not hear, nor do they grasp and understand.** In them indeed is the process of fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, which says: You shall indeed hear and hear but never grasp and understand; and you shall indeed look and look but never see and perceive. For **this nation’s heart has grown gross (fat and dull), and their ears heavy and difficult of hearing, and their eyes they have tightly closed, lest they see and perceive with their eyes, and hear and comprehend the sense with their ears, and grasp and understand with their heart, and turn and I should heal them.**”*

Parables were used for hard-hearted, stubborn, difficult people that were insistent in their rebellion against the scriptures. Why are they then used to establish some kind of hidden doctrine? We never see parables used again in the Bible. None

of the others who wrote in the New Testament, including Paul, Peter, and John, used parables. They are not for believers, they were for rebellious unbelievers who refused to walk in their covenant. This is not my opinion; this is what Jesus said as His reason for using parables.

There is a further purpose for using parables with the stubborn unbelievers.

*“...lest at any time they should be **converted**, and their **sins should be forgiven them.**”*

The purpose of parables was also that people might choose to see and hear and be converted. Did you get that? The parable was so that people might reconsider, receive the Truth, be converted and forgiven. This says nothing about secrets to sowing into good ground for a supernatural harvest. How can people claim some hidden truth is being revealed in a parable when Jesus said clearly what the purpose of the parable was?

What is the seed?

*(Matthew 13:18–19) “Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth **the word of the kingdom**, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.”*

*(Mark 4:14) “The sower **soweth the word.**”*

*(Matthew 13:37) “He answered and said unto them, **He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;**”*

The seed is the Word of God - not money or anything else. This is so very plainly stated in the verses above. Also, the one doing the sowing is the Son of man - not us. The parable of the

sower is a story about Jesus sowing the Word of God into the hearts of mankind that they might be converted and forgiven. It is not speaking of us sowing finances into good ground for a supernatural harvest. Every exposition you have heard from the pulpit encouraging you to give into good ground was the invention of a man that, whether he knows it or not, was manipulating you to give.

Jesus is the sower. The Word of God is the seed. If the parable of the sower is about sowing into good ground in order to get the maximum harvest of one hundredfold, then Jesus is the most unwise sower there has ever been. Jesus sowed the Word of God into *every* heart that would listen to Him, whether or not they would receive it. As a matter of fact, He has commanded us to do the same:

*(Mark 16:15–16) “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and **preach the gospel to every creature**. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”*

The commandment is to sow the Word of God into the hearts of “*every creature*.” He then tells us that not everyone will believe it. However, Jesus expects every human being to have the opportunity to receive or reject the Word of God (the seed). If we want to obey the command of Jesus, we will focus on sowing the Word into every heart. In the mind of Jesus, that is success. In the minds of most Americans, success is getting the largest group of people together. It’s no wonder so many ministers are

focused on the hundredfold return and on good ground, because their definition of success fits that scenario, but it's not Biblical.

What is the ground?

The ground spoken of in the parable of the sower is not a ministry or any other project that man can come up with. The ground that receives the seed of the Word of God is the hearts of men. Here is the version of the parable found in Matthew.

*(Matthew 13:19-23) "When **any one** heareth the word of the **kingdom**, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away **that which was sown in his heart**. This is he which received seed by the way side. But **he that received the seed** into stony places, the same is **he that heareth the word**, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root **in himself**, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by **he is** offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is **he that heareth the word**; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and **he becometh unfruitful**. But **he that received seed into the good ground is he** that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also **beareth fruit**, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."*

This is as clear as it can get. Jesus is speaking about different types of **people** that hear the Word of God. The ground is clearly the heart of man. The quality of the ground is the decision of the man that hears the Word. People bring forth fruit of the seed of the Word in the ground of their heart. People can commit to live the Word in measures - thirty, sixty or a hundredfold. The only thing that makes a heart produce a hundredfold rather than thirty is the commitment of the person involved. This is not speaking

about a ministry being good ground and it is not speaking about sowing a financial seed. God forgive us for manipulating the Word of God for our purposes.

Here is a version of the parable found in Mark.

