

Truly Generous part 2 – Wes Martin

WHY MONEY?

The Bible mentions money hundreds of times (2,350 verses that talk about managing it and possessions) and of all of Jesus' parables, more than half of them talk about money.

Money is not evil however obsessing over money (and things) and being fearful of not having enough can cause us to sin.

people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires... the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows. 1 Timothy 6:9-10

Here's a bottom line: we want to master money instead of money mastering us.

Or the way Ron said it last weekend:

God is not opposed to us having stuff, He's opposed to stuff having us. – Ron Tucker

As Christians, all that we have belongs to God. Our money, possessions, skills and gifts are "talents" God entrusts us with and gives freedom to use.

We aim to be faithful with what God has given us and not wasteful.

There was a certain rich man who had a manager handling his affairs. One day a report came that the manager was wasting his employer's money. Here's the lesson...If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? No one can serve two masters...you cannot serve God and be enslaved to money. Luke 16:1, 9-11, 13

SEEK GOD WITH GIVING

Jesus teaches us in Matthew 6 a lifestyle of seeking God in various disciplines. The first discipline He mentions is giving. Some of the details He gives are so good.

“Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. When you give to someone in need, don’t do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. But when you give to someone in need, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.” Matthew 6:1-4

Part of what Jesus is teaching us here as it relates to giving is the fact that God sees. Don’t take this the wrong way in that He’s watching to make sure we do it with a judgmental spirit. That’s not the spirit of what Jesus was teaching as Jesus points out that our Father will respond to our giving with reward.

He’s pointing out that when we give it’s a big deal to God. It moves Him!

One of the great stories of this truth is found in Acts 10:

Cornelius was a devout, God-fearing man. He gave generously to the poor and prayed regularly to God. One afternoon about three o’clock, he had a vision in which he saw an angel of God coming toward him. “Cornelius!” the angel said. Cornelius stared at him in terror. “What is it, sir?” he asked the angel. And the angel replied, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering!” Acts 10:1-4

The early church took this invitation of giving and generosity to heart and put it into practice.

I want you to know what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more...They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem. 2 Corinthians 8:1-4

MATTER OF THE HEART

So what is God truly after? He's after our heart and one way He's chosen to get it is in the realm of our money.

God wants us free from fear and greed.

Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be. Matthew 6:21

Again, it's not the money, it's what our money represents, the costly treasure of our hearts. He doesn't care if the actual amount comes to two cents or two billion dollars...what He cares about is whether or not it's our all...He esteems the sacrifice... - Ron Tucker

Giving money requires emotional and mental dynamics that force us to wrestle with covetousness and the fear of lack as we learn to trust in our Father's ability to provide for us.

What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear? These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek first the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need. Matthew 6:31-33

Again, this is why Jesus was pointing out in Matthew 6 that it's important to know that our Father sees us. Giving is not some distant from God religious duty. It's meant to be relational. When we're relational with God in our tithing and giving we're able to work out our lack of trust issues with God.

Every time I tithe or give I aim to remind myself that “God is my source...my job and my employer are only conduits through which His resources flow to me.”

SEED OR BREAD? Being wise with what we’ve been given.

The Bible defines where to start the journey: at 10% (Leviticus 27:30, Proverbs 3:9-10, Luke 11:42, Matthew 23:23-24). To tithe is to give back to God 10% of our money. God gives us \$100 and we give \$10 back to Him. Some get hung up on gross or net. I would say do what you feel led to do.

Remember don’t approach this discipline in a non-relational way. He’s not interested in your money but your heart.

When we give 10% of our income to God, we discover that 90% with God involved will go further than 100% without Him.

Start where you can. Have a goal of no less than 10%...the biggest factor of seeing our hearts freed from greed and fear is to work the muscle consistently.

We want our hearts freed from greed and fear so that we can be joyful in generosity. This really is who God is...He’s joyful in His generosity.

a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. “For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.” And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, He will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, 10

Many have a pocket full of seeds without the fruit it would produce because they do not sow the seed.

Don’t eat seed and don’t sow bread.

How do we know how much to give? When is it foolish (like my Jeep story) and when is it wise? How do I know what is seed and what is bread? We gain wisdom over time.

LEARNING TO LOVE GOD WITH OUR MONEY

1. Reflect on God's provision in your life.
2. Set your heart to give freely and cheerfully. Pray about what is seed and what is bread.
3. Aim to consistently tithe. Start where you can.
4. Stay connected to God's heart every time you give.

Talk to Him. Remember, we're committing to love God with our money. It's about relationship not a religious ritual.