



THE PRAYER CLOSET

*Transforming Lives Through Intercessory
Prayer And Fasting*

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRAYER CLOSET MINISTRIES, INC.

VOLUME III

JULY, 2000

ISSUE 6

PRAYING FOR YOUR CHURCH'S FINANCIAL CONDITION

The use of money is a good indicator of how mature a person is in the faith. A person will spend most of his or her life working in exchange for money. Because of this, there is a very real sense in which his or her money represents the person. The way that a person uses money speaks volumes about who he or she is. It reveals what his or her priorities are. It is a testimony to what is in his or her heart.

The Word of God contains a surprisingly large amount of counsel concerning the use of wealth and possessions. It declares that believers are to be a good "stewards" of their money. This

means that believers are to manage money wisely. God's people are to use money to provide for their basic needs. This also includes the needs of their family. The Word of God denounces those professing believers that fail to take care of the needs of their family, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8). God wants believers to use money to provide for the basic necessities of life.

At the same time, God also desires that believers use their money to carry out ministry. This ministry is done in order to glorify God, meet needs, and advance His kingdom among men. God has chosen to finance this work through the giving of the believers. The bottom line is that ministry costs money. If the church is going to impact lives, God's people must give. The church carries out Christ's ministry through the financial support of believers.

This issue of *The Prayer Closet* will focus on praying for the financial condition of your church. In order to carry out ministry, God's people must give. It is therefore a necessity to pray for God's blessing on the finances of the church. Because of this, you will be given prayer suggestions concerning how God's people should use money. There will also be suggestions on how to intercede concerning the giving of the believers of the church.

ISSUE 6 - HIGHLIGHTS

PRAYING FOR YOUR CHURCH'S FINANCIAL CONDITION

The Principles of Giving
Praying For A Lifestyle of Giving
Praying The Principles of Giving
Pleading for Financial Blessing
The Foundation Of A Prayer
Ministry In The Church
The Power of Praying Together

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Yet, before we get to these things, we need a foundation on which to build our prayer requests. That foundation is the principles of giving from the Word of God. These are basic principles that God's Word presents concerning giving. They will give you a better understanding of God's view of giving. They will also provide you with insight on how to pray concerning this crucial matter.

The Principles Of Giving

The first principle of giving is that God owns everything that you own. The Word of God plainly teaches this:

- ◆ "The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein" (**Psalm 24:1**).
- ◆ "Who has preceded Me, that I should pay him? Everything under heaven is Mine" (**Job 41:11**).
- ◆ "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine" (**Exodus 19:5**).

The Word of God is teaching us that we really don't own anything. God owns everything; we are simply the managers, the stewards, of what He allows us to have. We are the temporary managers of what belongs to God. God also owns the money that you have in the bank even down to the change in your pocket or purse, "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says the LORD of hosts" (**Haggai 2:8**).

Giving is not a matter of asking, "How much of my money should I give to God?" Rather, it is a matter of asking, "How much of God's money should I keep for myself?"

*The next principle that you need to understand is that giving is an act of worship. The Word of God declares in **Philippians 4:18**, "Indeed I have all and abound. I am full having received from Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God." In this verse, Paul is thanking the Christians at Philippi for the*

financial support that they gave in support of his ministry. He calls the money that they gave "a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God." Paul compares their gift to an Old Testament sacrifice that people gave in worship to God. Paul is saying that their act of giving to the work of God was an act of worshiping God. When you give, it is an act of worship. Giving is a tangible way of adoring and worshiping God. You should not see giving as merely a duty or obligation. It is an act of adoring and worshiping the God who has blessed you. Your giving can be "a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God."

*The Word of God teaches that our giving should be sacrificial and generous. Giving is not just for those who can "afford" it. In **Mark 12:41-44**, Jesus tells of a poor and common lady who gave out of her poverty. Jesus says, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood" (**Mark 12:43-44**).*

In **2 Corinthians 8:1-5**, Paul tells of how the poor Christians in Macedonia sacrificed to support him and his ministry. He declares, "For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing" (**2 Corinthians 8:3**). These poor Christians struggled with poverty. Yet, they gave according to their ability and even beyond in order to support God's work.

Our giving must be sacrificial and generous. If your giving is not a sacrifice, then it is not sacrificial. You can give to God. However, you may not be giving sacrificially. Many believers give token amounts to the work of the kingdom. Yet, your giving is to extend beyond token amounts. It is to be characterized by genuine sacrifice and generosity.

*Your giving is a reflection of your personal faith in God's provision. How much you give is a good indicator of how much you trust God to provide for you. The amount that you give back to God is a vivid indication of how much you trust Him to meet your needs. The poor widow in **Mark 12:41-44** is a fitting example of this principle. This woman was willing to give all that she had to live*

on. She did this because she believed that God would provide for her.

A person's giving is going to be determined by one's trust in God to provide. The more that we believe that God will provide for our needs, the more we are willing to risk giving to Him. At the same time, the reverse is true. The less you trust God to provide the less that you will give to Him.

The Bible teaches that your giving should be motivated by love and not because of obligation. In **2 Corinthians 8**, Paul states that the Macedonian Christians were good and faithful givers (vv.1-4). He then tells these believers at Corinth, "But as you abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—see that you abound in this grace also" (**2 Corinthians 8:7**). He desired that they too would excel in the grace of giving.