*(Mark 4:13-20) "And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? **The sower soweth the word.** And these **are they** by the way side, **where the word is sown**; but when **they have heard**, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was **sown in their hearts**. And these **are they** likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when **they have heard the word**, immediately receive it with gladness; And have no root **in themselves**, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately **they are offended**. And these **are they** which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and **it becometh unfruitful**. And these **are they** which are sown on **good ground**; such as **hear the word, and receive it**, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred."*

Again, this is very clear. The seed is the Word of God - not money. Jesus is speaking of people as they hear the Word of God. Jesus clearly says that the sowing was the Word of God, and the place it was sown was in their hearts. What bears fruit is the Word of God in the heart. Good ground is a heart that has received the Word of God. The hearts of people bring forth the Word of God in measures based upon their commitment to live it. The Word is not variable, and God is not a respecter of per-

sons. The variation of thirty, sixty or a hundredfold is clearly in the control of the one in whom the Word was sown.

Sowing in bad ground.

I bring this up here to illustrate Biblically that there is no such thing as a “good ground” ministry. In the following passages you will see that the ground where the seed was sown did not determine the harvest of the seed that was sown into it.

*(Genesis 26:1–3) “And there was a **famine in the land**, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; **dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which**”*

*(Genesis 26:12–14) “Then **Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him.**”*

If the parable of the soil in Matthew and Mark was teaching us to sow only in good ground, what is to be done with this account? There was a famine in the land. I lived in Israel for four years and I can testify that famine is caused by a lack of rain. This area of the world gets just enough rain to grow wheat. A little less rain in a season and there is no crop.

If you take the scriptures at face value you will see that it was the obedience of Isaac that brought the blessing of God upon his

crops - rain or no rain - good ground or bad ground. Isaac's blessing of a hundredfold return on his seed was not a product of the ground it was sowed into. God clearly said, "*I will be with thee, and will bless thee.*" Obedience to God's Word is what produces in the life of a person, just as it states in the parable of the soils in Matthew and Mark.

What then is a hundredfold return? The term "hundredfold" is used to describe a multiplied blessing of God that produced an abundance in that situation. God's blessing in your situation will do the same.

The teaching of "good ground" ministries is a subversive, humanistic doctrine. There is no scriptural basis for a ministry or a project to be determined to be good ground, and therefore, more productive ground for sowing seed. If one ministry is better ground than another, then that doctrine creates competition between the ministries. That is exactly what we see in America, ministries competing for the same Christian dollar. It is carnal, base and offensive.

The doctrine of "good ground" is opposed to the nature of giving altogether. God was the first giver, and as such, He established the nature of giving that is of God. Giving is done that the other person will have something and not because the person is something special. They are the object of the giving. In "good ground" teaching, the return is the focus of giving, and that makes it entirely selfish. When there is a declaration that a particular ministry is better ground for giving into than another, then it is not only selfish but also manipulative.

Every ministry that the Lord has called and anointed is equally deserving of being supported by the family of God no

matter how big or small that ministry is. The only good ground is the soil of the human heart, and it becomes good ground for the Word of God as we decide to receive it and live it.

Chapter 7

What is the Hundredfold Return?

When it comes to giving, there has always been much attention given to the hundredfold return. Everyone wants to receive the maximum return on their giving as is possible. Often, I have heard a hundredfold return promised when an offering is received. I have also heard ministers state that certain “ground” (a ministry) is hundredfold ground. In some circles, the hundredfold return is indisputable doctrine. It seems that they will fight to the end to maintain their position on this issue.

Do the Scriptures promise us a literal hundredfold return on our giving? **No**, they do not.

Brother Kenneth E. Hagin in his book entitled, “The Midas Touch” makes this statement on page 152 of the book.

One morning I was getting up to come teach a class at RHE-MA. I was sitting on the side of the bed putting on my socks. I had one on and was starting to put the other one on when the

Lord said to me, “No one has ever received a hundredfold return yet on all their giving.”

The errors in teaching the hundredfold return have primarily come out of the Word of Faith group of ministers. Although the Word of Faith is not a formally organized group, the term represents a large group of ministers that adhere to what has come to be known as the Word of Faith. Brother Hagin might be considered the original leader of the Word of Faith. However, you can clearly see that Brother Hagin did not believe in a literal hundredfold return and did not teach that. Many of those that followed him did not listen to him or to the Bible. And, they are certainly not listening to the Spirit of God as Brother Hagin did when the Lord spoke to him about the hundredfold return.

