

Five Habits of Highly Effective Believers
The Practice of Stewardship
May 08, 2016

Intro: The Book of Acts records an incredible sense of generosity that began to overtake the Believers and they were selling land, items and giving money to any who had need. God had not only gotten through to their heart but they gave God access to everything and embraced the Biblical concept of stewardship.

This is our last message in the series *Five Habits of Effective Believers* and we are going to look at stewardship in a Biblical perspective.

I want to start this message by asking you a question this morning...If God has an endless supply of resources at his disposal...does He really need our help and resources in reaching the world? In fact, why would He need us to play a role in building His kingdom by being good stewards of our time, talents and treasures?

The idea of faithfully offering God our time, talents and treasures (tithes) is a Biblical principle called stewardship and stewardship is not only a good thing for Believers to do, but I believe with all my heart that if we as Believers choose not to be good stewards with what God has provided us...we choose to live outside the realm of promised blessings from the Lord.

So, what does the Bible say about the importance of Biblical Stewardship?

1. God owns everything and entrusts His creation to us. *“The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (Psalm 24:1)*. It is our responsible to be good stewards of His resources to bless others and to build the Kingdom of God.
2. The Bible teaches us that whatever we sow...we will reap...this translates into if we give our time, talent and tithe to God...He will have something in our life to bless. If we choose to never give God these things...we make the choice to live an unblessed life.
3. Being a good steward is a mark of an authentic desire to walk with the Lord in a way that pleases and honors Him and places our trust in His power to provide for our needs.

In essence, stewardship is taking what the Lord has blessed us with and using it in such a way that it brings honor upon God and the Kingdom.

Some people tend to get bent out of shape when sermons are preached on the topic of stewardship but it’s important to know that the Bible speaks frequently about the concept of Biblical Stewardship.

Pastor Greg Laurie of Harvest Christian Chapel in California said one time, *“It is worth noting that money is such an important topic in the Bible that it is the main subject of nearly half of the parables Jesus told. In addition, one in every seven verses in the New Testament deals with this topic.”*

The Bible offers 500 verses on prayer, around 500 verses on faith, and more than 2,000 verses on money. In fact, 15% of everything Jesus ever taught was on the topic of money and possessions—more than His teachings on heaven and hell combined.

We know that the Bible talks about money often, but a question that may come to many believers' minds is simply...why in the world would God need our tithe? After all, we serve a God that owns everything...right? I mean...He owns the stars and calls them by name...He owns the cattle on the thousand hills...He owns all of creation. So, the ultimate question this morning to start this message out is why is it so important that a believer tithe.

If you are new to the family or maybe just need a quick refresher on tithing, the word comes from the Hebrew word (*ma-a-say-ya*) (which is probably why we just say tithe and it means a tenth part of something. When addressed in God's Word, a tithe was always a tenth part or 10% of a possession or goods or money. Please understand this morning that not only does the tithe -10% belong to God, but so does the remaining 90% as well. He entrusts us to be faithful stewards with the resources He blesses us with. It's important to understand that the tithe was always taken off the top. The tithe was commanded in Scripture to be given to God and when we tithe to the Lord we are practicing faithful stewardship with God as specified in His Word. In fact, when talking about the tithe in Scripture,

Abraham commenced it.

Jacob continued it.

Moses confirmed it.

Malachi commanded it.

Christ commended it.

Sometimes tithing gets a bad wrap and at times it's because people are bound by a few worldly ideas that are not found in the basis of Scripture. There are many reasons why people don't tithe to God and we are not here to unwrap all of those reasons...I am here to share with you the many truths found in God's Word about the importance of our tithe unto God and the many blessings that God showers upon those that tithe.