In verse 8, Paul makes a significant statement. He says, "I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others." He does not command the Corinthians to give. He does not use his authority as an apostle of Jesus. Instead of commanding them to give, he says that giving should be a way of proving their love to God.

This principle is made even clearer in the next chapter. **2 Corinthians 9:7** says, "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." Paul says that one is to give "as he purposes in his heart." He is saying that giving is to be measured in the heart. The standard for giving is your love for God.

God does not send you a bill. Your giving needs to be motivated by your love for Him. How much you give of what you have should be a reflection of how much you love God. Your love for God should be the standard for how much you give.

The Word of God teaches that you should give cheerfully and willingly. In **2 Corinthians 9:7**, Paul writes that the believer is to give "not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." God does not want you to give because you feel that you have to. He does not want you to give with a grudge; that is, you give in spite of the fact that you don't want to. God wants you to give because you want to give. Robert Rodenmeyer wrote, "There are three kinds of giving: grudge

giving, duty giving, and thanksgiving. Grudge giving says, 'I have to'; duty giving says, 'I ought to'; thanksgiving says, 'I want to'".

When you give, you should remember that you are giving to God. Think about what God has done for you. He has created you. He has sustained you. He has blessed you. He has given you the greatest possible gift of all, His Son, Jesus Christ. He has provided for you. When you consider that you are giving to Him, it should cause you to give cheerfully and willingly.

The Bible teaches that giving reflects one's spiritual trustworthiness. In **Luke 16:10-13**, Jesus Christ says, "Therefore, if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" A believer is untrustworthy to handle spiritual riches if he or she is not faithful with the money that God grants. This would certainly include the believer's giving to the work of the kingdom.

If a believer is not faithful in using and giving money, he or she will not be faithful in spiritual matters. The reason is that your use of money indicates your priorities. When a person gives sacrificially and faithfully, it reveals that his or her heart is right with God. When a believer surrenders to Jesus the rights over every dollar that he or she makes and ever will make, that believer is ready to handle greater spiritual responsibilities. That is why it is said that your checkbook tells more about you than almost anything else. It will reveal your spiritual trustworthiness. It will show how much Kingdom responsibility God can entrust to you.

Another biblical principle concerning giving is that your giving should be planned and systematic. In **1 Corinthians 16:1-2**, the apostle Paul directs the Corinthian Christians on how to give. He says, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also. On the first day of the week let each of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come." Paul states that the believers needed to give "on the first day of the week". People are paid in varying ways: every week, every two weeks, or once a month. This will determine when you give your main gift. Yet, you should not appear empty-handed before the Lord when you come to worship Him. Yet, you should plan to give each Lord's day

even if you are only giving a small amount of pocket cash or change when you aren't giving your main gift.

Second, Paul says "let each of you" give. He is teaching that every believer should give. All believers are to give. No one can excuse himself or herself from this. Every believer should plan to give regardless of age or circumstance.

Paul's final instruction about planned and systematic giving is that it should be "as he may prosper." In other words, the more you prosper, the higher should be the proportion of your giving. There should be no percentage goal in your giving. It should be as God blesses. Giving 10 percent is not a ceiling of giving to stop at, but a floor to move from.

The Bible teaches that generous and sacrificial giving will result in abundant blessing. God will bless the generous giving of His people. The Lord Jesus Christ says, "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38). The apostle Paul declares, "But I say this: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully . . . And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:6, 8).

These verses are teaching that God will bless the believer if he or she gives generously. If you give to God, He will give to you. If you give bountifully to Him, He will pour out abundant blessings on you. These blessings may not be money. There may be other blessings that God grants to you because of your generosity. Yet, you can trust that God will bless your generosity. He will not let this go unnoticed.

It is important to remember that many of God's blessings for your giving will not come in this life. This is why Jesus says, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matthew 6:20). There will come a definite time in a real place when God will reward the believer for what he or she has given generously and cheerfully. You can count on blessings in this life and in the next if you bountifully and generously give to God.

A final biblical principle concerning giving is that it is an appropriate response to human need. Believers should give spontaneously and freely when there is the real need in peoples' lives. There are at least three occasions in the book of Acts when early Christians gave in response to specific needs. The first occasion is Acts 2:44-45, "Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need." Many of the believers who had been saved and added to the church at Pentecost were visitors to Jerusalem. These visitors unexpectedly stayed in Jerusalem because of their new faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These people had no home, no job, and no way to provide for their needs. In order to meet this unique problem, the early church gave generously and sacrificially.

In Acts 4:32-35, these Christians gave generously to meet the specific needs of fellow brothers and sister in Christ. Luke writes in Acts 4:34-35, "Nor was there any among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need." These early believers responded by generously giving to those who had real needs.

There is another example of the early church giving generously to meet needs. In this example, the church's giving is not directed to believers in the local church. This time they could not see the people who needed help. This example is found in Acts 11:27-30. A devastating famine had hit in Judea. The Christian community in Jerusalem was suffering through this. The Christians at Antioch gave generously to help meet their needs. Three hundred miles separated these believers. Yet, they gave sacrificially to help feed and meet the needs of their fellow believers in Jerusalem.

There is a place for spontaneous and generous giving. God honors and blesses this type of sacrifice. Most of a believer's giving should be planned and systematic. Yet, a believer should always be open to times of spontaneous giving.

In this section, we have established biblical principles for giving. By doing this, we have laid a foundation for our praying. Our praying must have the Word of God as its foundation. When we understand what the Word of God teaches, we can then pray with power and authority. Now that we