

## INTRODUCTION

Why do you think the issue of money and giving is so sensitive to us? One reason is the abuse we feel from people begging for our bucks. We get bombarded with every kind of gimmick under heaven to try loosening our money from our pockets. “Give me a dollar a day and keep the devil away.”

Another reason: We want a certain quality of life—and by giving something away, aren't we giving up a portion of that quality? If I always focus on others' needs, will I have enough for my own? Our fear is that we won't be able to pay for the things that bring us the quality of life we want. In the words of C. S. Lewis, “For many of us the obstacle to charity lies not in our luxurious living or desire for more money, but in our fear—a fear of insecurity.” That's why money is so important to us and why we are threatened by anyone or anything that might be after it.

Paul reminded the Corinthians that they had slacked off in their giving. The reason was quite simply, “covetousness” (2 Corinthians 9:5). They wanted to help all right—help themselves! Their desire was “more and more for me.”

Paul reminded them of the Principle of Increase, which is how giving becomes a great blessing to the giver. God designed grain to be sown and to yield its return; He designed money to work the same.

One rule that we all need to learn is: Little investment, little increase; larger investment, larger increase.

God did not create us and then leave us to fend for ourselves. He is very interested in what happens to his children. He created each one of us to be a child of the King, complete with all the benefits befitting a king. However, as a king must live by certain rules, we have rules also. A basic rule for living a life of prosperity is: Money is not to be thrown away, but invested where there will be a return—to you and to Him.

His interest in us caused Him to promise us healing, prosperity, and salvation in the covenant He made with Abraham. Abraham gave God all that he had—his faithfulness.

### THE STAFF OF GOD

The Bible is full of stories where ordinary people like you and me gave God all they had, without seeking or asking, and received great returns. A beautiful sign of God's love for us is told in Exodus 4:1-4. Moses protested, “What if they don't believe me or listen to me? What if they say, ‘The Lord never appeared to you?’”

Then the Lord asked him, “What is that in your hand?”

“A shepherd's staff,” Moses replied. (Today we would reply, “It is just a stick, why do you want it?”)

“Throw it down on the ground,” the Lord told him.

So Moses threw down the stick, and it turned into a snake! Moses jumped back. In my mind's eye I can see him jumping and shouting, “WOW!” and exclaiming, “If God can do that with a stick that I gave Him, what He could do with my life, if I give it to God?”

Then the Lord told him, “Reach out and grab its tail.”

So Moses reached out and grabbed it, and it turned back into a shepherd’s staff that has become known as the Staff of God. First Moses had to let go of what was in his hand.

Moses’ reluctance and fear were caused by over anticipation. He was worried about how people might respond to him. We often build up events in our minds, and then panic over what might go wrong. God does not ask us to go where He has not provided the means to help. Go where He leads, trusting Him to supply courage, confidence, and resources at the right moment.

A shepherd’s staff was commonly a three to six-foot wooden rod with a curved hook at the top. The shepherd used it for walking, guiding his sheep, killing snakes, and many other tasks. Still, it was just a stick. But God used the simple shepherd’s staff Moses carried as a sign to teach him an important lesson. God sometimes takes joy in using ordinary things for extraordinary purposes.

### **GIVING TO PRODUCE MIRACLES**

Last week I sat in a service in which the pastor described the church’s bus outreach ministry. When they are out witnessing to street people, they ask each of them to open their hand and give God something. Many of them will pick up a stone from the street and offer that. The pastor stated that even with just a rock offered and given to God, there were reports of miracles happening.

One of my favorite stories of God taking something ordinary and making something extraordinary is Elisha’s visit with the widow as told in 2 Kings 4:1-7. Poor people and debtors were allowed to pay their debts by selling themselves or their children as slaves. God ordered rich people and creditors not to take advantage of these people during their time of extreme need (Deuteronomy 15:1-18). This woman’s creditor was not acting in the spirit of God’s law.

Elisha’s kind deed demonstrates that God wants us to go beyond simply keeping the law. We must also show compassion. This chapter records four of God’s miracles through Elisha: providing money for a poverty-stricken widow (4:1-7), raising a dead boy to life (4:32-37), purifying poisonous food (4:38-41), and providing food for 100 men (4:42-44). These miracles show God’s tenderness and care for those who are faithful to him.

When reading the Old Testament, it is easy to focus on God’s harsh judgment of the rebellious and to minimize His tender care for those who love and serve him. Seeing God at work providing for His followers helps us keep His severe justice toward the unrepentant in proper perspective.

Elisha asked the widow what she had in her house that she could sell and pay her debts. Her answer was that she only had a small jar of oil. He instructed her to collect all the vessels from the neighbors.

