

4. THE PRACTICE OF GIVING

REVIEW: THE PRINCIPLE OF HUMILITY

Jesus emptied Himself of status. What status do you have? Where do you have that status — work, school, family, etc.? How can you empty yourself of that status? Be specific.

On **page 70** Gary wrote, “Our pride fuels us to purchase what we do not need with money we do not have to impress people we do not know.” How does humility counter the destructive effects of pride?

Read **Philippians 2:5-8**. What deliberate decisions did Jesus’ journey to humility require? What choices are expressed in these verses? If we have this mind among ourselves, what kind of decisions will we make?

Look at the examples of how to think of others before yourself on **page 81**. Have you performed any of these? How did it work out? How did it make you feel?

A HOT TOPIC

A survey by Wells Fargo & Company revealed forty-four percent of Americans polled claimed that a discussion about personal finances is the most difficult conversation to have with another person. Even so, you and I know that another money-related issue can make a conversation go nuclear. It is the topic of giving, and it has potential to make any conversation explosive.

The conversation is essential, though — whether it’s with our family or with our God. In fact, God started the conversation with us. The Bible has more than 2350 verses that talk about money-related issues and many of them speak directly about giving. Perhaps we can defuse the conversation by beginning there.

Read through the verses cited on **pages 140-141**. What do you learn about God from these “snapshots.”



THE STRUGGLE WITH GIVING

Read the first paragraph on **page 142** and the “Top Ten List” that follows on the next few pages.

“The financial crisis is not a shortage of funds. It is a shortage of commitment. We do not believe in tithing or for that matter, generous giving.”

John Dickerson

Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (**Luke 12:34**). How is this addressed in the quote from John Dickerson (above)?

Do you use any of the top ten excuses to not give? If so, which one(s)?



A STORY ABOUT GIVING

Read through the story of The Widow’s Offering found in **Mark 12:41-44**. Jesus made three observations about giving in this story.

1. Expectation

“The Jews were doing what was expected of them during Passover, bringing their offerings to God.” Giving was part of their worship and celebration, just like it should be for us as well. Giving is not something we should do casually or without thought. Like worship, our hearts must be in it.

The lesson Jesus draws from what he witnessed is that God measures our giving not by the amount we give to Him, but by the amount we keep for ourselves. What we set aside for God does two things:

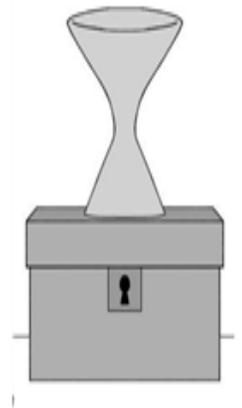
1. It limits what we spend on ourselves
2. It indicates whether or not God matters most in our lives

How can we make sure our giving honors God rather than ourselves?

2. Motivation

There were many in Jesus’ day who gave to draw attention to themselves rather than glorify God. They did this through the “shofar chests” that clanged and sounded as money was placed in them. Jesus says the sound itself is their reward (**Matthew 6:2**).

Jesus calls his disciples’ attention to the widow’s offering. It was too small to make noise — and yet it spoke loudly of where her heart was. **No one is too poor to give.** No one is so destitute that their faithfulness to God doesn’t matter.



3. Devotion

The difference between the widow and the others that day was they “gave out of their wealth” and she “put in all that she had to live on.” There was nothing left for her to provide for herself. She placed her trust completely in God.

The lesson for us is **we will never learn to give to God until we learn to trust God.** Gary speculates in this chapter about how many times the widow had given everything she had to God. Perhaps she had learned to trust him by proving Him faithful over and over.

There’s a Nigerian proverb that says, “It’s the heart that gives. The fingers just let go.” How do you understand this proverb? Have you seen it proven out in your life and experience?

TRUTH OR

CONSEQUENCES Read **Malachi 3:8-12**, found on **page 153** of “Too Much.”

Truth #1: There are two types of giving to God: tithes and offerings.

What is a tithe?

Based on **Malachi 3:6**, does God still expect His people to tithe? See also **Matthew 23:23**

What is an offering?

Truth #2: The whole tithe is brought to the storehouse.

The storehouse was part of the Temple. The tithes collected were used to accomplish four purposes which translate well to what the Church does today. Looking at **page 156**, what are these four purposes?

1. Provide for the _____ / _____ .
2. Provide for the _____ / _____ .
3. Provide for the _____ / _____ .
4. Provide for the _____ / _____ .

Truth #3: God wants us to put Him to the test.

Nowhere else in the Bible does God invite us to test Him, except when it comes to giving Him our tithes and offerings. What does God want us to learn from testing Him?

Consequences: Blessings or curses?

How we respond to the truth about tithing determines the consequences of our being blessed or cursed?

Why did God say the nation was cursed in **Malachi 3:9**?

The word “curse” means “hemmed in with obstacles.” How might we find ourselves “hemmed in” if we withhold from God?

In contrast, obedience brings blessing. In Hebrew, “blessing” means “favor and benefit.” How does God describe His blessings in **Malachi 3:10**?

Gary reminds us on **page 158**, “The promise of blessing doesn’t mean that money will rain down from the sky. Favor and benefit are evidenced in many ways other than monetary gain.” What kind of blessings should we look for when we demonstrate our faithfulness to God?

STRIVE TO GIVE MORE

2 **Corinthians 9:7** tells us, “God loves a cheerful giver.” The Greek word for “cheerful” is “*hilaros*.” Does it look familiar? It’s where we get the word “*hilarious*.” God’s guidelines on the tithe are not there to restrict us but to give us a place to start — a place to explore His faithfulness and experience his blessings in new ways. Strive to give generously — **maybe even hilariously.**

SKIN IN THE GAME

Winston Churchill said, “*We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.*” What kind of life are you making by your giving? Be specific.

Have you put God to the test by tithing? If not, why not? If so, how did He open the floodgates of heaven and pour out blessing on you? (Remember, think beyond monetary blessings.)

Have you said no to yourself so you could say yes to someone else? If so, how did you feel when you gave generously in that moment?

PRINCIPLES + PRACTICES = REAL PROFIT

All through this series we’ve looked at principles and practices. Now that we’ve assembled all the pieces, how do you see them working together to produce **REAL Profit**?

The Principle of Gratitude

The Practice of Debt-Free Living

The Principle of Contentment

The Practice of Saving

The Principle of Trust

The Practice of Budgeting

The Principle of Humility

The Practice of Giving

How do you define **Real Profit**? Describe what it looks like in your life. Be specific.

Knowing that life comes to an end for all of us, what kind of legacy do you hope to leave behind — and for whom?

What changes do you need to make to be able to live a life of “no regrets?”