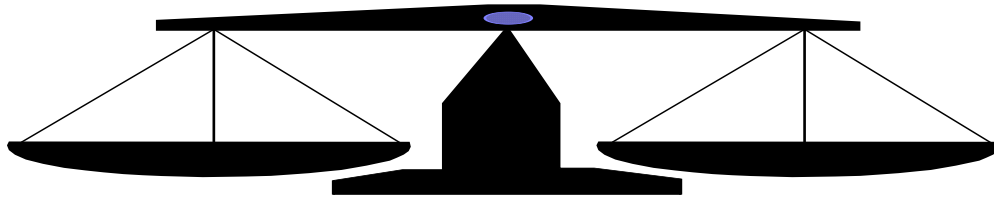


Chapter 13

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

SECTION 1: THE EL ELYON PRINCIPLE (Genesis 14:1-24)

- I. Christian Stewardship is based on the revelation that God is El Elyon, the Possessor of Heaven and Earth. God had made a covenant with Abraham that He would bless Abraham so that he could then be a blessing. According to Galatians 3:26-29 as a child of God we have inherited this same covenant. When Abraham went to battle against Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him and defeated them, two other kings came out to meet him. These two kings represent for us two attitudes that we can have concerning our resources that we are to be stewards of. One (Sodom) shows dependence on the world's system. The other (Melchizedek, 'king of righteousness') shows us dependence on God as our source. With the revelation that Abraham received and that we can receive comes the knowledge of who our source is; El Elyon, the possessor of heaven and earth and freedom from dependence on the world's system. This revelation emphasizes God's strength and sovereignty. (Genesis 14:14-24)



- II. With the understanding of God as our source, we can then see ourselves as stewards of that which is given to us. A steward (manager) is one who is entrusted with the use or management of that which belongs to another. (Matthew 25:14-30; 1 Corinthians 4:2 AV)
- III. The revelation of Divine Ownership and Man's Stewardship teaches us the balance of the privilege and responsibility of Christian Stewardship. We can see Christian Stewardship as a three step process.
- A. Revelation of God as our source. *And he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator (Possessor) of heaven and earth."* (Genesis 14:19)
- B. Our management or steward of the resources that are given to us. *Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.* (1 Corinthians 4:2)
- C. God's promise of His provision for us. *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 4:19)

MANAGEMENT
I CORINTHIANS 4:2

PROVISION
PHILIPPIANS 4:19

SECTION 2: THE TITHING PRINCIPLE

- I. The term "*tithe*" is not first of all a religious term, but rather a mathematic term. It means one tenth. God asks for it to be the first tenth from our increase and that it be given to Him. (Malachi 3:10-11)
 - A. When Abraham received the revelation of God as El-Elyon, the first thing he did was to give a tithe to God. Jacob desired a blessing from God and entered into covenant with God through a vow. Part of that vow was that he would give God a tenth of all that God gave him. (Genesis 14:20; Genesis 28:20-22)
 - B. Moses formalized the principle of tithing into law as it was given to him by revelation from God. The entire tithe (first tenth) was to be the Lord's and was to belong to Levi as his inheritance. Levi's tithe was to belong to Aaron and the priesthood. (Leviticus 27:30-33; Numbers 18:21-28)
 - C. From the understanding of the laws that were given to Moses, we can understand the tithe is first of all to be given to the ministry as their inheritance so they can be free to give servant leadership to God's people.
- II. Where should our tithe be given? The place God has chosen for the tithe of the people to be given is at the place where He chooses to put His name. Where is the place God has put His name today? The local church is God's house, a dwelling in which God's Spirit lives. The church is the place God has put His name. The local church is God's designated place for the tithe. The leadership of the local church are God's designated stewards for the tithe. The believers in the early church brought their money and entrusted it to the apostles. (Deuteronomy 12:4-14; Ephesians 2:20-22; Acts 4:32-35)
- III. The purpose of tithing for us is more than just giving money. God does not need our money, but He does need and want our hearts.
 - A. One of the first purposes of tithing is to help us learn to reverence the Lord our God. Tithing will also help ensure that our hearts will be in the right place. It will also help us learn to put people before things and thus break the chains of materialism. Whatever you own that you cannot let go of owns you. (Matthew 6:21; Colossians 3:1-3; Deuteronomy 14:23)
 - B. Tithing was established to properly ensure the support of the ministry and care for the poor. (Deuteronomy 14:29; Malachi 3:10)
 - C. Another purpose of tithing is that we can learn to practice proportionate and systematic giving.
- IV. When the tithe is not given properly and used properly, the church suffers the loss of ministry and the ministry cannot fulfill its calling. When tithing is not practiced properly, fruit is destroyed (Nehemiah 13:10; Malachi 3:11)

- V. God gives us promises concerning the proper giving of our tithes.

