

RECEIVING GOD'S BLESSINGS THAT INSPIRE JOYFUL GIVING



STUDIES IN THE HEALING WORD
AND WILL OF GOD SERIES

BIBLE BYTE COMMUNICATIONS

Receiving God's Blessings That Inspire Joyful Giving

Studies in the Healing Will of God

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Why this e-Booklet is free:

We are so glad that you chose to download this e-Booklet as our gift to you. Jesus taught us in Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and we aspire to follow our Lord's teaching. The Apostle Paul also understood this concept, "What is my reward then {for preaching and giving the gospel away freely}? *Verily* that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge" (I Corinthians 9:18). Paul came to realize that to serve the Word *without charge* was both a blessing to those who received the Word and to himself personally because he understood that God Himself is the reward, "I *am* thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Genesis 15:1, and see Hebrews 11:6). When you have God in your life as your *exceeding great reward*, then being *with God* you will have everything you need to begin enjoying the more than abundant life. Our prayer for you is that you come to know experientially that "with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27).

Enjoy, and God Bless You!

Introduction:

The Joy of Cheerful Receiving and Giving

In this booklet we will be looking at God's healing Word regarding some of the spiritual principles of the heart of genuine receiving and giving. What God's Word imparts to His children about giving is as equally important as what the Scriptures say about receiving from God. Giving and receiving work together in unison to build trust in our God, and He, as our heavenly Father, can work through our trusting Him to prove that He is our genuine sufficiency. Do Christians give to help their local Churches and to support their ministers, and to relieve the less fortunate in their communities, and to help comfort the suffering, and to feed the poor? Yes, these all can and do happen when people give, but giving according to the Scriptures is primarily meant to first bless and build up the giver.

God will bless us immensely when we give with the true heart of understanding *how* and *why* giving truly works, for it is a universal principle that will always return back in multiple ways (spiritually, mentally, and physically) to the giver. It is never greed to expect to receive back when you give in accordance with what God's Word reveals, for God's desire is to bless the giver.

God's blessings will indeed follow a gift given and bless those who have received the offering, whether it is our time, our resources, our finances, or our help in any way.

Nobody would plant a garden and then simply walk away without anticipation for the produce to grow, for we plant in hope that we will receive the product of our labors. The same is true with giving; as we learn God's Word, we shall see this same truth behind our very own giving that produces great and beneficial dividends from our heavenly Father.

In these pages we will be learning how to give our hearts to God by sharing our lives with our heavenly Father, for in this one action alone God

is truly blessed, and He in turn praises and rewards the giver. When we come to understand that God desires us, His children, to give to Him our worries, doubts, and fears and we follow through and do so, God can then begin working mightily to deliver us from all our cares and give us the desires of our hearts.

Many Christians think and believe that they must make major changes in their lives before they can approach God with confidence or conviction; however, God loves us just as we are with all our shortcomings and frailties because He is pure love and loves us unconditionally without any strings attached.

Definitely, there are principles in the Scriptures that we may utilize to improve our lives, and with God on our side, we can make changes that will augment our walks with God. Yet any and all changes that we desire to make in our lives need to be done by our free will commitment to do so: “For we are his {God’s} workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). The *good works* that God would have us enjoy are His requests rather than burdensome mandates. The words *we should walk in them* means that we may if we so choose.

The walk we can have with God is phenomenal if we, from our hearts, decide to do so and begin enjoying His guidance. When and if we simply try to do what God requests, then our confidence in Him will become unwavering, steadfast, and absolutely delightful.

Many of the principles that you will read in the following studies may at first blush seem counterintuitive to what is normally preached in regard to giving or tithing. Not all ministers or preachers are after your money, but barely a day goes by on the religious airwaves that an audience is not badgered in some way with pressures that they must give in order to receive, as though giving is how blessings get back to them, when all along, God is the giver of His blessings — FREELY, as we shall come to understand within these studies. When we first learn to receive, well then, we will genuinely have something blessed to give back, rather than applying the reverse efforts of trying to give enough simply to get, which is the opposite of what Jesus taught us “freely ye have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:6).

The Heart of Giving and Receiving

Giving is a spiritual principle established by God in the beginning. It is a powerful principle certifying that when we give we also receive – more. Yet some have distorted and abused this divine principle of giving so that the emphasis on our receiving abundance from God has fallen by the wayside. In this study, I want to explain some spiritual truths that will energize for you the spiritual principles of “giving and receiving,” and bring the true light of God’s healing Word to the forefront with logical reasoning that will augment the dynamic teaching of the Scriptures. If you have ever been hassled, dogged, hit up, ridiculed, or begged for money, then this study will truly thrill your heart.

A Christian friend came to me a few years ago with tears in his eyes and when I asked about his sadness, he handed me a note that his minister gave him. It said that he should not be blaming God for car accidents that he would inevitably have because his minister noticed that he had not been giving much money to his Church lately. My friend was terrified to drive his car, so to avoid an accident he had his daughter drive him to work and back, and everywhere else he needed to go because he feared that God was out to get him. That horrible note broke his heart, and for a time he was so afraid that he quit praying to God. (That was after going to Church and praying for nearly sixty years.) I explained to him some of what we will be looking at, and I showed him from the Scriptures why the note he received was untrue.

The Scriptures boldly proclaim that our God is a loving Father, but the Scriptures do not teach that God is the “godfather” extorting protection money from His children. God is love, and light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. Unless Scripture is manipulated, we also will not find verses propounding that God will protect us from the Devil if we give money because that is still paying for protection. It is a devilish idea to assume these unscriptural notions come from God and His healing Word. In all of the Church Epistles written directly to us, God never demands

giving money or paying God or His ministers for protection (and besides God does not need money, nor can He spend it). Giving, whether it is your time, your talents, your resources, or your money is the biblical ministry of true receiving. The Bible says that God loves a cheerful giver. Nevertheless, how in the world can anybody really give cheerfully if he or she lives in fear of God's retribution? One could not!

II Corinthians 9:6-8:

-6: But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

-7: Every man according as he purposeth in his {own} heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

-8: And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work:

These verses relate to the attitude of the mind and heart, because if we do not understand the true spiritual heart behind giving we might give either sparingly or grudgingly and receive only sporadically. However, when we truly understand God's Word and we know that we have received blessings from God (Ephesians 1:3), then with purpose of heart we may, out of those blessings, give back bountifully and receive bountifully as well. This will cause us to experience the delight in having "all grace" abounding in our lives to the point that we will receive all sufficiency in all areas of our lives. This further causes us to abound in "every good work" that we may cheerfully pursue.

I Will Rebuke the Devourer

Malachi 3:11a:

And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground. . .

This verse and section of Malachi 3:6-12 has been used today by some to coerce tithing (ten percent) from people. Then after they read (manipulate) the verses they say that when you give, God will rebuke the Devil for your sakes (implying that if you do not tithe, then God will not rebuke the Devil). However, this is untrue – I will tell you why.

First, if giving meant rebuking then we would be paying for protection. Secondly, the word devourer means a devourer, not the Devil. The Amplified Bible defines the devourer as “insects and plagues”; it is what consumes, it is what eats away and decays. The devourer went into the fields, not upon the people.

The entire section in Malachi is specifically addressed to the children of Israel who were not taking care of their priest from the tribe of Levi. Their Law required them to tithe a tenth of their substance, and because they were not fulfilling the Law, God’s blessing upon their crops was lacking, but not His continued care and concern for their souls. Nevertheless, today in God’s grace we are never commanded to tithe a tenth of our incomes. In fact, the word tithe is never once mentioned in the Church Epistles that are directly written to us today.

If tithing were a Law for us, then God’s divine grace would be totally worthless (Galatians 5:4)! Whenever anyone implies that the devourer is the Devil, then that gives the Devil power and authority over our finances and lives, and that power the Scriptures currently denies to him. This does not negate that God indeed wants His children to give, and when we remove the Law, restraints, and misnomers about true godly giving, then giving from the heart can take on heavenly insight into our genuinely

receiving from God. Today in grace, we may, if we so chose to, give out of an inner spiritual love and devotion for our heavenly Father, give without restraint, compulsion, or fear, and this is acceptable to God.

God gave the children of Israel (in Old Testament times) their land when they came into the Promised Land as prophesied to them from the time of Abraham. Their tithing, though still a Law, showed their appreciation for God's blessings upon the land, and their tithes were to be given to the priests to maintain the temple and sustain the priest who ministered daily on their behalf.

Galatians 4:7:

Wherefore thou art no more a servant {under the Law like all of Israel was}, but a son {son is an all-inclusive noun for men and women}; and if a son {of God}, then {you are} an heir of God through Christ.

We, being genuine heirs of our God as His children, do not pay tithes, but rather we reciprocate honor and respect back to our heavenly Father. In Malachi 3:10 God said that He would pour out "a blessing" when the children of Israel tithed; however, Ephesians 1:3 says ". . . who {God} hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ."

We are currently blessed with how many blessings? All! How can we reconcile this difference between "a blessing" that the Old Testament believers were to receive, and us in God's household who have already received all spiritual blessings? It is simple. The Old Testament Scriptures regarding tithing were written for that particular time of the Old Testament, while the New Testament Scriptures (Epistles) are written for us in this grace administration. We have already received "all spiritual blessings" and our giving is to be proportionate to how we purpose in our hearts.

This allows us to freely give, not out of the Law but out of love.

God's Blessings

The greatest things in life are free. A man may sell his soul, but he cannot buy eternal life, peace, joy, true inner happiness, or love. These are all gifts of God! We can stand in total awe of these gifts, and thoroughly enjoy them, for they far surpass any monetary value; as Philippians 4:19 reads "my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The richest people on earth are those who have their needs supplied by God, day to day from the riches of His glory. Conversely, the people with large wallets may not be experiencing all the gifts and blessings of God in their lives. The Scripture in I Peter 1:8 informs us that we can "rejoice with joy unspeakable"; or joy beyond explanation, and this joy is an inner quality of life which is a spiritual manifestation of having God in Christ in our hearts while we are receiving and enjoying heavenly, God-given blessings.

II Corinthians 9:15:

Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Although we cannot fully explain our inner joy and the unspeakable gift of God, we certainly can enjoy realizing unmistakable revelations of having these divine gifts. As we begin experiencing the true treasures of life, recognizing from whence they come and Who gave them, then we will be totally unfettered to give freely from our heartfelt inner joy and thankfulness to God.

God desires that we receive and grasp the realities of our heavenly blessings and treasures which He alone freely gives to men and women who are meek and humble to His healing Word and will.

