

## LESSON 9

### GIVE GENEROUSLY

#### It's All God's - In Gratitude, Steward It For His Kingdom

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**L**ook at what's in your hands. Look at where you live, what you drive, what you eat, what you wear, where you go, and what you buy. All of it you had to buy with *your* money, right? Wrong. The Bible teaches the things we think are ours, actually aren't. They belong to God. Everything was created *by* God and *for* God. The universe, the earth, each one of us, everything that exists, every experience, every opportunity—and everything we possess. We're just a steward of it. Meaning it actually belongs to God, we're just the manager of it. It's our duty to manage it well for Him. Deuteronomy 8:18 says, "*Remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the power to make wealth.*" God gives us the power, or *ability*, to make wealth. He gave you talents, skills in creativity, problem solving, etc. He gave you a mind capable of understanding tasks, a body capable of doing tasks, the means to get education, helped you get the personal connections and job opportunities you did. He also gives you the life, breath, and strength to do it. Nothing you have was entirely your own doing, even the things you earned through your own hard work. God deserves your gratitude for everything, including your money. So, in gratitude, make your money your servant, rather than your master.

***Money is a Good Servant but a Bad Master.*** The Bible warns often against being covetous, greedy, and a lover of money. Your money, or rather the selfish, pleasure-seeking things you use your money for, should not rule over you. Rather, your money should do what *you tell it* to do, while you do what God *tells you* to do. In Luke 16 Jesus gave a parable about a dishonest manager. One of the takeaways of the parable was about stewardship. Verses 10-12 read, "*One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?*" Jesus reminds us we must be faithful with what we've been entrusted with in this life. If we are, God will give us true, eternal riches of our own. You must choose if you will use your money to serve *yourself* or God. "*No servant can serve two masters, for 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 God and money.*"

**Your Money Shows Where Your Heart Is.** In Luke 12:15 Jesus said, *“Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”* He then gave a parable about the futility of being rich in earthly possessions but not rich towards God. Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* It’s also not about the *amount* you give. A person can be very wealthy and be greedy or generous. Likewise, a person can be poor and *still* be either greedy or generous. In Mark 12:41-44 Jesus, *“sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”* It’s not about the total amount you earn, or give. It’s about the *percentage* of what you earn, above your basic needs, that you give away towards things God cares about vs. the percentage you keep for *yourself*. Ask yourself these three questions. Of your monthly income, what percentage is well budgeted and managed for basic life necessities, frugal spending, wise saving and investing? What percentage is being used to indulge in selfish, foolish, worldly, temporary pleasures? And lastly, what percentage is given towards God’s Kingdom purposes and for blessing those in need? Remember, it’s not *your* money - it’s God’s. He didn’t entrust you with it for you to indulge yourself! Your percentages reveal where your treasure is, and thus, where your heart is also. Steward the first, limit the second, and be generous with the third.

**God Blesses the Giver and Multiplies What We’re Generous With.** On two separate occasions, shown in Mark 6:30-44 and Matthew 15:32-39, Jesus took the few fish and loaves of bread the people had available and multiplied it in a way that miraculously fed more than five and four thousand people. (cf. Mark 8:19-20) This principle is true for you and me as well. Whatever money you give to God for the work of the Kingdom He will do abundant and amazing things with it. Now, God doesn’t need our money or our help. It’s a *privilege* that He extends to us that helps us to *know* Him, and to be *known by* Him, *need* Him, and *become like* Him. He invites us to partner and co-labor with Him. He rewards our desire to serve and our faithfulness and trust. He lets us share in the outcome of the harvest by receiving eternal rewards for the good that comes as a result! And He often blesses us in the here and now for our pleasure. Sometimes God even provides us with greater income potential because He knows we will manage it well for Him. So give generously towards Kingdom work, towards activities that build up the Church, towards activities that bear good fruit in the world, and towards activities that bless others - all to the glory of God. Make a plan. If it’s not painful, it’s not generosity. So give generously until it hurts!

Let’s pray. LORD God, everything is Yours! Destroy the love of money and greed and covetousness in my heart. Help me manage well the money You’ve entrusted to me. Help me make money my servant, to be generous with as led by Your Spirit, and please multiply it for Your glory. In Jesus’ name. Amen.