Apparently, the promise of extraordinary return in giving is difficult to avoid. People want it to be true. The reason is that it appeals to the carnal, humanistic side of man. The earthly, worldly man is always looking for something that will propel him forward with little effort or commitment.

The word “hundredfold” is found in the parable of the soils and of the sower. In previous chapters I have shown scripturally that this parable is not talking about money. It is talking about sowing the Word of God into the hearts of mankind. The phrase, “some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” is speaking about the Word of God in the hearts of mankind in measures. It’s a saying, not a secret formula. People receive the Word in measures, and they live it in measures. That measure is in the power of their decision and commitment to it. There is no prom-

ise of a return made in this phrase. It is a statement of the condition of the heart of mankind.

The other uses of the term “hundredfold” are found as follows.

*(Matthew 19:27–29) “Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, **we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?** And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And **every one that hath forsaken** houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, **shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.**”*

*(Mark 10:28–30) “Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, **we have left all, and have followed thee.** And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, **There is no man that hath left** house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s, **But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time,** houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.”*

These scriptures seem to be the ones primarily used by ministers to teach a hundredfold return on giving. Is Jesus teaching on giving and receiving? No. He is teaching about those who have left everything to follow Jesus to preach the Gospel. His disciples did that. They left their families, homes and their businesses to go with Jesus. The average Christian will never be in a position where they literally leave everything they own to go and preach the Gospel. Ninety-nine percent or more of

Christians don't even qualify as being the ones Jesus is speaking about.

Concerning the ones Jesus was speaking about, we have no record of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, or Paul receiving one hundred houses, yet they all left their homes and everything else to preach the Gospel. I have never known any minister that has received a hundred houses for leaving to preach the Gospel. No wonder Jesus told Brother Hagin, "*No one has ever received a hundredfold return yet on all their giving.*"

Rather, the one who leaves all to go and preach the Gospel has the promise of God that they will be provided for abundantly through the Body of Christ everywhere they go. As a Christian in the family of God, we have not only hundreds of new relatives but thousands. Hundreds of family of God members willingly provide their houses as shelter for traveling ministers preaching the Gospel. This is what Jesus was talking about.

The blessing of God is not relegated by a numeric formula of return. God can bless far beyond all that we can ask or think. Let me offer the following to you.

(John 1:1) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

(Revelation 19:13) "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God."

(1Peter 1:23) "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

Jesus is the Word of God. One of His names is "The Word of God." The Word of God is the seed that God sowed so that man-

kind could be born again. God sowed one seed - Jesus. How many Christians do you think there are in heaven and on earth? That return is a lot more than a hundredfold.

There is no secret way to give in the Kingdom, no hundredfold ground to plant into, and no literal hundredfold return on giving. All of those ideas are the conjecture of mankind - usually in receiving an offering or trying to gain partners for their ministry. The Kingdom of God is not a mysterious system that is a way to prosper in the world.

Let your giving be the God kind of giving, and trust Him to bless and prosper you because you love Him and love people.

Chapter 8

Giving That Gets the Attention of Jesus

There is much attention given by man to what man gives. In the worldly way of giving, it is often done to get noticed and to gain favor with someone. All of that can be classified as giving to get - and not giving to give.

God is not impressed with our wealth, and He cannot be moved to act on our behavior because we have given a large amount. I have noticed that the nature of worldly giving has crept into the practices of giving in the Body of Christ. There has been so much worldly teaching concerning giving in the church that many of the saints do not know the difference anymore. Giving has become a means of personal increase for the believer. The true nature of giving has been completely lost in many Christian circles.

There is a giving that gets the attention of Jesus. This giving is quite different from the giving that occurs in the world. The scriptures are very clear about this but are usually overlooked by

the prosperity teachers. When Jesus notices a person's giving, we should find out why He is interested.

Jesus watched people give.