Acts 20:35b-36:

-35b: . . . {The Apostle Paul said that we are} to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

-36: And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

The word *blessed* means to be happy or to have happiness. These words that Jesus spoke were remembered and talked about by the believers and are not recorded in the Gospels, only here in the Book of Acts. The commentaries have always assumed that verse 36 was narrated back to the Apostle Paul who knelt down and prayed with those he was teaching. However, from the Greek Text,s verse 36 is a continuation of the words and action of Jesus: "it is more blessed to give than to receive, and when he {Jesus} had thus spoken, he {Jesus} kneeled down, and prayed with them all." This completes and fulfills the true understanding that Jesus was explaining in the Gospels, and because of the prayer they were experiencing happiness, and thus, they were expressing inner thankfulness to God. We can find nothing to suggest that the Apostle Paul did not also follow through with Christ's example and prayed with those whom he was teaching in Acts 20. "More blessed {happy} to give than to receive" does NOT negate the blessings of receiving, rather it is in reference to the more we give thanks to God, the more we then can receive to then have to give again out from what He gives.

God always wants His children to be happy, and as we learn to discover His true blessings upon our lives, then happiness follows, and the first, the very first thing that we do is to return thankfulness to God. ". . . a threefold cord is not quickly broken (Ecclesiastes 4:12b)." The threefold cord as it concerns "giving and receiving" is that God first gives divine spiritual treasures to man, secondly man in return gives thankfulness, honor, and respect back to God, then thirdly God again returns to man the spiritual blessings in physical abundant realities. This is a threefold cord that God will honor and continue to reward. This is what Jesus and Paul were explaining by teaching and by example. "Every man *shall give* as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee" (Deuteronomy 16:17). See how the blessing came first before any giving is even mentioned? This gives us a spiritual mindset on giving based on receiving blessings.

Psalms 146:5:

Happy {there is that word again} *is he* that *hath* the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God:

Let us look at Jacob in Genesis who sought God for his help and who spoke to Him in a way that at first blush would seem to be a little rude if not downright blasphemous (in the way some think, believe, and teach on tithing these days). Nevertheless, what he said to God was in fact following the theme of what we just read about from Acts and Deuteronomy, above, and the theme of God's Blessings that we are looking at in this study and the reason for Jacob's happiness that could be ours as well. "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If {IF, IF} God will be with me, and {IF You} will keep me in this way that I go, and {IF You} will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then {THEN} shall the LORD be my God" (Genesis 28:20-21). Wow, really? Yes – really, IF God would, then he would – and God did, and he did.

Jacob went to the source of abundance, "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof" (Psalms 24:1); he went directly to the LORD God Who "giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:18) and said IF YOU SUPPLY – THEN I WILL GIVE. "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:22); note, the only thing given here is a prayer, and a prayer is simply believing with thankfulness to God. It is from this request and understanding that Jacob not only lived an abundant life, but he concluded "of all that thou {God} shalt give me {of all things, whatsoever he asked in prayer and received} I will surely give the tenth {of what You give me} unto thee" (Genesis 28:22). See the **Bonus Chapter**, below, titled: **Prayer with Thankfulness**, which sheds light on this very subject of receiving from God in light of verses such as Matthew 21:22.

Psalms 46:7:

The LORD of hosts *is* with us; the God of Jacob *is* our refuge.
Selah.

Jacob would contribute only after his receiving, and his life was indeed blessed; he was praying and being honest with God and being true to

himself for the prospects of his inner happiness. Since the *God of Jacob* is still our *refuge* in today's world, should we not want to learn from him and follow his example and belief system? Jacob indeed was a principled man and wanted to know why it is more blessed to give than it is to receive, and as he received from God first, he then realized it is also blessed to give in return from out the blessings he received (because they were not his in the first place making his giving much easier; it is like playing with house money). This is the reasoning behind cheerful giving (II Corinthians 9:6-9) because one will manifest happiness! "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help."

It is not wrong to think as Jacob did – it is right to think as Jacob thought, it is not wrong to behave as Jacob did – it is right to behave as Jacob behaved, it is not wrong to believe as Jacob did – it is right to believe as Jacob believed, it is not wrong to say what Jacob did – it is right to say to God what Jacob said; in fact, God said of him "Jacob have I loved" (Romans 9:13). Furthermore, God did not curse Jacob for saying what he said, but blessed him. "Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?" (Ezekiel 18:25). In other words, God's way is right and Jacob proved to himself that God's way was very equal and abundantly pleasing to him. Man's way is to give first, God's way is to receive first; man's way is unequal, God's way is equal. Man's way is unbalanced and although God's way may at first seem unbalanced and narrow-minded in man's mind, it is actually perfectly balanced, as Jesus stated "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14). I ask, have we found God's way, His equal way? God's way turns the tables, so-to-speak, and rights one's course into true godliness, "godliness is profitable {**PROFITABLE**} unto all things" (I Timothy 4:6).

Truth (which makes one free,— John 8:32) purposely inspires the joy of giving from within the heart; error drains the joy of giving from the heart to become an uninspired, compulsive and legalistic function.

"For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6). *Sacrifice* and *burnt offerings* were based on giving something in the prospect of getting something (i.e., a quid pro

quo/tradeoff), while God desires *mercy* and *knowledge* which assures more. In fact, Jesus said about Hosea 6:6 “go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice” (Matthew 9:13). *Mercy* means the withholding back of that which is deserved, like a punishment and condemnation for a past sin, while God gives something so much grander, such as total forgiveness, love, mercy, peace, grace, and an abundant life; “no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Psalms 84:11). These kinds of treasures we can come to know and experience and receive when we understand that it is He Who gives us not simply a tradeoff but more abundance because He “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20). A nutshell version: When your giving is a sacrifice, it is not what our God of love intended. “Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, *or* with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression, the fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, **but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God**” (Micah 6:7-8).

Who would not want to walk humbly with God and know for certain that He is blessing them personally simply because He loves them? “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn {called} thee” (Jeremiah 31:3). Who would not want to give from their personal God-given blessings with which He has blessed them? We receive blessings in order that we may enjoy an abundant life that comes directly from the ebb and flow of receiving from God and therein we are enabled to enjoy a heart of giving without having shortage or making sacrifices. From a biblical perspective, Jacob’s spiritual joy and physical happiness opened up to him the flowing simplicity of godly abundance, and is the foundation of discovering why it is more blessed to give than to receive because it is the key to more of what is free from God.

It certainly is easier to give out of what God blesses one with than to give out of what you have to start with and just may need to live on in the first place. When God becomes your God as He became Jacob’s, then the true perspective of life with God in your life will become living and real and life becomes a joy worth singing about. It is more blessed to give and receive Jacob’s way, which just happens to be God’s way! Yes, this is why it is

thankworthy to pray with happiness and thank our heavenly Father. Jesus and Paul never taught “with effort you have worked, so freely give,” rather they taught God’s children, “freely ye have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8).

Psalms 81:1:

Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.

When we, the children of God, live our lives in this perfect harmony of receiving and giving, then the greatest treasures in life become ever more available and real to us. Then God’s Blessings continue coming in and we can experience genuine spiritual happiness living our lives in all the joy God originally intended.

Psalms 35:27-28:

-27: Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.

-28: And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness *and* of thy praise all the day long.

The Seeds of Authentic Abundance

The phrase *seed money*, as far as giving and tithing to a church or TV ministry is concerned, is wrong to the core. Using this phrase instills a counterfeit concept because the giving should come from the product produced and one should not be giving away their seeds.

Deuteronomy 16:17 teaches us that, "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee."

The blessings must come first!

Even the Children of Israel never gave their seeds away, but a handful of their firstfruits from the produce of their seeds, freely offered in thankfulness for God's abundant blessings upon them and their land!

Not until the seeds produce are believers to give from the abundance!

The heart of the matter is that we may give when we are inspired by God, but His Word does not say to do so out of the household funds, like your food or lights or gas or the children's lunch money; that is just plain irresponsible. God gave you your money first and foremost for your needs.

God supplies your needs as much He does theirs, and if He is not supplying theirs, then they are doing something wrong. You are not simply a means of revenue or a cash flow pawn for the luxury of leather-tongued orators whose so-called ministry is to guilt you into giving!

So, do we believe God's Word? Believing God's Word is planting the seeds of authentic abundance which in turn open up the floodgates to His abundant healing Word along with our absolutely enjoying His fullness.

Question: Would you happen to know where that verse is where Jesus says, *C'mon Man, Where's That Seed Money? Cause I'm Only Gonna Work in the Shade Where Your Seed Money Grows*. Oh, it's not in the KJV Bible you say? Well then, Lesson Learned!

Also, where are the verses where Jesus was taking from his followers? Because I can only find verses where he gives of himself and his very life so that his people could receive — first!

Are we not His people, or do we belong only if we have *seed money* for gleaners who usurp his good name for lucre?

“What Is Not in the Scriptures Is so Often Just as Important as What Is in the Scriptures!” ~LMJ~

Giving Is a Partnership

Giving is a partnership between the giver and his or her heavenly Father. The Christian believer is not instructed in the Scriptures to give until it hurts. Giving is not a form of penance, nor can the act of giving relieve a person from sin and condemnation because God does that freely (Romans 8:1, I John 1:9). Giving according to the Scriptures is always meant to be a profitable blessing and adventure to the giver first. Giving with the correct heart of understanding the Scriptures will indeed invoke God's true spiritual blessings and power upon our lives.

Philippians 4:17:

Not because I {the Apostle Paul} desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

The subject here in Philippians 4:13-20 is about giving and receiving, and Paul is expressing the true spiritual perspective in the absolute will of God for godly giving, and that is that fruit may abound back into your accounts. The first biblical truth about giving is that fruit may return and abound in your life. This verse does not emphasize the fact that Paul could also receive because he (and God) wanted the believers to understand thoroughly that the blessing for giving always returns to the giver. The word *fruit* represents the result, the product of their labor of love.

Matthew 7:11:

If ye then, being evil {having the potential to be evil; this verse does not mean that people are evil}, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Although people have the potential of being evil, we normally give good gifts to our children; however, God is never evil (Jeremiah 29:11; James 1:13), and He will only give good things to us. Giving comes and is offered in many forms, from sharing our long suits with others, our resources, our time, and from our finances. We are never instructed or commanded in the Church Epistles simply to give mindlessly despite our own feelings and apprehensions about giving. Giving needs to be freely offered from the heart and in the love of God in order to receive the full spiritual benefit.

When we share without restraints, demands, or coercion, then the spiritual blessings will return many-fold. Paul said, “Not because I desire a gift” because he taught the Scriptures and gave the healing Word of God to people freely. However, he did his best to show people how to have fruit abounding back into their accounts.