In order for you and I though to get to a place where we can understand the importance of tithing and actually put it to practice in our everyday lives...we need to break through some carnal thoughts that many of us have or have had in the past:

1. We tend to view money as ours...not God's money.
 - a. God owns everything and entrusts His creation (that's right, I said, His creation) to us. "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Psalm 24:1). It is our responsible to be good stewards of His resources to bless others and to Build the Kingdom of God.
 - b. *"But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day" (Deuteronomy 8:18, NASB).*
2. We give based on comfort and not necessarily based on the need at hand. In other words, we don't give until it hurts. We may drop a \$20 in the plate here and there but we often don't give sacrificially because the thought is in the back of our minds...what if this happens...what if this breaks...what happens if I need this...we give only until we start to feel uncomfortable
 - a. *"Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a*

penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on." -Mark 12:41-44

- b.** Notice that Scripture doesn't say that the little widow woman was sweating bullets or having a nervous breakdown because she was giving unto God...she knew that her needs would be taken care of...she gave to honor God and because of this God would care for her
- c.** Generosity is not tied directly to the amount of wealth we possess. Generosity relates to our willingness to share what we have with others in need.

3. We tend to trust God for everything else except for when it comes to money

- a.** The Bible teaches us that whatever we sow...we will reap...this translates into the simple fact that often times...we trust God for the very salvation that will save us from going to an eternal lake of fire...we trust Him to care for everyone of our needs...we trust Him to put food on the table...shoes on our feet...but yet...are hands tremble when we begin to think about honoring God with our income...

4. We sometimes view tithes as a transaction or dues rather than a part of worship to God

- a.** Tithes are not dues that we pay to God to earn His favor. It is not a way of paying God off for something we really want. Remember that the money is His to begin with.
- b.** Paying tithes doesn't earn you a free ticket to heaven nor does it guarantee that all your wildest dreams will come true.

A minister once did a very interesting thing in his congregation one Sunday morning. He said that when the elders had taken up the offering one Sunday and brought the plates down to the altar, he took the plates and held them up in the air and he gave a prayer: "Lord, regardless of what we say about you with our lips, this is really what we say about you, this is really what we feel about you. This is really what you mean to us. Amen." Your money follows your heart. If your commitment to Christ has not yet reached your wallet then it has not yet reached your heart.

Matthew 6:21 says, " For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"

I want to give a few principles here this morning for you to think about when it comes to tithing...notice, I'm not being pushing about this....you need to understand that at certain times in Monica and my life and in our marriage...there were times that tithing was the scariest thing we could do...it defies human logic to give away money that you know you could use for others things....but there had to come a time that we understood that we were either going to trust God and what His Word said...or we were going to continue to try and do it all on our own and solicit God's help along the way...obviously...we quickly learned that keeping God first in all things was definitely the way to go.

1. Giving Is An Act Of Worship

- a.** When we give in return...not just in seeking a return, giving becomes an act of worship and thanksgiving, not just a business proposition.
- b.** When the Nation of Israel began to tithe, part of that was to bring their firstfruits to God. *"So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with*

great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders. He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, O LORD, have given me.” Deuteronomy 26:8-10

- c. When people see authentic generosity that doesn't expect to be repaid and when they see giving that recognizes God, then the world sees not only our confession of the gospel, but our obedience to the Gospel as well. So when it comes to your finances, and your giving, this is where the rubber meets the road. This is where our real priorities and real faithfulness comes to light. As we bring our finances under obedience to God

2. Giving Is An Act of Trust

- a. Everything about life in this world teaches us how temporary it is...what we buy wears out...New technology becomes old quickly... Our income doesn't go as far as it used to go... Jobs can end quickly... The economy can slow down and the stock market crashes occasionally... Tomorrow you might strike it rich, or you may have to go to the Dentist again or the Eye Doctor or the car shop... When you think about it, it can scare you to death, and make you want to hold on to your wealth.
- b. *A. A. Hyde, a millionaire manufacturer, said he began tithing when he was one hundred thousand dollars in debt. Many men have said they consider it dishonest to give God a tenth of their incomes when they were in debt. Mr. Hyde said he agreed with that thought until one day it flashed upon him that God was his first creditor. Then he began to pay God first and all the other creditors were eventually paid in full. If a man owes you money, it would be wise business policy on your part to encourage him to pay his debt to God first. — Sunday School Times.*
- c. Giving, not only worships God, but it trusts God as both the provider for our present and the preparer for our future.
- d. *“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life” I Timothy 6:17-19.*
- e. *Tony Campolo tells of being invited to speak at a ladies meeting. There were 300 women there. Before he spoke, the president of the organization read a letter from a missionary. It was a very moving letter. In the letter the missionary expressed a need for \$4,000 to take care of an emergency that had cropped up. So the president of the organization said, "We need to pray that God will provide the resources to meet the need of this missionary. Bro. Campolo will you please pray for us?"*

