

Call to Obedience #499  
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA  
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## **The Necessity and Blessing of Christian Stewardship**

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I believe it is obvious that as long as a man does not invest in a business, he is not a member of that business and he really does not care whether the stocks of that business rise or fall. As this is true in the world, so it is also true in Christianity. As long as a man goes to church only to get and not to give, he is not part of her. In fact, a man who expects to get without giving in return is nothing other than a robber. This is what God said concerning His people who neglected the church: *...you have robbed Me* (Mal. 3:8). With these words, you see that God takes your giving very personal. This makes your not giving an insult to His Majesty. We are all called to be helpers in the body of Christ, all of us. And we all need to pray for God to help us to know where we can lift a corner that needs to be lifted, light a candle where there is darkness and give encouragement where there is sadness. We need to leave the judging of the church in the hands of the prophets. It is not ours to do.

So then, if we go to church, it is not only that we must give something to her in return, but the Bible tells us that God requires that we give a minimum of 10% of what we receive to His church. This is called “tithing” and goes all the way back to Abraham who gave a tithe of all he had to a priest called Melchizedek (Gen. 14:20b). It was not that Melchizedek needed the money, but it was because, by doing this, Abraham was investing into the life and blessings of Melchizedek. As Melchizedek ministered to Abraham and Abraham gave to Melchizedek, these men ministered to each other in divine love and they also enriched their fellowship with their heavenly Father.

Hence from Abraham on, tithing became a tradition, a way of life for God’s covenant people. But when Jesus came, He encouraged us to give beyond the tithe by saying: *Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you* (Luke 6:38). Using these words relative to giving, Jesus set the bar for Christianity way above the tithe. Jesus sacrificed His life for the church as is: with all her spots, wrinkles and blemishes. Yes, He did not only give 10% of all He had, He gave 100% of His life for her. By doing this, He became one with her. Therefore,

if you attack the church, you attack Christ who is her head. And again, if you rob the church, you are robbing your Lord.

Oh, dear soul, if you give nothing, you will get nothing; if you give meagerly, you shall receive meagerly. You do not become a member of the body of Christ through a certificate of membership but rather by giving yourself to her. Your hand contributes to your body because it is part of it. Your eyes contribute to your body because they are part of it. Your ears contribute to the body because they are part of it. Do you get the picture? There is no free ride with God. God gave His all for you and He expects that you will give your all to Him. He expects you to get all in just as He got all in. He has no room for marginal Christians.

As it turns out, you prove your love to God and His bride (the church) by giving to her and by doing it not only when she is healthy but also during times of her sickness (Acts 20:35). The reason why so many Christians are so poor and continue to be so poor is not because they have not, but because they give not. Giving does not make you poorer but rather richer. This is a spiritual secret the world cannot understand. Giving is the way out of poverty. A missionary from Indonesia reported that every year the villagers had a terrible harvest. They had droughts, floods and cankerworms. They lived in a continual state of starvation. The missionary was afraid to ask them to give a tithe because they were so poor—until God spoke to him: “They are poor because they do not give, so I cannot bless them.” After telling the villagers, they began to give their tithes. If they had 10 eggs or 10 cabbages, they gave one to the missionary, etc. The next year, for the first time in years, their crops prospered. They were no longer poor. And the missionary had enough support to work full-time and adequately take care of the villagers (sheep) that God had given him. He then had enough time to visit other villages and preach the gospel to those people. Later, a church was built and a Bible school was also started in that area.

This principle is clearly shown in the book of Haggai. The Jews were released from their Babylonian captivity and returned to rebuild Jerusalem, but they neglected the house of God.

*Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: This people says, “The time has not come, the time that the LORD’S house should be built.” Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, “Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?” Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: “Consider your ways! You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough;*

*You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes.”*

*Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,” says the LORD. “You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?” says the LORD of hosts. “Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands.”*

*Then... all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him; and the people feared the presence of the LORD. Then Haggai, the LORD’S messenger, spoke the LORD’S message to the people, saying, “I am with you, says the LORD” (Haggai 1:2-13).*

If you do not give, you will be blocked out of God’s presence whether you are rich or poor. Concerning the poorest of the poor, Jesus drew the attention of His disciples to a poor widow woman who gave her last two mites (Luke 21:2). He praised her for putting in all the livelihood that she had and it is recorded in the Bible for the whole world to know. How much do you think she was blessed? Elijah, the prophet, had the courage to ask a poor widow of Zarephath to give him her last meal! Again, Jesus cannot bless you if you do not give. What did this poor woman get in return? She received oil and flour every day to make bread until the famine was over! Overnight, the poorest woman in the land became the most blessed. Poor people often have the sense of not belonging, but giving makes them belong to something great and indestructible which is worth living and dying for. Also consider that Paul even asked the churches under persecution to take up an offering for the starving people in Jerusalem. Yes, even persecution is no excuse for not giving. Rich people certainly should give way beyond their tithe. A good example is the Centurion in Acts 10. His giving was rewarded with a visit to his house by Peter which brought salvation to his household. Zacchaeus, the tax collector, gave half of his belongings to the poor and it brought Jesus into his house (Luke 19:1-10). Rich man, is your giving bringing Jesus into your house?

And concerning pay for ministers:

*For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." ...For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel (1 Cor. 9:9-14).*

Let me close with the words of Malachi the prophet:

*"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3:8-10).*

Let God do this for you.

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