*(Mark 12:41–44) “And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and **beheld how the people cast money into the treasury**: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That **this poor widow hath cast more in**, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but **she of her want did cast in all that she had**, even all her living.”*

Jesus was sitting in the place where offerings were received watching people give. He was not only watching them give, He was watching **HOW** they were giving. “How” they were giving is what caused Jesus to comment to His disciples. I believe to this day that Jesus watches how we give more than what we give.

It is stated, “*many that were rich cast in much.*” Jesus then says that these people “*did cast in of their abundance.*” Jesus did not say that this was wrong. He did not say that they should not have done this. Jesus acted and spoke as if this was acceptable, normal and right. However, it warranted a mention only because He was contrasting their giving with that of the widow to make His point about the widow's giving. It was the widow's giving that He wanted His disciples to take note of and be instructed from.

In Jesus' own words, He told His disciples that the widow had cast more in than those who had cast in much. Does Jesus

not understand money and what can be done with it? Obviously the rich people gave more in numeric value than this poor widow. Jesus, as God, is seeing things differently than we do.

In our culture, many ministers would notice the rich givers and how much they are giving. They are considered the important people. We would then set up a plaque on the wall and give them special recognition for their giving along with the amounts they gave. We would categorize the giving into “diamond, gold and silver” groups to distinguish the levels of people’s gifts. We might even have a special recognition dinner for the biggest givers. All of this is done to motivate people to give. This sounds just like political fund raisers we see throughout the world. They might as well sell the place settings at the dinner.

What constitutes a large gift in the eyes of God? According to this recount by Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, the amount (or number) of the gift was not what determined its size in the eyes of God. Let’s get this clear. A rich man gives \$1,000, and a poor widow gives \$.50. Jesus says that the widow gave more than the rich man. Did you get that? It is not possible that the amount given is what determined a large gift in the eyes of Jesus. Jesus is looking at something else.

Jesus said, “*For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.*” A person with a million dollars can easily give a thousand dollars. This is not difficult for them, and it requires no trust in God. It’s not wrong, it just does not put the giver in a place of dependence upon God due to the giving. The widow, however, gave out of her need and gave all her living. This put the widow

into a place of complete dependance upon God. This is what got the attention of Jesus and is why He said she had given more.

Please notice that in this offering Jesus was watching, there was no preacher sweating and screaming out promises of supernatural breakthrough results for their giving. There was not one promise made by any person. The nature of giving should be giving - not getting. The givers mentioned in this instance came to give on their own with no outside influence. This is giving that is of God. This is giving that gets the attention of Jesus.

What would be necessary for the rich people to get the attention of Jesus for their giving? It is certainly not the amount given. For the rich to give like the poor widow, they would have to give to a point to where it created a dependance upon God in their situation. Jesus is not requiring that all your living be given like the widow did. When she gave all her living, it created a dependance upon God. Only a rich person could tell you what puts them into a dependance upon God due to their giving.

It is often taught that people need to go to different “levels” in their giving. These levels produce a flow of finances that can be elevated by a further sacrificial giving. While I agree with this in principle, I disagree with this in the way it is practiced and taught.

Jesus clearly said the widow’s gift was *more* than the rich person’s gift. So, in the mind of God, the number is not the size of the gift.

Paul states:

(2Corinthians 8:12) “For if there be first a willing mind, it is

accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.”

God accepts our gifts according to our willingness. What we can or cannot give is accepted by God if we are willing to give. The amount is not the issue.

So, what is it that takes you to the next “level” of flow in finances? Is it giving \$1,000 instead of \$100? According to the Bible, the answer to that question is “No.” What takes you to the next level of flow in finances is the dependance you place on God by your giving. A person giving \$100 might be placing more dependance upon God when he gives than a person who gives \$1,000. Understandably, the person with the \$1,000 must already have more money to give. However, his giving may not put a dependance upon God and, therefore, doesn’t take him further in a flow of finances. So, the number, or amount, is NOT the issue - dependance is the issue. When you give in a way that creates a dependance upon God, it takes you further.

We need to keep the ways of the world out of the Kingdom. Since money is the currency of the world, it lends itself to much abuse and error. The Kingdom uses the money of this world to advance its purposes in the earth, but the currency of the Kingdom is faith. Faith does things God’s way. When we do things God’s way, it gets the attention of Jesus. Let your giving be giving, and place your trust in God.

