



The Joy of Generous Giving: Unlock the Secret to God's Ultimate Blessing

(Part two in a six-article series on the bible and money)

By Matt Schoenfeld

Jane and Steve were tithing, but surprisingly, their financial life was still in chaos. Several risky and ill-timed business ventures had led them into deep debt. While they were giving 10% of their income to God's work at their church, they were neglecting critical financial principles like living within their means, planning, and following a spending plan. Despite their giving, their financial life was skating on thin ice, and they were actually spending more money than they brought in each month. Disaster was literally one emergency or missed paycheck away.

To be successful at managing money, it takes more than just generosity. We need a holistic approach to our finances that draws on all facets of the wisdom found in God's Word. Tithing is not a spiritual slot machine that always pays off with a jackpot of personal wealth. It's part of a broader biblical plan for both your finances and your spiritual growth. At times I think we treat tithing as if it were some type of magic financial cure-all. Generous giving is absolutely essential and the foundation of good stewardship, but if we neglect other sound financial principles, financial troubles will most likely persist.

To unlock the secrets to finding financial peace in your life and to help you learn to be effective at managing your personal finances, I would like to suggest that there are five key biblical principles for financial

success. These five foundational truths are giving generously, fleeing the love of money, living within your means, planning for the future, and using a spending plan. Today we will explore the first of the five principles which will lead us into financial success, generous giving. How would you define financial success? Better yet, what do you think *biblical* financial success looks like? The answer will revolutionize your spiritual and financial life.

Now, when you use the term *financial success*, people can easily get nervous that the health-and-wealth gospel will quickly follow. For years, it's been common place to hear teaching that God will make you rich if you will just tithe, or support a certain ministry, or pray the right prayers.

Randy Alcorn debunks this falsehood in his powerful book, *The Treasure Principle*: "Prosperity theology is built on a half-truth. God often does prosper givers materially. But He won't let us treat Him like a no-lose slot machine or a cosmic genie who does our bidding....God's payoff is very real, but it comes at the "proper time," which may not be today or tomorrow but in eternity....God prospers me not to raise my standard of living, but to raise my standard of giving." Biblical financial success comes when you let the Fruit of the Holy Spirit invade your financial dealings. When love, joy, peace, patience, self control, and the like flow through your financial life, then you've hit biblical financial success. It has nothing to do with your salary, nest egg, or car.

So here is the first secret that will bring you financial peace—giving generously leads to the ultimate blessing.

Hmm. Ultimate blessing, sounds pretty dramatic. It is. Check this out. In 2 Corinthians 9: 6-7, Paul tells us that whoever sows generously will also reap generously. He goes on to say that our giving should be cheerful and not motivated by guilt. But the big payoff comes in verse 10 where he teaches us that if we sow generosity we will reap the ultimate blessing—He will increase the harvest of our righteousness.

This echoes back to Malachi 3:10 in the Old Testament where God issues the “double dog dare” to the Israelites. After accusing the Hebrews of being pick-pockets because they are not giving Him ten percent of their income, God dares them to bring the whole tithe into His house. What will happen if we honor Him with ten percent? He says he’ll pour out so much blessing we won’t know what to do with it. Fast forward to 2 Corinthians 9:10 and we see that this ultimate blessing from giving generously is not a new BMW or summer house in Vail. The pinnacle of blessing is growing deeper in faith and intimacy with Him. Do you want to experience the ultimate blessing? Do you want to experience a bumper-crop of righteousness (accelerated spiritual growth in the Lord)? It all starts with giving our money generously to Him.

While it seems like a paradox, giving our money away forms the foundation for building a strong financial house. Excelling at this, the first of the 5 Biblical Principles for Financial Success, will set you on a collision course with blessings. Remember how the football players dump the bucket of water on their coach when they win the big game? Likewise, the Lord wants to shower us with blessings of increased intimacy as we give our financial resources back to the One who provided them in the first place.

Go ahead and test Him and see if He’s telling the truth. I double dog dare you! It’s OK; this is the one time in Scripture where God says it’s alright to test Him (Malachi 3:8-10). As you grow in the grace of giving and the harvest of your righteousness increases, you can begin to focus on the next biblical principle for financial success, fleeing the love of money. Strap on your running shoes and get ready to sprint. In the next issue we’ll explore one of the key places where the devil tries to derail the disciples.

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