The woman and her sons collected jars from their neighbors, pouring oil into them from their one jar. The olive oil was used for cooking, for lamps, and for fuel. The oil did not stop until she ran out of vessels. The number of jars they gathered was an

indication of their faith. Please understand that God did not quit giving, the woman and her sons quit getting jars for the oil.

God's provision was as large as their faith and willingness to obey. Beware of limiting God's blessings by a lack of faith and obedience. God is able and willing to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine. Have you quit allowing God to offer you His blessings?

### **THE PROSPERITY ACTIVATOR**

My all time favorite is told in all of the Gospels, the account of Jesus feeding 5,000 men plus all of the women and children with only five loaves and two fish. Part of the story is lost in that we have to realize that the person with the two fish had to give them to God.

Can you imagine your reaction to being there with all the people who had failed to bring any food? One of the attendees, probably because his wife or mother told him, "Honey we are going to be there during lunch time so we better take some food," brought the fish and bread. If you were the family that brought the food, would you be willing to give your fish and bread with the promise that Jesus could use it to feed 5,000 plus people, or are you a doubting Thomas?

Many of us would say, "No way!" A point missed by most of us reading this story is, somebody brought the fish and bread and was willing to give it to God at the personal risk of not having anything to eat. Jesus took the seed that was given to him and multiplied it.

Jesus never did magic to prove that he was the son of God, even when confronted by Satan. He could have turned the stones to bread; He could have cast himself off the pinnacle of the temple and survived. Instead He took seed and performed miracles.

In order to perform miracles, you need a seed. His first miracle was using the water as seed and turning it into wine. When he raised Lazarus from the dead, he had the body of Lazarus as seed. For every miracle Jesus did, He had something to work with. Your pastor needs seed to perform the miracles we all expect to see at church.

What do you have in your household that God can use? Maybe a better question is, what are you willing to give God? Are you willing to fast one day a week and give that money to God? While it is easy to assume God can use only special skills, you must not hinder His use of the everyday contributions you can make. Little did Moses imagine the power his simple stick would wield when it became the Staff of God.

What is our prosperity activator? Quite simply put, it is tithing. Quit eating your seed and enjoy your harvest. Yes, enjoy the fruits of your harvest. Not somebody else's. My loving parents tithed, but that does not carry over for me. I have to plant my seeds, work the field (prayer), bring in the harvest (evangelize), and enjoy the fruits. This is the only way God has ordained for us to prosper. We must learn to obey the Bible principle of giving.

One of the favorite books that I have written is *Choices, Allowing Yourself to Succeed*. It is a book on following your dream for success. By now you should have a good idea what your dream is. You should have overcome what was keeping you in the

starting gate. You should be cultivating the dream with prayer, perfected praise, and fellowship with other believers.

### **GIVING TO ACCOMPLISH YOUR DREAMS**

Now we will discuss something I consider critical to the success of any dream. It may seem unusual, even backwards, but I assure you that no dream that is God's dream for you will come to pass without this key element.

#### **The element is multiplication.**

You see, it is not enough to cultivate your dream, because if your dreaming becomes self-focused and introspective, it will die. It is not enough to work hard for a personal goal, although there is much good in that. God requires of every dreamer that we multiply our dreams by lavishly giving away our resources and serving others. Sound backwards? Therein is the secret.

Most people think the way to win a battle or accomplish a goal is by marshalling all they have, squeezing out every last resource of time and money, launching an offensive. That is true—in part. But if we hoard everything for ourselves, we are going against one of God's fundamental principles, which is this: If you want something, give it away.

In other words, if you want your dream to come true, be generous with the very resources that will help it come true. If you want your dream to become reality, help other people reach their dreams first. One of my favorite seminar leaders, Zig Zigler, states, "If you want to get something, help somebody else get what they want."

Give your money and time. Yes, your time. There are organizations, homeless families, churches and schools that could use your time and talents. It may be something as simple as reading a book to young children or at a senior center. Hospitals are in great need of people to come and hold crack babies. Serve others with enthusiasm. Evangelize and bring others to Christ. When God sees that generosity of heart, he won't be able to resist pouring new blessing and resources upon you. Jesus said:

*Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. (Luke 6:38 NKJV)*

During or after my seminars, people often ask me what the best business book that has ever been written is. I always refer them to my favorite book in the Old Testament—Proverbs. Proverbs 11:24-25 (NKJV) states it much clearer than I:

*There is one who scatters, yet increases more;  
And there is one who withholds more than is right,  
But it leads to poverty.  
The generous soul will be made rich,  
And he who waters will also be watered himself.*

For dreamers, such as me, generosity is not an option. It is a way of life. It's the only path to fulfilling your dream and multiplying the dreams of others. Without generosity, you severely limit what God is able to do through you and in you. The Bible commands us to be generous with God and with others, and serve them.