I Corinthians 9:18:

What is my reward then {for preaching the Gospel}? *Verily* that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

An abuse of Paul’s *power in the gospel* would be prevalent if he was to mandate tithing or giving as a requirement to receiving the liberating Word of God, and Paul would have none of it, which he calls being *greedy* of “filthy lucre” (I Timothy 3:3, 8, Titus 1:7, and 11). “And his {Samuel’s} sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre” (I Samuel 8:3, and see Deuteronomy 16:16). The *love of money* can take one down the wrong road, “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (I Timothy 6:10). There is nothing wrong with money in and of itself, as it is the medium of exchange, but craving it to the point of living for it could cause one to “turn aside after lucre” and subsequently “error from the faith,” which has been the cause of so “many sorrows.”

You see, Paul knew that his reward came from God Himself because he gave the Gospel; that was his ministry, and he made the Word of God available to people freely. (Compare how Paul gave the “Gospel of Christ without charge,” to others who gave the Gospel for the sole purpose of getting money, and see the result in Micah 3:11-12.)

Peter taught that ministers are to, “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre {c.i.f., i.e., cash in fist}, but of a ready mind {to give of oneself}” (I Peter 5:2). You see, being a minister is not a lucrative profession for the sake of money but a calling to serve for the love of God, and the Apostles knew this in their hearts. And yes, they did receive gifts and support from time to time and they used them to further the ministry as God showed them how and where to *Feed the flock of God*, and that is perfectly

acceptable, just as it is perfectly acceptable for you and I to give as we are inspired. No nonprofit origination could run for too long without financial support from those who receive, serve, and give of their time and resources, and there are needs that need to be fulfilled.

Most ministers in the various churches and fellowship groups are not after your money, rather because they have answered the call to serve they explain the heart of giving and receiving, and make it available to you to give. I do believe they desire and pray that the blessings for giving will return back to your account. So please do not think I am condemning anyone for passing the hat; giving in any form for the Christian believer should be done out of one's personal love for God — period!

As we look to God for His blessings and support, He can provide; in fact, He promises to do so: "my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). However, if a minister is living in a camper behind a church, or in a parishioner's garage or damp basement, and he is reduced to collecting food-stamps to make ends meet, then something is wrong either with his teachings or his congregation, and the heart of giving and receiving is missing, and the unfortunate result is that the more abundant life cannot be enjoyed. Did you know that Jesus came for this very reason? "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly" (John 10:10b).

People themselves are solely responsible for deciding whether they want to give, not only in monetary ways but also in whatever capacity they feel comfortable, they just need the truth taught to inspire them to godly endeavors. All Christian giving is between the giver and his or her heavenly Father and no one else. Paul's responsibility was simply to give the Gospel freely to others and God would continue to care for him, and the same is true with anyone who believes God's Word. The more understanding we receive from the Scriptures, the greater our receiving from God becomes. When our lives are right with God, all else fits into place and a godly order to life emerges without compulsion because Giving is a Partnership with God that produces a true spiritual balance to life.

Living in the Care of God

Psalms 34:10:

The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good *thing*.

Even the kings of the jungle lack the power to provide the complete supply for their young and so they have lack and suffer hunger. This shows that it really does not matter how powerful or rich a person is, without seeking God first he will have lack, not only in physical things but even more so, mentally and spiritually. We who “seek the LORD shall not want any good *thing*,” means that our God can meet our needs in life, and that living without want is available because our God is the supplier and our true sufficiency.

Matthew 6:33:

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things {food, clothing, and the things that give men and woman mental, physical, and spiritual abundance in life} shall be added unto you.

Philippians 4:19:

But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Living in the care of God is contingent upon believing the words in the Word of God. When God’s Word expresses that God will “supply all your need,” then that is exactly what He means.

Psalms 37:23-25:

-23: The steps of a *good* man are ordered {ordained} by the LORD: and he {God} delighteth in his {your} way. {The Lord God is in total delight when anyone walks in the steps that God ordains.}

-24: Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth *him with* his hand.

-25: I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed {his children} begging bread.

Who is a “good man” according to the Scriptures? A “good man” is a man or a woman who does one thing and one thing only; and that is they think about the Word of God (to the end that they believe His Word). They think the Word of themselves, and they believe the words God promises when He promises that He will not forsake them.

Hebrews 13:5 (The Amplified Bible):*

Let your character *or* moral disposition be free from love of money [including greed, avarice, lust, and craving for earthly possessions] and be satisfied with your present [circumstances and with what you have]; for He [God] Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you *nor* give you up *nor* leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless *nor* forsake *nor* let [you] down (relax My hold on you)! [Assuredly not!]

Life is such that people, no matter the strength of their faith, may from time to time fall, yet God promises that He will, with His hand (by His power and strength) lift them back up again.

Matthew 12:35 reads, “A good man out of the good treasure {i.e., the Scriptures} of the heart {that we have purposely placed there} bringeth forth good things,” and in Psalms 119:11 we also read, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” We Christians, by believing in God’s Word will bring forth good things into our lives, families, and surroundings. This is the promise of God to His own children.

Psalms 84:11:

For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good *thing* will he withhold from them that walk

uprightly. {Walking uprightly is walking with the Word in our hearts, and these are steps that God ordains.}

The challenge in life is to elevate our believing to the standard of God's Word, for it is the truths and standards of His Word that allow us to genuinely and honestly live in the care of God.

“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (I Peter 5:7).

Giving in Love

I wanted to share a little with you about giving with the heart of love, whether it is to your local Church (where your spiritual needs are being met), or if you are so inspired to give to a religious organization or a worthy cause. Giving for the Christian believer is first and foremost meant to build a special union between you (as an individual) and God (as your sufficiency), and is the beginning of a love-based relationship built on trust with the Creator.

God always looks at your heart (I Samuel 16:17), and He is thrilled when the heart of giving is inspired from an overall understanding of His healing Word and will.

Giving is a spiritual principle that enables the giver to receive. Many non-Christian people have used the universal principle of giving and receiving, and because the power in giving always works when applied – anyone can receive. However, only the Christian believer partners with the creator of the principle. Giving and receiving are part of the natural flow of life, and God as our Father can inspire us in love to further benefit our lives and the lives of those our gifts touch.

Today in God's grace, each believer is encouraged to give out of having a spiritual mindset and inner heart's desire to do so, but again I would like to remind you that giving is not a commandment but a free will offering. God will always love you regardless of whether or not you give, because God's love to you is completely unconditional.

As giving is always between you and God, receiving is always between God and you, for He gives you free access to the throne of His grace to help you in time of need (Hebrews 4:16, Romans 5:1-2).

II Corinthians 8:12:

For if there be first a willing mind {in regard to giving} *it is* accepted {by God} according to that a man hath, *and* not according to that he hath not.

Over time, the following phrases heard – either spoken out loud or to ourselves, can strip us of the heart’s inner joys in giving with a willing mind: “you have to give” or “you must give” or “you need to give.” We were bought with a price; all debts are completely paid for by the life and blood of Jesus himself (I Corinthians 6:20; 7:23). We now eternally belong to God because of the completed work of our Savior that was initially *for us*, and now that we are saved the completed work of Christ is eternally *in us* (Colossians 1:27).

Romans 13:8:

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled {all} the law.

According to the Bible, we owe only one thing and that is love. God’s Word encourages us to love one another. We currently belong to God and have His love in our hearts (Romans 5:5).

Giving God’s love is the greatest way to return our thanks to God in thankfulness for our eternal life, and in thankfulness for all that our Savior did for us. Giving can become a tremendous blessing that enhances our spiritual quality of life, for giving gives to men and women a supernatural inlet and an outlet of tangible proofs that God is truly our sufficiency (II Corinthians 3:5).

Within the framework of love, God Himself can show us how to give of our time, and of our resources and talents, and give out of our abundance, and this indeed will give the greatest effect in places of need.

Giving from the heart of God’s love will always be a blessing, and because freewill giving is within the spiritual boundaries of God’s love, the rewards will be freely returned in super abundance, and we will know that we are truly blessed of our Creator.

Receiving in Love

Giving can certainly give us an incredibly good feeling. However, when it comes to receiving from God or others, the human mind sometimes seems to refute these blessings either because of sin consciousness or because of a feeling of unworthiness. Yet God wants to bless our lives and He wants to give us the desires of our heart. God has already made us worthy to receive His blessings.

Romans 12:1:

I BESEECH you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.*

Our God with His divine mercies is calling, beseeching us to present ourselves to Him having been already made holy and acceptable to Him, and this is reasonable for us to believe for, because it is the truth and the will of God. God wants all the blessings that He can possibly bestow upon us to be graciously accepted by us. It is truly up to the individual how much he will actually receive from God by believing His Word and then receiving all His spiritual blessings.

Acts 26:18:

To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto {the power of} God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me {Jesus Christ's own believing faith by which He sanctified us}.

This was the ministry of the Apostle Paul, to open our eyes so that we may see; to help people turn from the darkness of this world to the light of God's healing Word. God called him to deliver God's children from the power of Satan to the power of God, with this purpose – that they may receive from God genuine forgiveness, and that they may receive the rightful inheritance as the children of God.

This ministry of Paul parallels the same ministry that Jesus Christ had (see Luke 4:16-21) when he was physically here blessing people's lives and giving them the spiritual joys that can only come from the Creator of life.

Receiving God's gifts can become a natural response as we learn to receive with the love of God in our hearts that we totally deserve to receive and enjoy.

Do you remember the story of the ten lepers who wanted Jesus to have mercy on them and heal them of their leprosy? Well Jesus indeed healed them, but only one returned to give him thanks; let us look at this in Luke.

Luke 17:17-19:

-17: And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where *are* the nine?

-18: There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

-19: And he {Jesus} said unto him {the one who returned}, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

Ten were healed, ten received blessings from God through Jesus Christ, yet only one was truly thankful for the mercies of God – the same mercies that God beseeches us to accept. The other nine followed the nature of most people to refute the graces of God. But that man who returned to give glory to God, Jesus further said that his faith (which was his believing action in accepting the gift of healing to the point that he returned to give thanks), is what gave him (not the other nine) wholeness.

To thankfully accept the gifts of God in love gives us true spiritual wholeness, and wholeness gives to the children of God real and defined purpose and direction in life.

The Fullness of God

In this study, we will be looking at some of the spiritual principles from God's healing Word regarding giving and receiving from God's point of view. We will endeavor to look at the Scriptures with a heart's desire to receive all that God would have us enjoy.