Chapter 9

Willingness in Giving

Giving that is of God is always done in willingness. The nature of giving is rooted in love and willingness along with a desire for the other to have something. How then could a willing giver be one that is giving that they might receive?

Giving is in the decision of the giver.

*(Amplified Translation, 2Corinthians 9:7) "Let each one [give] as he has **made up his own mind and purposed in his heart**, not reluctantly or sorrowfully or under compulsion, for God loves (He takes pleasure in, prizes above other things, and is unwilling to abandon or to do without) a cheerful (joyous, "prompt to do it") **giver [whose heart is in his giving].**"*

A giver is to make up his own mind, having communed in his heart. God is in the heart of man, and that means the decision to give is between the giver and God and no one else. When decisions to give are made this way, giving is then out of the desire to give. Notice that the scripture says that God takes pleasure in

a **giver [whose heart is in his giving]**. God wants our heart to be in our giving - not in our receiving.

Giving that is prompted by a promise of a return is not done with a heart that is in its giving. The idea that the return is part of the decision to give takes the decision out of willingness to give and into some type of investment for ourselves. This is not willingness; it's business. Much of giving these days in the Body of Christ is greedy giving because the focus is on themselves.

Paul commended selfless, willing giving.

*(Amplified Translation - 2 Corinthians 8:1-5) "WE WANT to tell you further, brethren, about **the grace** (the favor and spiritual blessing) of God which has been evident in the churches of Macedonia [**arousing in them the desire to give alms**]; For in the midst of an ordeal of severe tribulation, their abundance of joy and their depth of poverty [together] have overflowed in wealth of lavish generosity on their part. For, as I can bear witness, [they gave] according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability; and [**they did it**] voluntarily, **Begging us most insistently for the favor and the fellowship of contributing** in this ministration for [the relief and support of] the saints [in Jerusalem]. Nor [was this gift of theirs merely the contribution] that we expected, but first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us [as His agents] by the will of God [**entirely disregarding their personal interests, they gave as much as they possibly could, having put themselves at our disposal to be directed by the will of God**]"*

Paul said that the grace of God aroused these people to give - not a preacher receiving an offering, and no promise of a supernatural return. As a matter of fact, they begged Paul to give. Notice they disregarded their personal interests. This giving was

not done for a promised return. These givers were not thinking of themselves at all. They wanted the saints in Jerusalem to have something even if it caused their own poverty - which it did.

Paul went on to say.

*(2Corinthians 8:12) "For if there be first a **willing mind**, it is **accepted** according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."*

*(Amplified Translation - 2Corinthians 8:12) "For if the [**ea-ger**] **readiness to give is there**, then **it is acceptable** and welcomed in proportion to what a person has, not according to what he does not have."*

Be careful with this scripture. Paul just told us that giving that is acceptable to God is giving that is done so with willingness and eagerly. That means that giving under other circumstances may not be accepted by God. However, I have not known a church that did not accept an offering. Remember, Paul said giving that pleases God is not done, "*reluctantly or sorrowfully or under compulsion.*" God receives the motive more than He does the number.

When God receives an offering

It would be good if ministers today received offerings the way that God receives them.

*(Exodus 25:1-8) "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they **bring me an offering**: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, And rams'*

*skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense, Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breast-plate. **And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.***"

This is a building fund offering. This was not the tithe. God not only instructed Moses to receive an offering, but God told him that they should "*bring **me** an offering.*" This is how God receives an offering. God specifically told Moses to receive the offering from "*every man that giveth it **willingly with his heart.***" God was interested more in the willingness than the amount. Think about this. God is God! God could have just commanded everyone to empty their pockets on the spot. He could have told them to give the biggest bill in their wallet. No, God said He wanted this offering to be willing with the heart. Willingness is the nature of giving.

God made no promise of a return on this giving. However, preachers today sure do! I wonder where they think they got that authority? When God does something, we should be smart enough to realize that way is the right way to do it.

The only thing God said would result in this "willing giving with the heart" was that He would dwell among them. Is God enough for you? Does His presence mean enough to you that you would give willingly to have a place for it? Why do you need some sort of promised return for giving to the house of God to motivate you to give? If God is not enough for you, then you

should keep your money. God is looking for willingness with your heart.