Jesus did that very thing, taking the form of a bondservant. He came to serve, and he accomplished the greatest dream this world has ever known. We also must live to serve. We must embark on the generous lifestyle.

One of the most well-known verses in the Bible says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16 NKJV). God demonstrated that when you give, you gain much more in return. He gave his Son and gained the hearts of all who would believe in him. Similarly, we gain every time we give something away.

When you give energy, you gain energy. I realize that after a hard weekend day of doing yard work, we do not always understand that mysteriously we will gain energy. However, as we all know, when you do nothing all day, you feel more tired than if you had worked.

When you give time to a worthy cause, somehow you seem to have more time, or you use your time more effectively.

I have found that when I facilitate a meeting and give my knowledge away, God seems to sharpen my mind with more knowledge. Occasionally I hear a comment that I just made and I wonder where that came from. After a seminar I have commented to my wife, “I wish I knew that during my selling time.” The more I give the more God gives me.

Why does this principle work? Because when you give what you have, you are declaring that God is the supplier of every resource needed to fulfill your dream. Indeed, by giving, we acknowledge that he gave us every minute of life and breath. He gave us the energy and strength to work, the mind to have ideas, and the heart to love. Everything we have comes from Him, and the only way to make your dreams come true is by recognizing it and declaring with your actions: “I will give because my supply is unlimited.”

That is the attitude God blesses. The key to reaching your dreams is emptying yourself. Full vessels cannot be filled. A closed hand can't receive anything. Instead of hoarding your hours, you should give generous service to others. Instead of being tight-fisted with your money, you should hunt down opportunities to write a check to a person or ministry that needs it. Talk with your pastor; he will have numerous ways to invest your money in the work of the Lord. That signals to God that you put your dreams in His hands and that you know you can't fulfill it in your own time and with your limited resources.

### **GIVE IT A TRY**

Generosity will revolutionize your outlook on life, your finances, and your attitude toward others. If you are skeptical try it for a month or two. In Malachi, God commanded us to test Him. So try it. Give whatever you want to; go out of your way to pay for things, make donations, and be charitable. Be magnanimous with your family, friends, co-workers and your church. Devise generous plans for people, starting with your family. Write a check to your ministry. Take a bag of groceries to a less fortunate family.

You will find yourself growing happier by the day, because the only way to be happy is by bringing happiness to others. God designed humans to be happy only when

they are giving themselves away. When you focus on your own pleasure, you quickly hit a ceiling where you can't take in anymore. How many suits or dresses can you wear? How many fine meals can you eat? How many cars can you drive? When I hear of one of the sports superstars or the entertainment stars with ten to twelve automobiles, I wonder, have they gone back to their schoolteachers and bought them a car? Some of that money could be used to purchase a bus for their local church to start a bus ministry, bringing in people who would not normally get to church.

Put the book aside and write down where you could be investing your money in the Kingdom of God and the results.

For as long as I have been old enough to listen to the news, the reports have constantly told us how bad the economy is and it is always getting worse. Even though most of the reporters make millions per year, they have not understood the economy of God. With God you will find supernatural supply of replenishing your time, your ideas, your finances, and your joy. God will add high-octane fuel to your dream tank, and you will go further and faster than you thought possible. I believe some people never reach their dream because they are not generous with others. In God's economy, the surest way to limit your success is to hold tightly to what you have.

Perhaps you are already generous. But there is always another level. You cannot out give God, but it is fun once you begin to try. Take your generosity up a notch. Give more than you usually do, and see what happens.

Once you learn the joy of serving and giving to others, you won't want to live any other way. Generous living becomes a breeze. It enlarges your spirit, and it empowers and multiples. You have the privilege of becoming God's channel of supply to other people.

Think about it: When you give money to help your church feed hungry people, you literally give life to those people. They are in a better position to discover and fulfill the dream that God put in their heart. When you give money to a scholarship fund, you make a student's dream possible. When you volunteer at a Sunday school, you leave a lasting memory in the minds of the children. I remember and am thankful for my Sunday school teachers.

If that seems like a roundabout way to get your dream fulfilled, it is. But that's how God often works. While you are trying to get your dream established, help someone fulfill his or her dream.

Giving, according to the Bible, is the equivalent of a farmer sowing various seeds. What you plant is what comes up in your harvest.

That is the purpose of this book, to help you become familiar with the entire process of planting and harvesting, of giving and receiving. The principle has been around since the beginning of time and it's not going to change. Genesis 8:22 tells us that as long as the earth exists, there will be planting and harvest. It is the most natural and dynamic part of life. The sooner you grasp it and begin to live it, the sooner you will experience real life.