In Ephesians 3:19 we read: "that ye might {may} be filled with all the fullness of God." This verse will be our standard and guide as we plant and then water the seeds of abundance, with a further view of reaping the harvest of *all the fullness of God*.

The first principle that I wanted to share is that we must believe that God was telling the truth when He said that we can be filled with all His fullness, and that we can ask, seek, and knock and the result will be that the actual spiritual door to God's abundance will open to us.

We cannot wonder, daydream, or simply hope that perhaps God's Word is telling us the truth regarding His fullness that we have, but rather we must know that God's Word means what it says and that God does not make promises that He cannot fulfill.

So, do we believe God's Word? Believing God's Word is planting the seeds of abundance, which in turn opens up the floodgates to His abundant healing Word along with our absolutely enjoying His fullness.

Matthew 7:7-8:

-7: Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

-8: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

The Apostle Paul was considered in the New Testament as the believers' father in the Word of God (I Thessalonians 2:11) in the sense that he raised the believers up to the standard of the Epistles. In II Corinthians 12:14 Paul wrote: "I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." Paul was not after "yours" meaning their finances and the things they owned, but rather he was concerned about their financial well-being as his spiritual children.

The highest calling of Christian leadership today is to desire "above all things that thou {God's children} mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (III John 1:2) because it is God's calling.

The New Testament's emphasis relating to giving and receiving is always on the receiving first; having our needs supplied by God is foremost (Philippians 4:19) before we are ever encouraged to give anything. We want to learn how to receive the abundance of God's promises for our lives, our families, and our surroundings, rather than simply learning to give out of fear or to give reluctantly.

In the Book of Malachi, we have a very popular section of Scripture that is used today to coerce and even scare tithing of ten percent from Christians, and even say or imply that, "Without giving ten percent of your weekly income you will be robbing God and could bring a cursing into your life."

Then they quote Malachi chapter three:

Malachi 3:8-9:

-8: Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

-9: Ye *are* cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, *even* this whole nation {the nation of Israel}.

The Christian Church is never referred to in the Scriptures as a Nation, but rather they are referred to as being members of the family of God. What an awful presentation to imply that we, the children of God, are robbers,

saying in essence: “you are thieves and you are stealing from the greatest power in the universe (Acts 17:24–25)!”

Please, let us notice to whom the Book of Malachi is specifically addressed, “THE burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi” (Malachi 1:1). Malachi was the Prophet who delivered the Word of the Lord, and the entire Book of Malachi is addressed “to Israel,” but not to the Church of grace, not to Christians (what is specifically addressed to us are the New Testament Epistles), and certainly the Book of Malachi is not addressed to you and me as a doctrinal contract, but was “written for our learning” (Romans 15:4).

The ten percent mindset that so many Christians are bombarded with, along with the supposed “curse” for not giving, gives us the incorrect information, for it was the Nation of Israel and their Priests who were cheating God’s laws in the Old Testament, which, when obeyed, protected Israel as a Nation and their promised land.

Today, in grace because of the completed work of our Redeemer, our promised homeland is in heaven itself and there is no way that we could spoil that place or rob from it, for it is completely perfect. Heaven is our eternal destiny to ever be with the Lord.

Today, while we wait for our “gathering together,” we may begin discovering from the Scriptures and enjoying the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:19 (The Amplified Bible): *

[That you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]; that you may be filled [through all your being] unto all the fullness of God [may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself!]

Any and all giving that is offered today in grace is called, a freewill offering. Never is giving considered mandatory by God, but offered from our abundance as we feel inspired to offer. Giving offered this way is God’s

true way of blessing others, our churches, and our communities, as His blessings of our love offerings return back to us.

II Corinthians 9:7-8:

-7: Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

-8: And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work:

We Were Bought With a Price

Jesus Christ gave one hundred percent for you and me; he gave his all in all. He never gave his life for ten percent of our money, but much rather he gave everything for us so that we could freely walk with God. We were not redeemed with tithes, but with all of the precious blood of the Redeemer (I Peter 1:18-19). We were redeemed with every fragment of Jesus' being. He paid the ultimate price for humanity's salvation so that we may "freely" walk with God and with our Savior and enjoy the more abundant life (John 10:10)!

If an athlete would only give ten percent of their abilities or talents they would be out on the street; they give one hundred percent. God does not require ten percent of what you own or earn, He wants all of you (Romans 12:1-2) in the sense that you already belong to Him because of the work of Christ, and this God desires that we know.

I Corinthians 6:19-20:

-19: What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost {the holy spirit} *which is* in you, which we have of God, and ye are not your own?

-20: For ye are bought with a price: therefore {give, give, and give until it hurts, no – but rather} glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

All we own is already God's: "THE earth *is* the LORD'S, and the fullness thereof" (Psalms 24:1ff), and all Christian people are His children (whether or not we recognize this and acknowledge Him). The very best that we can return to God today is glory, praise, and honor, and commit our ways unto God with thankfulness that He indeed is our heavenly Father. When we get to the place in our own minds that we believe all we have is God's in the first place (after all He did create everything), then through our believing, God will become our true sufficiency in life (at one hundred percent).

When people give ten percent of their incomes and an hour or so of their time to God each week, then they inevitably will end up ninety percent short, and receive only sporadically, rather than when we acknowledge God as our true sufficiency with all that He has given to us.

First and foremost, what God has given to us is meant to sustain us! Then as we become genuinely thankful for whatever abundance we have, even more of God's abundance will come our way. Having a heart of thankfulness and gratitude for knowing God, recognizing that we will live with Him throughout eternity can cause us to become cheerful givers who are inspired by God's divine love (II Corinthians 9:7).

Galatians 6:9:

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season {at the appropriate time} we shall reap, if we faint not.

This verse is a spiritual principle and promise from God that we will reap and that we can receive from Him for standing faithful to Him "in well doing." For as believers "commit the keeping of their souls {their lives} *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (I Peter 4:19), we will discover that God our Creator is indeed our sufficiency, and our every reason to remain faithful to Him day by day.

Proverbs 16:3 says, "Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established," even if our thoughts are, "I wonder if God is real, and if He does hear my prayers." God can establish even these to you personally and prove to you that He will never leave or forsake you. Psalms 37:4-5 states: "Delight thyself also in the LORD, and he shall give the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring *it* {the desires of your heart} to pass."

The more we commit ourselves into the care of God, the greater the blessings become manifested in our lives. In II Corinthians 8:5 it says of the believers that they: "first gave their own selves to the Lord." This is when (and how) believers truly begin receiving abundance from our Creator.

Yes, it does take time for people to put their trust and believing in God Whom they have never seen, yet Jesus encourages, “blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* have believed” (John 20:29). The more we understand from God’s healing Word, the easier it becomes to allow God and His blessings into our lives. “Whom {Jesus} having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (I Peter 1:8).

When we learn to give God our first thoughts in the day, and thank Him in Christ’s name for the day which He has made for us, then we will be experiencing joy that is truly beyond words.

God's Garden

When I recall first becoming a Christian at age twenty, one huge concern of mine was about making any kind of commitment to God because ever since I was a child I heard and learned that Christians must suffer their way up to heaven. I was told that Christians could not have any fun in life, and I really did not want any part of that kind of life. But when I finally came to the Word of God, I began realizing that walking with God was fun, and that Jesus Christ suffered so that I did not need to, as I had feared.

There is nothing equal on earth in comparison to what we currently can receive from God. I used to think that the very best time to get saved was after I enjoyed life (like on my deathbed). Yet God's wonderful healing Word has made my life such a pleasurable joy that the old way I used to think and behave is almost like looking back on an elusive nightmare, for there is no comparison on this earth to enjoying life with God and personally knowing Jesus Christ, my Savior.

Over time, committing my life to God became easier as His Word began to lift me up from within, and it has been a wonderful experience for me to also see how God works the same miracle in the hearts of other believers.

Romans 12:1-2:

-1: I BESEECH you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

-2: And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

In this study, I wanted to highlight the phrase "present your bodies a living sacrifice." This implies that God desires us to commit ourselves (presenting

the whole person - wholly unto Him); for in doing so we will begin proving to our inner conscious minds that the will of God is so “good,” and completely “acceptable,” and even “perfect!”

When we begin committing our lives to God (our bodies, i.e., our very souls) we can then begin proving to ourselves that life with Him is truly spectacular and always rewarding. This is “Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord” (Ephesians 5:10).

To name just a few things that are acceptable that can be proven are: His love that we have within, which we may daily utilize; that we have joy overflowing, which we may bask in; that we have God in Christ in us, which is certainly much greater than walking alone without God in this world. This is why the greatest giving that man could ever give is to commit oneself to God Who is the Father of Lights. Then beyond this, the receiving from our heavenly Father truly flourishes in one’s spiritual growth, and the reason why may just blow your mind (so-to-speak).

I Corinthians 3:9 (The Amplified Bible): **

For we are fellow workman (joint promoters, laborers together) with *and* for God; *you* are God’s garden *and* vineyard *and* field under {God’s} cultivation, [you are] God’s building.

Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of God and they were to cultivate the Garden themselves (Genesis 2:15) while they lived in complete serenity with God in His divine grace. Yet as we know, they fell from grace with the entrance of sin while Paradise, the Garden of God, ceased to exist for man. However today, because of the redemption we received by the completed work of Christ, we can now walk again with God in His divine grace equal to that of Adam and Eve’s original fellowship and union with God. We are now laborers together with God in His cultivated home in fleshy tables of the human heart (II Corinthians 3:3, 4:7).

We are a new spiritual Garden of God’s making and design, wherein God provides the cultivating, nurturing, and growth of our spiritual lives, and in our hearts is where we may freely commit our very souls to Him.

In God's Garden, we are the sweet fragrance of Christ to Him (Ephesians 5:1-2). It is interesting to note that the word for "grow" in Matthew 6:28 for the growth life of lilies is the Greek word *auxano* and means to grow from within without compulsion, in the best conditions, having the best light for photosynthesis to promulgate the growth of life from within. This word is also used for the growth of the temple of God whom we are (Ephesians 2:21-22), for we are continuously growing in and with God's cultivation, immersed in the light of His love (Ephesians 4:16).

Today we walk with the Father in the Garden of His delight wherein He is our sufficiency as He continues to deliver and honor us. "He {you and I} shall call upon me {God}, and I will answer him: I *will be* with him in {or through} trouble; I will deliver him {from trouble}, and {I God will} honour him" (Psalms 91:15). WOW - God honors us! "For in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28); and this is why we are "called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified {by believers}" (Isaiah 61:3).