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. "Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty. (Malachi 3:10-11)

- A. There will be food in God's house, the church, because the ministry is properly supported and so will have the time to properly prepare and serve us spiritual food.
- B. God will open the floodgates of heaven and pour out blessing on us.
- C. God will prevent pests from devouring our crops (will protect us from loss and will at times allow things to last longer than they normally would).
- D. The vines will not cast their fruit; the fruit of our labors will not fall to the ground and be unusable.
- VI. In the New Covenant we see that Jesus affirms tithing, He does not do away with it. Jesus did not come to abolish the Law, but rather He said our righteousness is to exceed that of the law. Tithing gives us a faith foundation for all areas of finance and stewardship in our lives. (Luke 11:42; Matthew 5:20)

SECTION 3: THE PRINCIPLE OF SOWING AND REAPING

- I. The principle of sowing and reaping tells us that how we sow is how we will reap. If we sow a little, we will reap a little. Our sowing is how we give into God's Kingdom with our money, resources, time and effort. We have the choice of giving (sowing) the minimum requirement or sowing (giving) the maximum possibility. (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
- II. Our attitude in giving (sowing) is so very important. It should first of all be a decision of the heart rather than the compulsion of the law. Our giving should be done without reluctance or grudging; but willingly and cheerfully. We have been given the ability or the grace to excel in giving. (Exodus 25:2; Deuteronomy 15:10; 2 Corinthians 8:7, 12; 2 Corinthians 9:7)

***If you are really eager to give, it isn't important how much you are able to give.
God wants you to give what you have, not what you don't have.
2 Corinthians 8:12 New Living Translation***

- III. Remembering that God is the source, we can see that He supplies the seed that we sow. God gives bread to eat as well as the seed to sow. We as the giver must be careful that we don't eat our seed. Sowing and reaping not only gives a harvest of "bread," but supplies more seed as well. Deuteronomy 8:18 tells us that God gives us the ability to produce wealth. Whatever your financial situation, God is able to make His grace available to you so that you can give. (2 Corinthians 9:10)

Foundation for Christian Service – Term 2 – Chapter 13 – Christian Stewardship

We need to be careful that we are giving to give, rather than giving to get. Don't 'sow a seed to feed your greed!' Don't expect that every unit you give will be multiplied back to you. Sowing and reaping is a principle. We can see from the parable of the sower that there are different degrees of reaping. Sow your seed and release the gift to God. Trust Him for the return. A farmer plants the seed and expects God's principle of increase to give him a harvest at the proper time. (Matthew 13:3-9; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Romans 12:8; Ephesians 3:20; 1 Peter 4:10)

- IV. For a good harvest it is important to sow in good soil. Sowing in the field where you want to reap the harvest and sowing the seed you want to reap. The following are some good soil and good fields in which to sow seed.
- A. Give to and through your local church. Tithe to your local church for the support of the ministry. If you cannot wholeheartedly support the ministry of your local church, check your heart and check if you are in the right church. Give constructive input and make suggestions.
 - B. Give to the poor. We cannot meet every need, but we can meet some needs. We can focus on the ones that God brings our way. We can help the widows and orphans. (Proverbs 19:17)
 - C. We can give for disaster relief. Periodically we will be made aware of a disaster or tragedy that requires immediate and follow-up giving. Support agencies that are efficient and effective in this area.
 - D. We can give to missionaries and other Christian ministries that are effectively doing the things that we are concerned about. We must be careful not to allow ourselves to be manipulated emotionally.
 - E. Be creative! Can God channel the resources for someone else's need through you?
- V. The purpose of giving and of prosperity is so that you will be made rich in order that you can be generous. God said to Abraham, 'I will bless you and you will be a blessing'. (Genesis 12:2; 2 Corinthians 9:11; Ephesians 4:28)
- A. From 2 Corinthians 8:4-14 we can see God's purposes for giving; for sowing and reaping and its benefits.
 - 1. From verse 7 we can see that giving (sowing) is to be a part of the Christian's life that we are to do and even to excel at.
 - 2. From verse 8 we can see that giving (sowing) is a way that we can prove our love for God and for His church and people.
 - 3. From verses 4 and 9 we can see that giving (sowing) is a way that we can learn to share with others in a more Christ-like way.
 - 4. From verse 14 we can see that when we have been blessed, we can then give and share from the supply that we have been given.
 - B. An understanding of true prosperity goes beyond just satisfying our own needs and wants. Godliness with contentment is prosperity. True prosperity is not having what you want, it

is more wanting what you have. **Wealth without contentment is not true prosperity.** It is poverty of soul and spirit. True prosperity is not only having possessions, but being rich towards God. (Luke 12:15-21; 1 Timothy 6:5-10)

- VI. The promise we have from God is that He will supply those that are generous with enough to meet their own needs as well as enough to give to others in need. The generous giver (sower) will be given increasing seed to sow and thus be able to plant for a more abundant and increasing harvest. (Hosea 10:12; Proverbs 19:17; Luke 6:38; Philippians 4:19)

It is possible to give freely and become more wealthy, but those who are stingy will lose everything. The generous prosper and are satisfied; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed. Proverbs 11:24-25

SECTION FOUR: QUESTIONS ON TITHING AND GIVING

- I. Is tithing a law? Are we under the law?

