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Biblical Giving

Lesson 3
WHAT JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT GIVING

Thirteen of the thirty-eight parables Christ taught are related to money. More space is given to the use of money than to the Virgin Birth, the deity of Christ or the Trinity. Yet, we would die for the latter but are squeamish about the whole subject of money. Why? Because our Lord asks us to give money, which is very dear to our hearts. Man was made by God to give but because of his sinful heart, he loves money. It is not money that is the root of all evil but the love of money. **For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim. 6:10).**

Jesus Christ was born, lived under and died under the Mosaic Law system. He kept the Law perfectly; therefore, He tithed all of His substance. He gave tithes and offerings to the work of Jehovah. Our Lord assumes the tithing principle, but His emphasis is on attitudes about money and our motivations in giving money. What we see in Christ's teachings are principles for giving and correcting of abuses committed by the religious leaders in Jerusalem, who gave to get the praise of men rather than the praise of God. So much of giving has to do with the heart.

RESPONSIBILITY (Matthew 22:21)

Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

Christians are to pay taxes to the government over them. *Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as supreme authority, or to governors . . . (1 Pet. 2:13). Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God (Rom. 13:1).* They are to take all legitimate tax breaks but are to pay what is rightfully due the government. If tax laws are unjust, then Christians should seek to change the law legally, and, if necessary, the government.

Many of us may have missed the second half of this verse: *"Give unto God what is God's."* We are to give back to God what is rightfully His. Technically, everything the Christian has belongs to God because God has given it, so the Christian should give back everything to God. However, God does not require everything. He only requires our tithe and is delighted with our offerings. What we must understand is that giving is a duty (obligation) as well as a privilege. When we fail to give God what is rightfully His, we are robbing God and missing the blessing God has for us through tithing.

EXTERNALISM Matthew 6:1-4

"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no rewards from our Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that our giving may be in secret. Then your Father who sees what is done in secret, will reward you"

Jesus is not condemning people who give publicly. In fact, the widow gave two pennies publicly and Jesus did not berate her for doing so.

Jesus is condemning the Pharisees who were wealthy and were giving publicly with great fanfare so men would exalt them—“*to be honored by men.*” The Pharisees’ motivation for helping the poor was not to please God but to be praised by men. To give money to God and to others in order to glorify us is a serious violating of the will of God. Spiritual pride is destructive.

Christians ought to check their motives in giving. What if no one knew we were giving? Would we give to the same degree? On the other hand, what if others did know what we were giving? Would we be embarrassed and ashamed?

UNSELFISHNESS Matthew 5:42

Give to one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Jesus is not teaching that Christians are to be totally vulnerable to every person who asks for money—thieves, robbers, cheats manipulators, sloths and false teachers.

This context is about the Christian’s basic attitude toward his enemies - those who hate them. If a known enemy asks a Christian for help, he should be willing to give, and if that enemy wants to borrow, Christians should do it, providing they have the means. He would probably loan the money with interest. The point is obvious that Christians should not hang on to excess monies, even giving to their enemies if asked to do so.

ATTITUDES Matthew 6:19-20

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Jesus never intended to give the impression it was wrong to accumulate material possessions or to plan ahead to take care of family and us. Rather the emphasis should always be on eternal values and accomplishing the will of God by the way we use our money. Those who have much should give much. Whatever excess monies a Christian has should be accumulated and used in creative ways to further the kingdom of God.

If people are constantly concerned about their possessions on earth—thinking about them, worrying over them, demonstrating jealousy and greed, abusing others to keep them—these are treasures on earth.

A poor man can be just as worldly, greedy and self-centered as a rich man if his mind is constantly on earthly possessions.

ALLEGIANCE Matthew 6:24

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Jesus is teaching that money can become our master. Instead of us getting hold of money, money gets a hold on us. Most non-Christians in this world are enslaved to money and we Christians intellectually understand that.

It is possible, however, for a Christian to have his priorities messed up and be in bondage to money (material possessions). If Christians are enslaved to materialism or in debt over their heads, they are serving money. This is why it is important for people who claim to be Christians to search their hearts to see if their relationship with Christ is personal and real. When a Christian loves money, he sets himself up for God's discipline.

HYPOCRISY Matthew 23:23-24

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of our spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

These Pharisees were being meticulous about tithing a tenth of the produce of rather insignificant herbs. They were giving to God what was easy to grow and easy to give, and being arrogant about it. However, these Pharisees were neglecting justice, mercy and faithfulness. They were over doing the Old Testament tithe requirement ("***you strain out a gnat***") and were violating the law of love and concern for others ("***but swallow a camel***").

The counterpart in the church today would be people who tithe and go way beyond the tithe with offerings to impress men or soothe the conscience, but there is no real love for God, no desire to be obedient in holiness of life, no genuine concern for people, especially the poor (Matt. 15:8).

As far as I know, this is the only statement where Christ approves of the tithe system of the Old Testament, but one statement is enough. He said, "***You should have practiced the latter (mercy, justice) without neglecting the former (tithing).***"

HUMILITY Luke 21:1-4

As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in to very small copper coins. "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

While the woman's two copper coins were nothing compared to the great sums of money the rich were giving, her gift was truly sacrificial because she gave everything. The rich were just meeting their obligations to God.

God honors sacrificial giving. It was probably humiliating for this woman to give two copper coins but in God's eyes she was a big giver to the Lord's work.

REIMBURSEMENT 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 unto you."

Jesus gave the command that all Christians should give of their monies. When this giving is done in faith, the Lord in spiritual and financial prosperity will reward the Christian. It is impossible to out give God!

It also takes faith and obedience to give, believing God will return the money and much of the time return it with interest.