Too much money

Too much money would be a nice problem to have. When done God's way, this is what can happen.

*(Exodus 36:5–7) “And they spake unto Moses, saying, The **people bring much more than enough** for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make. And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So **the people were restrained from bringing**. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and **too much**.”*

This doesn't happen in our churches because the people have been incorrectly taught, and offerings are being received with promises being made that are not Biblical. Churches are filled with selfish people who have been taught to look for supernatural ground to sow into so that they can receive a hundredfold return. Their hearts are not in the Kingdom, nor are they in their giving. They are in their receiving. According to the scriptures, God doesn't like this.

We need to wise up. When people bring too much and have to be restrained from bringing, it's because they have it to give. Did you get that? Prosperity was not problem. Too much offering was the problem. The Biblical account of this building fund offering says nothing about what God was doing to prosper His people. It promises nothing in the way of finances for participating in this offering. Yet, the people were so prosperous, they gave to the point where they had to be restrained from giving

more. There is no question God was doing something to prosper His people to give because you can only give what you already have to give. You can't give something you do not have - they had it to give. The Bible does not mention the prosperity side of this event because it was not to be the focus - the giving was to be the focus. God does not have a problem with prosperity, but people do because they obsess over money.

Later in Israel's covenant, the Lord speaks of their wealth.

(Deuteronomy 8:11–18) “Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end; And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.”

This is not a promise; it is a warning. I have always heard it preached as a promise of prosperity, but it is not. God did not say they needed faith for this prosperity. God boldly states,

“thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied.” We see no seed being sown for this prosperity. We see no supernatural breakthrough offering being received to produce this prosperity. What we do see is that God expects obedience. If people obey, prosperity happens. Isn't that simple? When God received a building fund offering, the people obeyed, and God prospered them, even though there was nothing said or promised about prosperity, because prosperity and return on giving are not the focus or purpose.

Pastors struggle today in leading God's people into prosperity. God's people are also struggling to prosper. Please don't think that a television minister that is wealthy has accurate information on prosperity because he is wealthy. He just has access to millions of wallets, and you don't. His wealth is not due to knowledge; it's due to circumstance.

Prosperity is a struggle because most giving is selfish. Notice what God said in His warning to the people of Israel.

*(Deuteronomy 8:18) “But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is **he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant** which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.”*

I have heard this frequently taught, that wealth in the life of the believer establishes the covenant of God, that God's covenant is a covenant of prosperity and wealth, therefore, God's granting of power to get wealth, is Him establishing that covenant. God is interested more in His covenant than He is in our prosperity. Prosperity happens because God is God, and He has no poverty. God wants His covenant established because He

loves people and He wants all the people of the earth to enter that covenant - thereby establishing the covenant.

Notice He said, “*which he sware **unto thy fathers**, as it is **this day**.” Then this power to get wealth is all about what He said to the fathers - to establish that.*

When God called Abram, there was a promise and a purpose that were entirely connected to each other.

*(Genesis 12:2–3) “And I will make of thee a great nation, and **I will bless thee**, and make thy name great; and **thou shalt be a blessing**: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and **in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed**.”*

You cannot be a blessing unless you are already blessed with something. You cannot give unless you have something to give. God told Abram that He would bless Abram, but that blessing had a purpose. The blessing had to come first so that the purpose could be fulfilled. The blessing was not the focus - the purpose was the focus. The purpose of the blessing was so that Abram could be a blessing and that all the families of the earth would be blessed. We know that this eventually led to the coming of Jesus, through which all families of the earth have access to God should they choose. That is a blessing! That is also the establishment of the covenant referred to in Deuteronomy 8:18.

*(Galatians 3:29) “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye **Abraham’s seed**, and heirs according to the promise.”*

I cannot emphasize enough that God has been working His plan of salvation for the duration of the entire Bible. God thinks in terms of eternity while man is always interpreting things in terms of temporal, material blessings. When Abram obeyed

God, it was not to receive the blessings of God; it was to fulfill the will of God. Prosperity then happened.