We today are God's spiritual Garden, for we are His habitation (Ephesians 2:22), living in and enjoying our heavenly Father's own cultivating. He gently pulls out the weeds of doubts, worries, and fears, and increases our confidence, trust, and believing faith to commit ourselves to His healing Word. Jesus said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13). In other words, our heavenly Father can deliver us from whatever holds us captive, no matter how deeply seated (or seeded) it may be, for God is the cultivator of the human heart.

God warms our souls in His marvelous light as He gives us spiritual growth that blossoms out from our heart's commitment to Him.

Giving of oneself to God is the greatest act of giving because it is the greatest act of receiving God's lovingkindness within!

We may plant and water by placing the healing Word of God in our minds. Simultaneously our heavenly Father will cultivate and give us the increase (*auxano*), with which we need to grow in the spiritual Garden of God's care as we enjoy a continued perpetual springtime.

Casting Our Care Upon God

When I recall first hearing that I could cast all of my cares upon God, I first thought, “Why would I do such a thing as giving God something that I do not even want?” That is a good question, and the answer is wonderful!

Casting our cares upon God is the will of God, for in doing so He can then go to work delivering us from all our cares. To cast is to deliberately pass it on with mental thought, like as if we were casting a fishing line into a particular spot on a lake where the fish are swimming. Do you know what else? When we cast deliberately, we expect to bring in a catch. It is the same with God; He would love nothing more than to return unto us the true desires of our hearts, and one key about “how to receive from God” is by first casting our cares, then the receiving will come.

I Peter 5:7 (The Amplified Bible): **

Casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately *and* cares about you watchfully.

The first usage of “care” in I Peter 5:7 in the Greek Text is a different word than the second two words, “cares.” The first word “care” means that which is distracting the mind, such as our anxieties and our worries, while the word “cares” above (used twice) is beautifully illustrated in the Amplified Bible with the words *affectionately* and *watchfully*. In the Text, “cares,” means to be an object of care or interest, with forethought.

I Peter 5:7 from the Zondervan Interlinear Greek reads as follows, “All your care having cast upon him, because with him there is care about you.” God is genuinely concerned about you and me in His reasoning and thinking, for He gave (way before we were born) His only begotten Son for us, knowing that in the end we would be redeemed and we would belong to Him. “For I {God} know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the

LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jeremiah 29:11).

We, on our own merits, are oftentimes distracted in our minds with the cares of this world, while God is never distracted and ready to answer our prayers and deliver us from the cares of this world. Now that we are the children of God, His greatest desire is to care for us completely, yet a man or woman must believe and be fully persuaded that what God promises us through His Word, He is also willing and able to do for us (Romans 4:20–21).

Psalms 55:22 (The Amplified Bible): *

Cast your burden on the Lord [releasing the weight of it] and He will sustain you; He will never allow the [consistently] righteous to be moved (made to slip, fall, or fail).

Our loving heavenly Father is always able to deliver us; all we need to do is give over to Him whatever is a burden to us. Thankfully, God will never give them back to us, yet sometimes we may become impatient and take them back ourselves, and some people actually blame God for not working on their timetables.

Recall God’s promise to us that we shall reap if we faint not (Galatians 6:9). God will never allow the righteous (you and me) to be moved from our convictions when we give God the blessed opportunity to care for us.

II Corinthians 1:10:

Who {God} delivered {past tense} us from so great a death, and doth deliver {present tense}: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver *us* {future tense};

The great “death” is in reference to the end times, yet we have been completely delivered from any and all the future judgments (I Thessalonians 1:10), for we have been given eternal life (I John 5:11–12). **II Corinthians 1:10 is an awesome verse stating that we have already been delivered from something that has yet to happen!** God also delivers us in the present-tense here and now (Galatians 1:4).

We may also have complete trust in our God to deliver us from any and all impending troubles. Believers can become the recipients of all the blessings of God, and they truly will become ever more tangible for us the more we cast our cares upon God.

In I Peter 3:15 the Word says: “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts” and the word “sanctify” means to set aside, to make room. The more room we set aside in our hearts for God, the closer will be our relationship in the care of our faithful Creator.

Giving Our Hearts to God

In this study, we are going to be looking at one of most misunderstood sections recorded in the Gospels regarding a statement that Jesus made about a woman who gave all she had. But before we quote the passages and begin looking at what Jesus was teaching, I want to make the point that giving is a spiritual principle that will always return blessings back to the one who is the giver. God is the “possessor of heaven and earth” (Genesis 14:19, 22), and He honestly does not need financial support from His children to make His ends meet, but much more what He desires of us is our love and respect, prayer and faithfulness. There are spiritual and physical reasons for giving; giving proves to ourselves that God is real and caring for us by blessing us in multiple ways. When we know for certain that He has blessed us, then giving from a cheerful heart (which is offered in thankfulness) becomes a way of life that bountifully reaps. “He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (II Corinthians 9:6), and God’s desire is that His children reap bountifully.

In the Book of Acts, we have the story of the Apostle Paul who walked up on Mars’ Hill in Athens to preach the Word of God.

Acts 17:22-25:

-22: Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, *Ye* men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

-23: For as I passed by, and beheld {and I looked on all of} your devotions {Paul is referring to all their idols, deities, statues, and altars that the Athenians had set up along the walkway leading to the top of the hill}, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him {the unknown God} declare I unto you.

-24: God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

-25: Neither is worshipped with men's hands, **as though he needed any thing** {emphasis supplied}, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.

The altar with the inscription to the unknown god was set up by the Athenians because they were so into worshiping any and all the gods of the world that they had set up an extra altar just in case they may have forgotten anyone. If so, then they had that situation covered; thus, they hoped to not offend the peoples of the world who came to study and worship in their philosophically academic city, "For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing" (Acts 17:21). They were more into political correctness in Athens than we are these days. Paul was able to use the unknown god altar and theme to introduce to them the true *Lord of heaven and earth*, and the first thing he teaches them is that God does not dwell in manmade temples, but rather He dwells in the hearts of people who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior who said, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (I Corinthians 3:6). Indeed if a believer happens to be in a temple, then so is God, but He does not dwell in empty buildings without His people being present, "the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts 7:48). Could the Scriptures be more explicit? The Scriptures teach "for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (II Corinthians 6:16).

Please, do not get me wrong, places of worship are needed and inspiring to the hearts of believers who gather in His name; as well, those places are blessed by God, but this does not change the truth that WE are the actual "habitation of God!" Indeed one can find God anyplace and miss Him anywhere, although "in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). When the heart turns to Him — then He is discovered within "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (II Corinthians 3:3). His most sacred abode is in His beloved children, as we read in Ephesians, chapter 2.

Ephesians 2:19-22:

-19: Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

-20: And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*;

-21: In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

-22: In whom ye {YOU!} also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

As far as giving directly to God, Paul taught in Acts 17:25, above, that, “Neither is {God} worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.” There is nothing you can bring to the altar that emanates from the works of the flesh that God requires of you; NO, not your money or other gifts are required by God to prove your worth to Him because you have been already made worthy by the offering of Jesus — on your behalf, and his gift suffices for all — forever (Hebrews 10:12-14). Interesting to note that in the Old Testament, King David WAS a man after own God’s own heart (Acts 13:22), but today, in the New Testament, in grace, God IS a Spirit after OUR OWN HEART (John 4:23-24)! He has been trying to reach you from the beginning, and in truth, He called you from before the world began (Ephesians 1:4, II Thessalonians 2:13).

It is TRUTH that makes us free (John 8:32) rather than our finances and/or the amounts we give away in any capacity. Christians are not instructed in the Scriptures to be tithing simply for the sake of giving, or to give because they have been threatened with the supposed retribution of God or to hold to the false mindset of “give to get,” but much rather we “want to give” because we have received, then you have something to give. We can be inspired with the love of God to become cheerful givers who have placed our believing trust and hearts into the care of our heavenly Father.

Mark 12:41-44:

-41: And Jesus set over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

-42: And there came a certain poor {humble} widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

-43: And he {Jesus} called *unto him* his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor {humble} widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

-44: For all *they* did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, *even* all her living. {This is also recorded in the Gospel of Luke 21:1-4.}

The *treasury* reference above is not in relation to the tithe outlined in Old Testament Law, but rather, this *treasury* was for many reasons, some religious and some secular, for donations such as giving to community needs for relief. (In the Companion Bible, page 1414, the footnote on this verse reads, “**the treasury**. Situated in the woman’s court, occupying about 200 feet square, and surrounded by a colonnade. Inside, against the wall, were thirteen receptacles, called ‘trumpets’ (from their shape): nine being for legal dues, and four for voluntary contributions. All labeled for their special objects.”) For instance, one container may have been given to help support the homeless, another for widows and the fatherless, another for disaster or famine relief, another for public works, and so on. We still have these kinds of fundraising containers today, such as for The United Way, The Salvation Army, The Red Cross, the latest catastrophe, and so forth.

Yet, unscrupulously, the standard teaching about the verses above from Mark 12 has been interpreted that this poor little widow caught the Savior’s eye ONLY because she had given away all that she needed to live on, while the rest of the people were merely giving only out of their abundance, and were not really true believers because they were not making any real sacrifice for the Lord. Then, folks like these imply in sundry ways that the more poverty we endure on earth, well then, the greater and richer our eternities will be with heavenly rewards. Oh – baloney! Come on – really? This kind of preaching may instigate a real roof-raising experience at meeting – in temple – at worship, but it completely negates the true teaching of Jesus and of any common sense or decency.

Jesus saw all the people who were giving, not just the widow. Jesus simply observed that of all the donations he personally saw that day coming into the treasury came from people's abundance, except for that one "poor widow." Please note that Jesus never said that everyone else was wrong, nor did he say that those people who gave of their abundance were going to hell for giving only what they didn't need anyways, as I have heard this passage qualified. Nowhere in the Gospels did Jesus preach that giving of one's abundance is a bad thing; besides, all those people were giving to the Temple treasury (which was a good thing).

Sometimes those who desire more money from believers to make church-ends meet, who come to see their parishioners only as "their cash flow" can fall away from what is important and that is that God is our sufficiency as much as He is theirs. They can often rise up to becoming people like Ezekiel 22:27 references, "Her princes in the midst thereof *are* like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, *and* to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain." Now I know that people like this are not everywhere, they are few and far between, but we do come across them from time to time who think that our finances are in reality theirs to coerce out and gather up in the guise of "good works for the Lord." The shedding of blood in Ezekiel 22:27 is in reference to taking away what one honestly worked for through their efforts by way of blood, sweat, and tears.

