

## The Vital Importance of Giving

Philippians 2:5 says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” This should be the goal of each and every one of us. To better understand this verse, let's read the verse just before this great command in Philippians 2:4: “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” In the context of our Scripture we observe that having the mind of Christ requires looking beyond what we have to the needs of others. We are reminded of the beatitude found in Acts 20:35; here the Apostle Paul said, “I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” The two verses just above this verse give us important insight. Acts 20:33, 34: “I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.” Jesus said, “And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15). Our Lord is teaching us that our money does not define who we are, but what we do with our money says very much about who we are. God commands us to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30). One of the definitions of “strength” found in Hebrew is “resources or wealth.” Our giving is often a guide that measures our love. Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 12:34).

In the early church we see how vitally important giving was to aid those in need and ultimately to be able to fulfill the Great Commission. Meeting needs is important, but it also matters to our Lord the way in which we give and how we put our hearts into it. An event took place involving a man named Ananias and his wife Sapphira that illustrates the principle of giving and the manner in which we give.

### I. GOD OWNS EVERYTHING WE HAVE.

“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own...” (Acts 4:32a). Notice how many times the word “my” appears in Luke 12:15-19.

Psalms 24:1: “The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” The Devil doesn't own one square foot of earth. In II Corinthians 4:4 Satan is called the “god of this world.” The word “world” has been translated from the Greek word, “aion” which means “age or period.” In other words, during this age he causes havoc in this world, but he doesn't own the terra firma.

See Psalm 50:10-12 and Haggai 2:8.

## II. WE SHOULD HAVE GREAT EMPATHY TOWARD THOSE IN NEED

Acts 4:32c-35: "...But they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

In the United States, you are in the top 10% if your total household income is \$170,431. You are in the top 1% if you have a total household income of \$430,600. You are in the top .1% if your total household income \$1,135, 421. Worldwide, the top eight richest families own the equivalency of the bottom 3.6 billion people. Those eight families own the equivalency of half the world's wealth of the bottom 50%. Three years ago it took 63 families to make the equivalency of the bottom 50% of the world's population. On a worldwide basis, you are in the top 1% of the wealthiest people in the world if your total household income is \$34,400! We understand that God blesses hard work and some have tried harder and therefore will show a noticeable disparity between many of the "haves" and "have nots." But still we need to keep in mind what Jesus said in Luke 12:48b, "...For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required...."

Jesus said, "But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:13, 14). Not only do we see a physical need, but even more so, do you not see a spiritual need? Our Lord said to the church of Laodoea in Revelation 3:17, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

In Luke 4:18, Christ said in His first chronicled sermon, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."

## III. A GIVING PERSON IS AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO OTHERS.

Acts 4:36, 37

Barnabas is a prime example that givers are an encouragement everywhere they go to whomever they minister. II Corinthians 8:5: "And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." The first five verses of II Corinthians 8 show the churches of Macedonia going above and beyond their duty. Givers are people who give consolation to others like Barnabas.

## IV. GIVING IS TO BE DONE ON A VOLUNTARY BASIS.

Acts 5:1-4

In Acts 5:4a, Peter reminded Ananias, “Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?” Exodus 35:22 shows the attitude of the ancient Israelites: “And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing heart, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered offered an offering of gold unto the LORD.” II Corinthians 9:7 reveals the pattern of the New Testament form of giving: “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

#### V. HONESTY IN STEWARDSHIP IS REQUIRED WHEN WE GIVE.

Acts 5:5-11

Ananias and Sapphira paid an ultimate price for not giving from their hearts and for not giving honestly. I Corinthians 4:2: “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

Studies have shown that people who are wealthy have a tendency to rate themselves highly on empathy or compassion. People who are poor don’t rate themselves as highly in these areas. Then the researchers took the testing further and found when observing people in need and hurting, portions of the brain lit up more in the poorer people than the wealthy. We have a tendency to become insulated from the sufferings of other people.

Charity Navigators, an organization that charts giving in America, has discovered that the top 10% of income earners give approximately 3% of their income away. The bottom 20% of income earners give away 4-5% of their income. Those who made more give less; those who made less give more.

Giving is partnering with God. What does your tax return say about you? Proverbs 3:9, 10 promises, “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” Jesus said in Luke 6:38, “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” Be honest and give. God will keep His word and bless you abundantly!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.