God is far more interested in our willing heart than He is in the amount of substance in our hand. God has no problem blessing a willing and obedient giver whose heart is in his giving.

(Isaiah 1:19) "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:"

Now that's a promise!

Chapter 10

How Does Return Come?

Willing, obedient giving, that gives so that the other will have something, does cause a return. However, the return is not because of a formula that has been worked. Return comes as a result of the favor of God because He is pleased with our giving. When He sees us give this way, He sees Himself in us, and that is pleasing to Him.

How God works to bless us financially in our lives is often misunderstood. Ministers have preached about sowing and reaping extensively. They have received offerings into the church or ministry. The people see money flow to the minister and to the church. The problem is that people begin to think that this is the way money will flow to them. They think someone will

just give them a large sum of money because they have sowed a large sum of money.

It is scriptural for the minister to be given money.

*(1 Corinthians 9:11) “If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if **we shall reap your carnal things?**”*

*(1 Corinthians 9:13–14) “Do ye not know that **they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple?** and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? **Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.**”*

The above are just a couple of scriptures out of many that deal with this topic. The plan of God is that the minister receive the tithe as his inheritance, and they are to be given offerings in response to preaching the Gospel and discipling the saints. This is not the way the saints will increase and prosper. Even though it may not be directly told to the saints that people will give them money, I have noticed that they seem to think and act that way. I see the saints sitting in the pews waiting for something to be given to them because that is how they see the pastor prosper.

I also think that the idea of sowing and then reaping a harvest appeals to our carnal nature. Many people would rather sit around “believing” while they wait for a supernatural return rather than getting up and doing something that will bring a harvest. People tend to look for easy things.

God gives favor

When Paul instructed the Corinthian church about giving, he

told them what they would receive for their giving - and it was not money. It was better than money.

*(Amplified Translation - 2Corinthians 9:8) "And God is able to make **all grace (every favor and earthly blessing)** come to you in abundance, so that you may always and under all circumstances and whatever the need be self-sufficient [possessing enough to require no aid or support and **furnished in abundance for every good work and charitable donation**]."*

Grace is God's power and God's favor in your life. Grace produces every earthly blessing. However, things do not fall off of a tree or out of the sky into your lap. You have to get up and go do something. This is where the saints are failing to receive. They are waiting for something to be given to them, and they don't know that something was given to them - all grace. Grace manifests in the presence of people. The saints need to get up and go out into the world and possess the substance that grace will give them if they will just go do it.

There is also a purpose stated in this scripture above. Your needs will be met in abundance, but abundance will also be required of you for every good work and charitable donation. In other words, you must remain a giver - a big giver. People, we qualify for prosperity; we don't merely believe for it.

God gives power

God does not directly give money and wealth. He gives you power to get wealth.

*(Deuteronomy 8:18) "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is **he that giveth thee power to get wealth**, that he*

may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.”

God gives us power to get wealth, but it is up to us to use that power and go and get the wealth. That power is the grace and favor of God. The children of Israel had to go in and possess the land even though God said that He had given it to them. Had they sat on the border of the promised land, held a prayer meeting to intercede for wealth, sowed a breakthrough seed, and stood looking up to heaven, they would never have received anything. They had to swing a sword and drive out the bad guys. Today, in our covenant, we do not swing swords, but God does favor us as we pursue. We must take action. We must do something that God can bless.

God has promised us productivity

A Christian, walking in the ways of the Lord, has an advantage in life.

*(Psalms 1:3) “And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water; that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and **whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.**”*

Trees, given enough water, produce fruit. With God’s grace, power, and favor upon you, you will produce an abundance of fruit. However, God says you will be “like” a tree - you will not be a tree. If you were a tree, you would just have to stand there and wait until the fruit comes in. God qualifies this and says, “**whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.**” Go do something and expect it to prosper. You have God’s Word on it.

Most saints are somewhat limited in life because they don’t have something to do that can be blessed in a multiplied fashion.

If you work a job and receive a salary, you can receive raises, promotions, and rise to the top of the company by proving yourself. God will bless and help and life is good. However, a man that owns his own business has somewhat of an unlimited situation that God can increase. I am convinced this is what is meant by the following scripture:

(Deuteronomy 28:12–13) “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. 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.”