Tony, who is very outspoken said, "No." Startled, she said, "I beg your pardon." He said, "No, I won't pray for that." He said, "I believe that God has already provided the resources & that all we need to do is give. Tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to step up to this table & give every bit of cash I have in my pocket. And if all of you will do the same thing, I think God has already provided the resources." The president of the

organization chuckled a little bit & said, "Well, I guess we get the point. He is trying to teach us that we all need to give sacrificially." He said, "No, that is not what I am trying to teach you. I'm trying to teach you that God has already provided for this missionary. All we need to do is give it. Here, I'm going to put down all of my money I have with me." He wrote, "I only had \$15 in my pocket so I wasn't too worried about that." So he put down his \$15 & then looked at the president of the organization. Reluctantly, she opened her purse & took out all of her money, which was about \$40, & put it on the table. One by one the rest of the ladies filed by & put their money on the table, too. When the money was counted they had collected more than \$4,000." Tony Campolo said, "Now, here's the lesson. God always supplies for our needs, & he supplied for this missionary, too. The only problem was we were keeping it for ourselves. Now let's pray & thank God for His provision."

3. Giving Is A Kingdom Investment

- a. God doesn't have to but He chooses to build the Kingdom based on our giving...which allows us to sow seeds into the Kingdom of God. In fact, God will never send a need without having a provision close-by.
- b. *2 Corinthians 8:7-9 says, "But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."*
- c. In 2014, Around \$35 billion dollars was spent on missions which sounds great until you learn that Americans spend approximately \$117 billion on fast food, \$96 billion on beer, \$66 billion a year on lottery tickets, \$65 billion on soft drinks and \$60 billion a year on pets. We have to conclude that Americans are more passionate about their pets than they are about missions.
- d. If someone examined how you spend your money, what would they say you are passionate about? Are you following the pattern of the NT Believers?
- e. If you are passionate about something, you will be committed to it. *A parable is told about a chicken and pig that were walking down the road. They passed a church with a sign that said, "Missions breakfast, ham and eggs". The chicken turned to the pig and said, "That's great. A church is raising money for missions. We ought to get involved. I will furnish the eggs, and you furnish the ham." The pig replied to the chicken, "That is easy for you to say because all you have to do is get involved, I would have to be committed."*

Conclusion: David Egener told of a doctor who was working in a remote area of Minnesota many years ago when a Native American family begged him to come and help their elderly grandmother who was gravely ill. He went, diagnosed her condition, and then gave them detailed instructions for her care. The woman recovered, and a few weeks later the entire family made the journey to the doctor's office in town. They ceremoniously presented him with

a 150-year-old pair of moccasins made by a great-great-grandfather. When the doctor protested because the gift was cherished and valuable, the head of the clan replied, "You saved my mother's life. We insist that you accept these moccasins. We do not express appreciation with a cheap gift."

We see this same principle in 2 Samuel 24. David was told to offer a sacrifice to God on land owned by Araunah. As king, he could have taken the piece of land and the animals to make the sacrifice, but instead he purchased them. Araunah offered to give David what he needed, but David said he would not "offer burnt offerings to the Lord...with that which cost [him] nothing" (v. 24). By definition, a sacrifice has a cost. So when you give to the Lord, give generously.

Brothers and Sisters...we give as a people of God not because God needs the money...but because this is a way that we can honor God. He is so faithful to you and I each and everyday. Being good stewards of our income to God is a mark of an authentic desire to live for God and a practice of highly effective believers.

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. 11 Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes," says the Lord of hosts. 12 "All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land," says the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 3:10-12, NASB).