If we ever come across their paths, then God's Word wants us to be aware of their motives as well as their end and ours if we become their enablers by hook or crook. Leaders are instructed to, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind" (I Peter 5:2), and *filthy lucre* is dishonorable gains of cash that are extracted by greed. People who are motivated to this kind of gain are "destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself" (I Timothy 6:5). "He that oppresseth the poor to increase his *riches*, *and* he that giveth to the rich, *shall* surely *come* to want {more and more although acquiring less and less}" (Proverbs 22:16). If we give to corruption what will we reap (Galatians 6:7-8)?

Please Consider!

Haggai 1:5-7:

-5: Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

-6: Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages *to put it* into a bag with holes.

-7: Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

This is what happens when filthy lucre is extracted from the children of God — everybody involved comes up short! Even the funds collected from the innocent are so named filthy lucre. “Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous” (Deuteronomy 16:19). And yet, once I was told by a church leader to only witness to people who met two requirements, 1) they had to have a good paying job, and 2) they had to own a car. Why? Because on average, people who owned a car and worked hard gave more money at church and they were considered nothing more than numbers for balancing the ledgers. I’m sure Jesus never looked at one’s finances before helping them; in fact, he spent much more time with the sick, sinners, and the needy, with those society would throw away, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mark 2:17), and he was “a friend of publicans and sinners” (Luke 7:34).

Presenting: God’s way of giving, “Every man *shall give* as he is able, according {**ACCORDING**} to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee” (Deuteronomy 16:17). We never are instructed to “give to get”; that is not the kind of trade-off God desires; we “get to give!” We all too often reverse God’s will by trying to out-give Him or bypassing His will altogether and never truly receive all that we could. The Bible reveals “freely ye have received, {**THEN**} freely give” (Matthew 10:8). All we own from God’s perspective is His to begin with, but until we really come to that realization, our stuff is still ours. The wise path is to use our stuff for His glory, then we are all in, and that is all in to receiving our personal needs met by God. Paul questions “what hast thou that thou didst not receive” (I Corinthians 4:7)? You see, all we have is either ours or His, and

if you give what you need away, which was given to support you, then why would He give you what He gave you again if all you do is give it away? That is not being a faithful steward, but is an unwise act. There is nothing wrong with giving regardless of how much one gives because when one gives from the heart, then God certainly is blessed, and as well, one will always receive back more abundantly when their heart is in the gift given. But giving should never be done as payment in the hopes of receiving blessings of healing or abundance in return; it's not tit-for-tat.

The widow in Mark 12 was most definitely giving something beyond her abundance, something no one else gave that day, but what? She had no extra money to give; in fact, she gave very little, *two mites*. Yet this humble widow was giving something much more precious than money, for she gave to God *all her living*. The key to understanding the point that Jesus was making to his disciples is in knowing the meaning of the word *living*, it means one's life, she was committing herself, her life to God as her sufficiency in life.

This is what Jesus was referring to when he said that she, "cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury" for she was casting all her cares upon God! She realized that her life was the greatest gift that she could return to God. In the Greek Text the word for "poor" is the word for humble, she was humble before God. She had recognized what so very few people do and that is that God uplifts the humble.

James 4:10 reads, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." She realized that the greatest thing that she could give was herself to God, and acknowledged Him as the real source of her happiness and her true sufficiency in life.

The notion that she gave even what she needed to live on is ridiculous. What kind of blessing or benefit would it really be if she literally starved to death? None, whatsoever!

I could say, "Gee, I wished that God would just give me a million dollars, but my true need at this very minute is that I really need a hot meal!" So if I could thank God for that, well then He can go to work and "do exceeding

abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). Then dessert will be forthcoming, and that is the abundant life in spades!

Do you know what the difference is between one dollar and a million dollars? The amount of zeroes used. God can add zeroes to anyone who gives from the heart to bless others because zeroes are no big thing to God and are something quite marvelous when someone gives with a cheerful heart to others in need. Then He can go to work blessing their account for counting on Him as their true sufficiency in life.

When one commits their ways to the Lord, what they will receive is true spiritual freedom and the desires of their hearts, which is something one does not pay for but receives from God (see Psalms 27:2-6). One desire of the heart is to be a blessing to others, to give help or support when that is needed. All too often Christians cannot help because they are way too strapped in both time and resources, but when God gives time, redeemed time (Colossians 4:5), and the power to get wealth (Deuteronomy 8:18), then giving finds a godly way to be supportive of the needs in our communities and in our fellowship or church outreach programs.

Receiving first, as a biblical principle may seem counterintuitive to common sense but it is a principal to godly receiving. "Get wisdom, get understanding: forget *it* not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *therefore* get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee" (Proverbs 4:5-9)

I Peter 5:6:

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God,
that he may exalt you in due time:

Being Rich Toward God

If we were to take a survey, asking, “What was the main purpose for the coming of Jesus Christ?” We would receive dozens of answers and most of the answers would be good, but none would be as great as the actual words which Jesus himself spoke, “I am come that they {believers} might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly” (John 10:10). The more abundant life that Jesus came to give is available because he has already given himself completely so that we today might receive the more abundant life. However, today the more abundant life is barely known, scarcely believed, nor really enjoyed by the Christian.

The word for “life” in John 10:10 means life in all its fullness. Jesus came that we may experience the fullness of our God-given eternal life in every category of our lives in the present tense.

I John 5:13:

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

To “believe on the name of the Son of God,” is quoted twice above to doubly empathize our continued believing in everything the name of Jesus represents, including the abundant life which he came to give.

When we become saved, we receive eternal life; this God desires that we know and thoroughly understand — that our eternal life is already in progress.

We have eternal life now, not when we get to heaven, but now. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God” (I John 3:2).

After receiving our salvation, the more abundant life may become manifested in our lives proportionately to our believing in the Scriptures that we have received.

Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life" (John 6:63); thus the more humble we are to believe the Word of God, the more of the spiritual life we may enjoy. James 2:5 records: "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor {humble} of this world rich in faith {believing faith}, and heirs of the kingdom." We who are humble before God will become rich in believing faith to the end that we may receive. God chose us; all we really can do is humbly accept the graces of God upon our lives, believing we indeed are heirs of God.

Luke 12:20-21:

-20: But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee {the day of his judgment}: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? {The material things he worked for his whole life.}

-21: So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

In Luke above, we have the conclusion of a parable that Jesus used to expound on a concept he was teaching: "for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Rather the true abundance of a man or a woman's life is measured by how rich we are toward God's Word. God already has chosen us to be rich in believing faith, yet man within himself must decide whether or not he will be "rich toward God," whether or not he will have a relationship with Him Who called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light (I Peter 2:9). "Which thou hast provided" in verse 20 above shows us that this man in the parable was not rich in believing, but rather he was rich in his own sufficiency; he never really had any believing faith in God to care for him.

The parable above never happened; rather, Jesus used it as a teaching example to accentuate that the more abundant life rests proportionately in one's own believing. When we believe the living Word, we effortlessly will

become “rich toward God” and we will then be enjoying the more abundant life.

Hebrews 11:6:

But without faith {believing faith} *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he {God} is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

We cannot buy eternal life or the gifts that accompany salvation. Jesus said in Matthew 16:26, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” There is nothing on this earth that any man could possibly give in exchange for salvation because it took the actual life of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to purchase redemption and salvation for humanity, and now it is freely ours by our believing on the completed work of Jesus. Accepting the work of Christ on our behalf is being rich toward God.

Mark 9:23:

Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

Luke 18:27:

And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

Savoring the Taste of Grace

Proverbs 3:5-6:

-5: Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

-6: In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

The more we commit ourselves to God, the greater our trust in Him will grow effortlessly and without compulsion. As we begin acknowledging Him in all our ways, the clearer our daily paths in this life will become lit up in the light of God's healing Word and guidance (Ephesians 1:18-19). By learning to put our trust in God with all our hearts, it will be most evident to us that God can then begin directing our walks with Him on paths that will be most pleasing to Him and to us.

When we share our hopes and dreams with God and allow Him to work within our lives, He will most assuredly give to us the desires of our hearts, for God is able to do more than we could ever think of asking or even imagine (Ephesians 3:20). When we give God our earnest prayers, our continued love, and our daily thanks - believing that He has received them - then God begins to work mightily in our lives.

When we begin making room in the heart of our hearts for God, we will also discover that we were formed, made, and created to be the actual habitation of God (Ephesians 2:22). Then becoming a cheerful giver (to God first), will be a continuous blessing to us. This is why I believe that Christians can become the most generous and giving people on the planet. As we learn to trust in God and become good stewards of what He has given, He will inspire us to become "cheerful givers." From a biblical point of view, whatever and whenever a believing Christian gives to God, it never costs him, but rather pays in eternal dividends.

The more we begin believing that all we own are gifts from God, and that He has made us stewards of His gifts, then He can inspire us in love to be cheerful givers. We will know within our hearts that when we share of our God-given abundance, or of our God-given talents, or of our God-given time with others, we will literally be giving His blessings to others. The greatest giving that Christians can possibly give is to dedicate their lives to God, which thankfully does not mean that we need to change our lifestyle because God loves us the way we are. He not only accepts us with our hopes and dreams but with all our shortcomings and frailties as human beings. God simply wants you to begin enjoying life; He only desires that you take Him with you. Romans 12:1-2 reads that we may “prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” If we were to give God our prayers in the morning, and spend a few moments in His healing Word, thanking Him for the upcoming day, then God will be proving to us that He is with us throughout the day. This is how and when God begins showing us His “good, acceptable, and perfect will.”

Psalms 34:8:

O taste and see that the LORD *is* good: blessed *is* the man *that* trusteth in him.

One who has placed his trust in God is one whose life is blessed (by God) to the point that God’s gracious Word and His many promises becomes truly palatable spiritually, physically, and even mentally. Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but {man shall live} by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). So, God’s wonderful Word can be feasted on and savored in the heart of our hearts. No *wonder* the Word is called “the bread of life” (John 6:48), and “wholesome words” (I Timothy 6:3).

Jeremiah confessed: “thy words were found and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.” (Jeremiah 15:16). It seems like he thoroughly enjoyed the Scriptures! When a believing soul puts his or her trust in God as their sufficiency in physical matters of life, God also fills to the full the true spiritual matters of the human heart.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:6 “Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be fulfilled.” As we taste our heavenly gift of righteousness, of holy spirit, of the joys discovered from the Word of God, and the immensity of the powers of God (Hebrews 6:4-5), we cannot but be inspired to continue trusting in God’s gracious Word. Our thirst for the fullness of life with God in Christ can and will become a reality within our lives.