That sounds like someone in business for themselves to me. It certainly is not limited to a person being in business for themselves, but a person in business for themselves is potentially unlimited. A person that is the head, and that is above only, sounds like the boss or owner. Again, God says He will bless the work of our hands. We must do something. Why not believe to buy the company we work for or start our own company? It may not be for everyone, but there is a promise to be claimed if we choose to go after it. If you are a giver and you are willing to work hard and apply yourself, God says He will bless you. You cannot find a better deal than that.

Chapter 11

Why Do We Struggle?

I don't know if people would admit it, but I see the saints struggling with finances everywhere I go. As one who ministers on finances often, people ask me, "*I do this and I do that. Why isn't it working?*" This is asked of me almost everywhere I go.

The answer to this question is not easy. There are many things that affect our financial situation. Some people need to apply themselves in working or in a business more than they are. Some need to walk in love. Some have spending problems that are out of control. Many are selfish and don't receive because they want to consume it upon their flesh. The list goes on. The common denominator among them all is they believe that they will receive some kind of financial harvest simply because they sowed some financial seed somewhere. They are frustrated and disappointed because it is not happening. They are also fearful to ask me these questions because, after all, the doctrine of sow-

ing and reaping has become indisputable, and they don't want their perceived "lack of faith" revealed.

Some things are simple.

*(Amplified Translation, Proverbs 13:15) "Good understanding wins favor; but **the way of the transgressor is hard** [like the barren, dry soil or the impassable swamp]."*

If we want to maintain the analogy of sowing and reaping, this scripture tells us that "transgressing" is barren and dry soil. That is soil that will not produce. When you transgress, you go outside of an established boundary. Once outside the boundary, you lose the rights, privileges and protections of being within the boundary. Things get hard.

Unknowingly, we have strayed beyond a boundary. The prosperity teachings of our day have become so extreme that the nature of God has been lost in those teachings. They are self-serving, humanistic and do not mention doing the will of God - which is what the money is for.

While faith is always an important factor in our walk with the Lord, it is not always the factor in our financial situation. More faith does not necessarily mean more finances. This teaching has subverted thousands of people, throwing them into a doctrine of works for finances. The idea that more faith will produce more finances is not taught anywhere in the Old or New Testament. However, "faith teachers" have extrapolated scripture to fit that doctrine, and it is now widely accepted. The saints are working as hard as they can on their faith and on their sowing seed for increase, but it is not working. They tell me this in secret.

Throughout the Old Testament we see God prospering His

servants. They prospered when they obeyed God and were impoverished and dominated by an enemy when they disobeyed God. We do not see them asking for money or sowing seed for money. Their financial and material blessings were a product of their obedience to God. We cannot even find “great faith” for finances in the Old Testament. Obedience to God is the path to prosperity.

The Bible tells us:

*(Hebrews 8:6) “But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a **better covenant**, which was **established upon better promises**.”*

Our covenant with God is better than the Old Covenant. In the Old Covenant, they just obeyed God, and God prospered them enormously. More than once they were **warned** about the extreme prosperity that was coming. That is a strong indication that the people did nothing to believe for it other than obey God. How is it that, now that we have a better covenant established upon better promises, we struggle with “believing” and “sowing seed” for financial increase? Even common sense would tell you that something is wrong when something better doesn’t work as well as something inferior. Let me paint a picture for you. When a VW Beetle can outrun a Ferrari, then something is wrong with the Ferrari.

I feel the Body of Christ needs a tune up. In the Bible, many of God’s people prospered in the midst of extremely difficult situations. So, their situation was not a limit. The only limit was the depth of their commitment to God and to His purposes.

I strongly feel that we need to be humble, teachable and wise enough to judge ourselves accurately. The extremities of the

prosperity teaching have run their course and revealed selfish excess without promoting the Kingdom of God. It's time for the Body of Christ to submit and obey. For most, this will be a paradigm shift that will be very hard to make. An entire generation of Christians are part of the American culture, and the American Christian culture is self-absorbed.

God is still the God of the Bible. I believe He is waiting for us to make some necessary changes before He releases more finances into the Army of God. Will you report for duty?