Tithing is a principle that existed before the Law was given and is practiced even though many areas of the Law have been fulfilled. "Exceed the requirements of the law and you are not under the law."

Example: If the law says give ten percent and I give nothing, I am **under the law**. If I give five percent I am **under the law**. If I give fifteen percent I am no longer **under the law**. I have exceeded its requirements and therefore its purpose for me has been fulfilled in this instance.

- II. Is it wrong to give some of my tithe for something other than the support of my local church?
- A. First, be concerned with what is right, not what is wrong. The principle of tithing was established for the support of ministry, the focal point of tithing in the New Covenant is the local church.
- B. It is fact that some churches do not use the tithe that comes in strictly for the purpose of supporting the ministry as outlined in scripture. Therefore, this truth is not presented as a legalistic requirement, but to help us establish an order of priority.
- C. Commit to the principle of tithing:
1. That the tithe is the first tenth and giving it teaches us to put God first in every area of our lives.
 2. That the tithe is primarily for the support of ministry and not for the acquisition and maintenance of property.
 3. That the local church is the place the Lord has chosen to put His name and that it is to be the center or focal point of our giving.
 4. I can expect God to open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing and also prevent pests from devouring my resources when I deal with the tithe scripturally.

- III. What if I don't agree with or support the way my church uses the money it receives?
- A. Check your heart attitude. Am I being stubborn or rebellious? Is there a pet project I think money should be used for?
 - B. Communicate clearly your concerns. If you have questions or concerns about the church and its finances, make every effort to get answers from the proper source. Don't be accusatory and confrontational. Offer your understanding of the scriptural principles involved. Don't dictate or try to manipulate the leadership with threats or accusations.
 - C. Withholding tithes and offerings as a means of protest against real or imagined shortcomings on the part of the church or its leadership is questionable at best.
 - 1. If you cannot trust the leadership of the church with the use of finances, how can you trust them with the spiritual oversight of your life and the direction of the church and its ministry?
 - 2. If you withhold your giving, you are also withholding the blessing God desires to release into your own life.
 - D. Perhaps you should determine why you are in that church?
 - 1. Did God put you there?
 - 2. Are you there for your benefit or for the benefit of others?
 - 3. Is there something in your life God wants to deal with through the situation?
 - 4. Is it time to move on?
- IV. What if I'm not currently in a local church?
- A. Find a church that is moving with the direction and vision you feel is right. What is the vision that moves that local church and determines its activities and priorities? Make sure you are in agreement with the vision of the church and its leadership before you commit to involvement.
 - B. Know what you're looking for so you'll recognize it when you find it. Don't be unduly influenced by surface issues.
 - C. Move carefully and wisely. Look before you leap.
 - D. Deal with past hurts and disappointments.
 - E. Keep the blessing principles active in your life through tithing and giving by supporting missions or a ministry that is blessing you or bearing good fruit.
- V. What about giving to missions, the poor, other fruitful ministries?
- A. Offerings should be given for such worthy causes.

- B. Apply the same principles you would use to evaluate a significant purchase or commitment.
 - 1. Check the quality and integrity of the ministry.
 - 2. Determine that there is a valid need.
 - 3. Become a "Fruit Inspector."

- VI. Is it right to make pledges to ministries such as international evangelists and the like?
 - A. Is your desire to give or pledge to the ministry based on an emotional appeal?
 - B. Are you under duress and being manipulated through veiled threats or unrealistic promises?
 - C. Is the ministry advancing the Kingdom of God or promoting its own agenda?
 - D. Don't commit your tithe or money that should go for your family's needs or obligations.
 - E. Will the TV evangelist come over and comfort you, pray for your children, write to the Home Office for you? Will he preside at your daughter's wedding or officiate at your father's funeral?
 - F. Is it proper to eat a nice meal at George's Cafe or Chili's Restaurant and then go up to McDonald's to pay for it?

- VII. What about a pledge or commitment I have made that I now see was entered into wrongly: Wrong motives, wrong methods, wrong priorities?
 - A. God honors those who keep their vows and commitments. (Psalm 15:4)
 - B. There is scriptural provision for release from wrong vows.
 - 1. Seek counsel from Pastor, Church leadership, Father, Husband.
 - 2. If appropriate, receive godly counsel and prayer, then let those you are in submission to release you from wrong vows.

- VIII. What about being led by the Spirit in giving?
 - A. First commit to systematic, proportionate giving.
 - B. Grow in your sensitivity to the Spirit's leading. Learn to discern between Spirit and emotion.
 - C. If God wants to bless someone or meet their need, can He trust resources into your hands?

- IX. When I give, can I just sit back and wait for the blessing to roll in? No. To expect God's covenant

blessing on your finances you must:

- A. Work
- B. Take initiative
- C. Use your God-given creativity

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

Chapter 13 Christian Stewardship

1. What does it mean in practical terms to see God as our source? Does that mean we never have to work or have a job? How do we make the truth of God being our source become a reality in daily living?
2. Think about what it really means to be stewards who are accountable to God for everything we have and use. What are some ways we can learn and practice Christian Stewardship?