I Peter 2:2-3:

-2: As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

-3: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious.

There is genuine milk (i.e., whole milk, rather than skim, one percent, or half-and-half) within every ounce of God’s winsome, delectable, and gracious Word! God is so wonderful and gracious to us in so many ways, which are at times beyond our comprehension, yet we may assuredly know that we have received from God (II Corinthians 9:15, I Peter 1:8).

God’s desire for us is that we take Him at His Word, allowing Him and His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ into our lives, and allow the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God into our hearts. Let us be men and women of God who have decided to give Him our inner heart’s trust. Let us continue allowing God Himself to show us how to be the kind of cheerful giver we personally desire to be, and give God His rightful place in our lives, giving Him all our love, along with our hopes and dreams, as we continue savoring the taste of His divine graces upon our lives.

Hebrews 13:5:

Let your conversation {manner of living or behavior} *be* without covetousness {greed, wanting more than our needs}; *and be* content with such things as ye have: for he {our God} hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Allow me to present this verse one more time from the Amplified Bible:

Hebrews 13:5 (The Amplified Bible):**

Let your character *or* moral disposition be free from love of money [including greed, avarice, lust, and craving for earthly possessions] and be satisfied with your present [circumstances and with what you have]; for He [God] Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you *nor* give you up *nor* leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless *nor* forsake *nor* let [you] down (relax My hold on you)! [Assuredly not!]

What a comfort it is to realize that God is with us always - this indeed is savoring the taste of grace.

“God Bless You!”

Benediction:

I John 5:14-15:

-14: And this is the confidence that we {can} have in him {God}, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

-15: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

II Corinthians 9:6-8 (The Amplified Bible): **

-6: [Remember] this: he who sows sparingly *and* grudgingly will also reap sparingly *and* grudgingly, and he who sows generously [that blessings may come to someone] will also reap generously *and* with blessings.

-7: Let each one [give] as he has made up his own mind *and* purposed in his heart, not reluctantly *or* sorrowfully or under compulsion, for God loves (He takes pleasure in, prizes above other things, and is unwilling to abandon or to do without) a cheerful (joyous, "prompt to do it") giver [whose heart is in his giving].

-8: And God is able to make all grace (every favor and earthly blessing) come to you in abundance, so that you may always *and* under all circumstances *and* whatever the need be self-sufficient [possessing enough to require no aid or support and furnished in abundance for every good work and charitable donation].

I Peter 2:1-2 (The Amplified Bible): **

-2: Like newborn babies you should crave (thirst for, earnestly desire) the pure (unadulterated) spiritual milk, that by it you may be nurtured *and* grow up unto (completed) salvation.

-3: Since you have [already] tasted the goodness *and* kindness of the Lord.

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Bonus Chapters

All Spiritual Blessings

(Note: **All Spiritual Blessings** is a study that used to be posted on our Donation page over at our old website, and was posted online for about 10 years (2005-2015). It consists of bits and pieces from many of the studies above, but also supplies more information on the art of receiving and giving - Enjoy.)

Our focus in this study will begin in the third chapter of the last book in the Old Testament, Malachi, in order for us to gain knowledge about the true purpose for why God had the Prophet discuss the issue of tithing to Israel, and then we will move into a New Testament's viewpoint about giving.

The Bible's emphasis relating to giving and receiving is always on the believer receiving first; having our needs supplied by God is foremost (Philippians 4:19) before we are ever encouraged to give anything. "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee" Deuteronomy 16:17.

We want to learn how to receive the abundance of God's promises for our lives, our families, and our surroundings rather than simply learning to give out of fear or giving reluctantly.

Giving is an awesome principle in God's Word when understood in the light that God reveals, and as giving becomes correctly utilized by believers, the abundance from the promises of God can begin flowing into our lives.

In the third chapter of the Book of Malachi is a very popular section of Scripture that is sometimes used to coerce Christians with scare tactics

regarding tithing ten percent, saying in essence, "Without giving ten percent of your weekly income you will be robbing God and cursed by God." I want to tell you that this concept and such like connotations are absolutely, unequivocally untrue; no man is big enough to rob from the Creator of the heavens and earth, and Acts 17:25 witnesses that God does not need anything.

God desires our love and devotion freely offered, and any giving that we offer is meant to bless the giver in that God does not want or need our finances. Giving with the true understanding can open up the floodgates of God's promises and the Scriptures reveal to the believer the abundance God provides, as Deuteronomy 8:18 proclaims, God "giveth thee power to get wealth."

Malachi 3:8-9:

-8: Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me {Malachi}. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

-9: Ye *are* cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, *even* this whole nation {the nation of Israel}.

Let us notice to whom the Book of Malachi is specifically addressed: "THE burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi" (Malachi 1:1).

Malachi was the Prophet who delivered *the Word of the Lord*, and the entire book is addressed "to Israel," not to the church of grace, not to Christians, and therefore not to you and me. The ten percent mindset that so many Christians are bombarded with, along with the supposed curse for not giving, gives us the incorrect information; for it was the nation of Israel who were cheating God's laws in the Old Testament which, when obeyed, blessed their promised land that God gave them. In verse 9 we read, *Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me*, but this phrase and the whole book of Malachi was directed to Israel. Today in the New Testament, we (you and me) are exempt from this *curse*, and all of the Old Testament *curses*, as Galatians 3:13 states, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law," and since we are *redeemed* - then the truth is - we are REDEEMED!

The phrase or question *will a man rob God* is rhetorical, and an impossibility! If the question were to be answered, then the answer would be absolutely – NO! We cannot rob God, how silly, how foolish, how can anyone say it is possible? When Malachi wrote, *Yet ye have robbed me*, he first was showing a contrast, not that one can rob God, but that one can withhold from the men whom God sent to minister before the congregation as the Levitical Priest did. God ordained the Priest to intercede between man and God, and the people were to support them, yet they were not doing so and that is shameful. This is what Malachi was saying to them.

You see, the Priest had no other means of support, and the gifts and tithes of Israel is what sustained them so that they could continue ministering. When Israel tithed, God blessed the land that He gave them, the land itself produced more abundantly, and so everyone had even more abundance, the Priest, the people, and the Prophets. But when the people became stingy and reluctant to give they literally received less, in fact, we could say that they were robbing themselves, for giving is a universal principle for unlocking the true spiritual floodgates of God's abundance.

The Christian believer is never referred to in the Scriptures as a Nation (as Israel was); rather, we are referred to as being members in the household of God (Ephesians 2:19). What an awful presentation when some imply that we, the children of God, are robbers, saying in essence that "we are thieves and we are stealing from the greatest power in the universe (Acts 17:24-25)!" This statement can devastate the unsuspecting and unknowledgeable regarding God's love and grace upon our lives.

Malachi 3:10-12:

-10: Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house {the Temple}, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, *that there shall not be room enough to receive it.*

-11: And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

-12: And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

The above section of Scripture has been used by some to pressure people to tithe ten percent. Then after they read (manipulate), the above verses they say that when you give, then (and not until then) will God rebuke the Devil for your sakes (implying that if you do not tithe, then God will not rebuke the Devil).

This is untrue — I will tell you why. First, if giving meant rebuking then we would be paying for protection, and the Bible never instructs anyone to pay for protection because God, our heavenly Father, is not a godfather. Secondly, the word *devourer* means a *devourer*, not the Devil. The Amplified Bible defines the *devourer* as “insects and plagues”; it is what consumes, it is what eats away and decays. The *devourer* went into the fields and devoured the crops, but the *devourer* did not go after the people to destroy them; as we just read: *and he {the devourer} shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field.*

The entire section in Malachi is specifically addressed to the nation of Israel who were not taking care of their Priest from the tribe of Levi. Their Law required them to tithe at certain times, and because they were not fulfilling their Law, God’s blessing upon their crops was lacking, yes, but not His continued love, care, and concern for their well-being.

Nevertheless, today in God’s grace we are never commanded to tithe a tenth of our incomes. In fact, the word tithe is never once mentioned in the Bible in reference to the New Testament believers who are saved by grace and are members of the body of Christ. In Old Testament Times, God gave the nation of Israel their Promised Land as prophesied to them from the time of Abraham. Their tithing, though still a Law, showed their appreciation for God’s blessings upon the land, and their tithes were to be given to the Priests to maintain the temple and sustain the Priest who ministered daily before God on their behalf.

If tithing were a Law for us, then God’s divine grace would be totally worthless (Galatians 5:4). Whenever anyone implies that the devourer is

the Devil, then that concept gives the Devil much more power and authority over our finances and lives, and that power the Scriptures currently denies to him because the Son of God destroyed his works (I John 3:8; 4:4). This does not negate that God indeed wants His children to give, and when we remove the Law, restraints, and the threatening misnomers about true godly giving, then giving from the heart can show us heavenly insight concerning our receiving abundance from God and pleasurable ways of giving from the heart.

II Corinthians 9:7-8:

-7: Every man {may freely give} according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

-8: And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work:

Jesus instructed in Matthew 10:8 “freely ye have received, freely give,” and as we become humble and appreciative of the blessings we receive from God, then the more we can learn to become just as humble and appreciable with our giving as a godly cycle of the abundant life begins flowing smoothly. Giving for the Christian believer should (and can) become about as natural as breathing air; notice the Scripture says, “so let him give,” (though it does not say “so let him not give,”) and still the quantity and the quality of our giving should be as we purpose within our own hearts. Jesus taught, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35) and this becomes true when one lovingly gives from the heart because one has received.

If tithing is not a Law for the Christian believer, then how much should the believer give, what is the standard? The New Testament says to give “according as he purposeth in his heart” (II Corinthians 9:7). This is not a Law or a commandment but a concept conceived in grace and freely offered to the Christian of today. The word *purposeth* literally means, as one prefers, as one decides to give in his own heart. There are times when it would be unwise to give ten percent if it meant going without food or paying your bills, yet there are other times when you can give much more

than a tithe as you are inspired — and the truth is, this is all up to you and between you and God. This is the truth about giving in this age of grace, a privilege earned for you by your personal Savior.

John 1:17:

For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Today in grace, we may give out of an inner spiritual love and devotion for our heavenly Father without restraint, compulsion, or fear. We may give, as we desire to, not because of Law, not because we must, but rather because we simply want to because we love God as He loves us, and we love our Savior as he loves us. We are living in an age of God's grace, and in grace if we desire not to give, then God still loves us, and if we give, He still loves us. However, if we decide not to give, the ebb and flow of life can become somewhat stagnant because giving opens up the unlimited resources of God's abundance to flow smoothly as II Corinthians 9:6 reveals "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

Giving includes our resources — our time, our talents, our love, and even our devotion to God. (Also, in light of our devotion to God, please see our Bible Byte titled: "The Fullness of God.") When one begins to give, the act of giving itself will become such a pleasurable joy and journey as receiving becomes a thankful, daily reality.

