

Other-Centered

How God Uses Money in our Lives—part 7

November 26, 2023

Series theme: God uses money to expose our values and our hearts. He uses money to build Christ-likeness, His values, His kingdom, and our faith. God uses the visible (money) to expose the invisible, our sin, and build the visible, our hearts and character.

Review: God is the owner; we are the stewards. When we get that mixed up stress! God takes *prime* responsibility for resources. Our role is *secondary* responsibility for resources.

DAY 1: Building a lifestyle of generosity

1. It appears from scripture and everyday life that the hardest thing for God to do is to empower us to get our eyes off ourselves and onto Him and others. We just *naturally* think, "my goals, my needs, my feelings, my ideas, my way, my family, my work, my friends, my money." This is the road to stress, emptiness, loneliness, and a loss of purpose and meaning.

2. How does God turn this around? It only begins with an explosion of repentance (owning my natural self-centeredness as fundamentally wrong and evil), and faith in Jesus Christ, that only He can save me from my sin, both from living this way and the penalty for living this way.

3. At least now, we have the power in our hearts to become other-centered, but learning to think, live, and act that way is a lifetime learning curve.

4. Generosity is an important quality to God. God wants us to become generous *people*, as a way of life and relating! In the situations below, jot down how you typically respond.

a. You've gotten in the grocery store line to pay. You have half a basket. A person comes in behind you with two items. How would you typically respond?

b. A co-worker is pressing on a deadline. You finished your work a little early. How would you typically respond?

c. An eighteen-year-old Marine is in front of you at Subway. How would you typically respond?

Proverbs 11:24 One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.

5. How does Solomon describe the first man's attitude toward giving and generosity?

6. What is the general result for the first man? _____

7. How does Solomon describe the second man?

8. What is the general effect/principle of such living?

DAY 2: God's promises to the generous

Proverbs 11:25 A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.

1. God delights in people who take on the same heart as Jesus--generous.
2. One of the principles of interpreting Proverbs is parallelism. Solomon sometimes makes two parallel statements that are meant to enlarge the meaning of each.
3. Using this technique, what word is parallel to "generous?"

4. How does someone's generosity *refresh* another person?

5. God makes two promises in this verse. What are they?

6. What strikes you about these two promises?

Proverbs 28:27 He who gives to the poor will lack nothing, but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses.

7. What promise does God make to those who give to the poor?

8. What promise does He make to those who close their eyes to the poor?

9. How does God use money in our lives?

___ As an avenue of blessing

___ To lift up our hearts!

___ To make a difference.

___ To awaken us to our own self-centeredness and challenge us to become other-centered.

10. What strikes you from today's verses? Have you seen these principles at work in your life?

DAY 3: The heart of a generous person

1. If you want a picture of the kind of heart God wants to build in us, you'll love the next two days' devotionals! Paul writes to the new church he started in a pagan city called Corinth, most known for loose morals and an "anything goes" culture. A number of folks became genuine Christians and a brand-new church was formed. He puts before them the example of the new Christians in the region of Macedonia, to the north, about what it means to be generous believers.

2. Meanwhile, in the Jerusalem area famine hit. People had a hard time just getting food. The Macedonian Christians gave resources to help out their brothers and sisters hundreds of miles away. Here is their story.

2 Cor. 8:2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.

3. Was it "a good time" to be giving?

4. What was the givers' financial condition?

5. What was their attitude about giving?

6. How did Paul describe their generosity?

7. Let's apply the principles from these young Macedonian believers!

a. Do you still have an eye to be generous even when you're under "severe trial"? Or does the fact that you're under trial shut down a generous heart?

b. Do you allow giving to stop when "finances are tight?"

c. On a scale of 1-100, what number would you give yourself as to joyful giving?

d. On a scale of 1-100, what number would you give yourself on being "richly generous?"

8. What strikes you the most from the Macedonian example? End today's devotional with prayer, asking God to give you a generous heart like the Macedonians.

DAY 4: The heart of a generous person--part 2

2 Cor. 8: 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability....

1. How did the Macedonians process the needs they heard about in Jerusalem? What limitations did they have? How were they thinking about their part in meeting the need?

2 Cor. 8: 4 Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

2. Were they coerced, arm-twisted, cajoled or "guilted" into giving?

3. How did they view the opportunity to participate in meeting the need?

4. How would you describe their attitude toward giving?

2 Cor. 8: 5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.

5. And here, is where we come to the heart of the matter, the real driver at work to produce generosity! Through the process of hearing about the need and then responding, what two things did these folks do *before* they gave financially?

6. What is the importance of:

a. *First*, giving yourself to the Lord?

b. *Then*, giving yourself to others?

7. What is the most challenging part of the Macedonian example to you?

DAY 5: The challenge and promises to become generous!

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

1. Jesus gives a picture of the possibility of bounty. The picture is a farmer with some type of measuring cup. Whatever the size of the cup the farmer uses to sow seed is the same cup used by God to provide a harvest! If a small cup is used, a small harvest is returned. If a five-gallon bucket is used to sow, the five-gallon bucket is used to bring in the harvest, etc.

2. Jesus challenges us to give, with the promise of return! God also challenges us in a similar way in the book of Malachi.

Malachi 3:7 "Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty.

"But you ask, 'How are we to return?'"

Malachi 3:8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?'"

3. If you and I were friends and you accused me of robbing you, we wouldn't be friends for long. The accusation of robbery is a serious allegation. Think of robbers you have known—Bonnie and Clyde robbing banks in the 1930's, Wild West train robbers, stage coach desperadoes. Some of you have been robbed and you know the horror of violation.

4. The response of God's people is, "What? Rob you? We don't rob you! How would anyone rob God?" Another stunning answer follows.

Malachi 3:8 ... "In tithes and offerings."

Malachi 3:9 "You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me."

5. Curse? God puts the brakes on their finances. People find themselves paddling upstream. Do you see how God uses money here? He puts the clamps on until we respond to him. We saw He does that with moving us from "owner" to "steward" and we saw how He does this with teaching us responsibility. Then God issues this challenge.

*Malachi 3:10 "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. **Test me in this,**" says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."*

This is the only time I know of in the entire bible where God tells us to test Him.

Malachi 3:11 "I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the Lord Almighty."

Malachi 3:12 "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the Lord Almighty."

6. How is God using money in their lives? How does God want to bless them? What is He willing to do to change their hearts?

7. What has been your biggest take away from this week?