Galatians 4:7:

Wherefore thou art no more a servant {under the Law as all of Israel was}, but a son {son is an all-inclusive noun for men and women}; and if a son {of God}, then {you are} an heir of God through Christ.

We, being genuine heirs of our God as His children do not pay tithes, rather we reciprocate honor, love, and respect back to our heavenly Father.

In Malachi 3:10 God said that He would pour out "a blessing" when the nation of Israel tithed; however, Ephesians 1:3 records that God "hath

blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ.” We are currently blessed with how many blessings? All!

How can we reconcile this difference between “a blessing” that the Old Testament believers were to receive if they tithed, and us in God’s family who have already received *all spiritual blessings*? It is simple. The Old Testament Scriptures regarding tithing were written for that particular time of the Old Testament and for the people who lived in those times, while the New Testament Scriptures are written for us who are in Christ.

We have already received *all spiritual blessings* and our giving is to be proportionate to how we purpose in our hearts. This allows us to freely give, not out of the Law or of necessity but out of love with a willing heart. It is so awesome to know that God allows His children to give only if they so desire to give, and to give in any way (or amount) that they personally feel comfortable with — this provides the believer with a life of genuine and lifelong freedom in Christ to be both a giver and a receiver of blessings.

So where are all of these spiritual blessings? The answer is — they are already in you and in me, they are *in Christ*, and he is in us (Colossians 1:27). And what brings these blessings out to the forefront of our lives is being *in Christ*, walking in fellowship with God, and loving Him with all our hearts, placing us on the path of grace which is above the law (Galatians 5:4).

We certainly do not want to limit ourselves by imaging that we have to pay our God/Father for protection or lower our standards with the ten percent mindset and then begin looking for “a” blessing, nor do we want to feel like we are buying “a” blessing - when all along we could have it all - all spiritual blessings! This is how God meets our every need at just the most opportune time and in astounding ways (Ephesians 3:20).

It takes walking with Jesus Christ in the present tense to realize that he is our golden thread to all of God’s abundance, as Jesus said in John 10:10, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

Colossians 2:3 states "In whom {in Christ} are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"; these treasures in Christ are not hidden from you, but are reserved for you. When we as Christians change our mindset from giving out of the supposed Law of tithing in the hopes of receiving protection and a blessing, to giving out of love as the standard and foundation of our lives, then all the spiritual blessings that we need and desire will begin to manifest themselves in our lives.

II Corinthians 9:7-8 (The Amplified Bible):*

-7: Let each one [give] as he has made up his own mind *and* purposed in his heart, not reluctantly or sorrowfully *or* under compulsion, for God loves (He takes pleasure in, prizes above other things, and is unwilling to abandon or to do without) a cheerful (joyous, "prompt to do it") giver [whose heart is in his giving].

-8: And God is able to make all grace (every favor and earthly blessing) come to you in abundance, so that you may always *and* under all circumstances *and* whatever the need be self-sufficient [possessing enough to require no {additional} aid or support and furnished in abundance for every good work and charitable donation].

"Each person has inside a basic decency and goodness. If he listens to it and acts on it, he is giving a great deal of what it is the world needs most. It is not complicated but it takes courage. It takes courage for a person to listen to his own goodness and act on it." ~Pablo Casals~

"We are justified, not by giving anything to God . . . but by receiving from God, what Christ hath done for us." ~William Gurnall~

Prayer with Thankfulness

Prayer is believing with thankfulness and believing is HOW we receive from God. Prayer with thankfulness is what builds and strengthens our relationship with God wherein we come to understand the freedom we have to believe and know that God is present, willing, and able to answer our deepest and most desired prayers.

Prayer is the key that helps release us from our doubts, worries, and fears as we daily give our concerns over to God (Philippians 4:6-7). God in turn will manifest Himself to us, becoming our true sufficiency in life – this is the joy of personal prayer.

In the Gospel of John, we have a short prayer that Jesus offered and spoke deliberately to teach others around him how to pray and believe with thankfulness in their hearts.

John 11:41b-42:

-41b: . . . And Jesus lifted up *his* eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

-42: And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said *it*, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

First, let us notice that Jesus spoke intimately with God, calling Him Father, as we also can. “Giving thanks {i.e., prayer} unto the Father, which hath made us meet {worthy} to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (Colossians 1:12),” and as Jesus taught in John 15:16, “that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”

Secondly, observe that the very first thing Jesus said to the Father was *I thank thee*. Being thankful to the *Father* is one of the greatest keys in receiving answers to our prayers. Yes, being humbly thankful, even before receiving, is absolutely the most important principle to utilize in order to

receive answers from our heavenly Father when praying. This is the message Jesus taught us from the Gospels, “Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*” (Mark 11:24), thus being thankful in advance is a wonderful and very powerful key to receiving from the Father.

Thirdly, it is a valuable lesson to see Jesus acknowledge that God, his Father, *always* heard his prayers. This is a great message to us so we may always know with believing that God, our heavenly Father, indeed hears the prayers of our hearts. “For your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him” (Matthew 6:8). Asking your Father does not negate the truth that even though He already knows your every need that you should not bother to ask Him in prayer for His assistance because prayer is a relationship builder – between you and your heavenly Father.

Prayer builds your one-on-One counsel with “the Father of lights” (James 1:17).

Prayer is your spirit-to-Spirit connection between you and “the Father of glory” (Ephesians 1:17).

Prayer is your opportunity to build a heart-to-Heart relationship with your heavenly Father (Philippians 2:13, I Peter 5:7).

Prayer allows the individual believer to have a one-on-One conversation with his or her heavenly Father and a thankful prayer life builds trust and confidence while maintaining a lasting relationship with heaven’s Holiest as Jesus demonstrated (John 11:41, Ephesians 4:21).

Prayer gives comfort from the Comforter that you are never alone, but are with “the Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:6).

From prayer offered to prayer answered, you also can receive the heart-touching confirmation that your heavenly Father knows the things you have need of because prayer assures you of being in contact with heaven’s throne and with His never-ending supply line from above to you!

I John 5:14-15:

-14: And this is the confidence that we {can} have in him {in God our heavenly Father}, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

-15: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we {already} have the petitions that we desired of him.

Fourthly, Jesus believed that his prayer would inspire others to believe as well. Believing in our prayers with thankfulness, believing that we will be receiving from God, is a biblical requirement in our receiving from Him, and this will always be inspirational to others as they see our believing manifested by the end result of our enjoying the answer to our prayers.

Matthew 21:22:

And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

“And when he {Jesus} thus had spoken {his prayer above}, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth” (John 11:43). This verse is the pinnacle of Jesus’ prayer, and Lazarus was raised from the dead because Jesus was thankful and he knew that the Father heard him, and Jesus believed this in his heart. Blessed results follow those who pray with a believing and thankful heart.

In Jesus’ prayer, he was thankful in advance, thankful in simply knowing that his prayer would be completely answered, and thankful that this would also be an inspiration to others in their prayer life. Jesus was teaching us (by his own example) how to believe the Father for the answers to our prayers.

Many a prayer has drifted off to the island of unanswered prayers when the spiritual connection becomes interrupted between the sender and the Receiver of prayer simply because of the absence of advanced thankfulness. (Thankfulness is how to properly address a sent prayer.) The unintended consequence of not being thankful has always been and will

always be the cause of shipwrecked prayers. However, thankfulness guiding one's prayer will see it to its intended destination at the safe harbor of heaven's throne with the return address intact. So it would behoove us to get in the habit of always starting our prayers with – "God, my heavenly Father, I thank You in the name of Jesus Christ for . . . (your prayer request)."

With thankfulness to the Receiver and Giver of your prayer-request, you the sender and recipient of your request may enjoy the intended result by the thankfulness originally sent and maintained.

Advanced thankfulness always has been the true key for genuine receiving from the Father. The Apostle Paul taught us that "whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks {**GIVING THANKS**} to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:17).

Hebrews 11:1:

Now faith {believing *faith*} is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

I Peter 1:8:

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

The healing Word of God encourages that we first believe that our prayers are heard (see Mark 11:24 above), and from the lessons of Jesus we can learn that being thankful is how he believed to receive, and is equally how we can receive.

Thanking our Father in advance and believing that we have received will bring great things into our lives, to our families, and our surroundings. The Apostle Paul wrote, "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all" (Romans 1:8), because the first thing in prayer is thankfulness, and thankfulness builds positive believing, and all believing equals receiving. Paul thanked God in the name of Jesus Christ, demonstrating that our prayers offered in the name of Jesus Christ will afford us the answers we

seek. "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you (John 15:16)." As thankfulness applies to properly addressing a prayer request, applying the name of Jesus Christ is the postage paid in full stamp on the envelope of your believing *faith* that will be personally delivered up to the Father!

Jesus said, "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). The reason we are blessed is that we know how to first believe before we receive the gifts or answers that we desire from the Father. Giving prayers and receiving results is a Christian lifestyle that is not only desirable but also obtainable as our union with the Father continues to blossom into an exciting, daily adventure; this is the result of your Prayer with Thankfulness.

Colossians 4:2 (The Amplified Bible):*

Be earnest *and* unwearied *and* steadfast in your prayer [life], being [both] alert and intent in [your praying] with thanksgiving.

Ephesians 5:20 (The Amplified Bible):*

At all times and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.

I Thessalonians 5:16-18 (The Amplified Bible):*

-16: Be happy [in your faith] and rejoice and be glad-hearted continually (always);

-17: Be unceasing in prayer [praying perseveringly];

-18: Thank [God] in everything [no matter what the circumstances may be, be thankful and give thanks], for this is the will of God for you [who are] in Christ Jesus [the Revealer and Mediator of that will].

Colossians 2:6-7 (The Amplified Bible):*

-6: As you have therefore received Christ, [even] Jesus the Lord, [so] walk (regulate your lives and conduct yourselves) in union with and conformity to Him.

-7: Have the roots [of your being] firmly *and* deeply planted [in Him, fixed and founded in Him], being continually built up in Him, becoming increasingly more confirmed *and* established in the faith, just as you were taught, and abounding *and* overflowing in it with thanksgiving.

“Prayer is the key of the morning and the bolt of the evening.”
~Mohandas Gandhi~

“Daily prayer offered in the name of our risen Lord and Savior places one in the receiving line, and initiates the ebb and flow of spirituality.” ~LMJ~

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