

Stewardship of God's Gifts: A Self-Study

Topic #3: Overcoming the fear (or reluctance) of tithing

Jesus tells us that where our treasure is, there our heart will be also. *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,* ²⁰ *but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.* ²¹ *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also* (Matthew 6:19-21). If our main concern is making sure that we have a great bottom line or live in the right neighborhood or do all the right things we need to in order to have the best resume, we should be aware that in the end, those things will perish just like we will. They have no enduring quality and they can be snatched away from us at any time. But, if our main concern is to deal in the things of heaven, to receive from God all he desires to give and to give in response to his blessings towards us, then we should know that we have been given an eternal blessing. And that blessing is not anything that anyone can take away from us. It is ours always.

One of the ways that we demonstrate our understanding of this is through our giving to the Lord and our faithful stewardship. God has asked for a tithe as a grateful response to his gifts which go to support the work of the Church. As we are able to reach that in our lives of faith, it is an indication that we trust in the Lord's provision for our lives. Because we have been blessed with so much, we can confidently give knowing that God will still preserve us and give us all that we need in this life. "The Lord will provide" is not just a pious phrase that is thrown around here and there. It is a divine reality God has given to us in his Word and in his Son.

Because we know God's Word to be true, we also know that his promises are true and certain. Our Lord would never ask us to do something that would bring us harm. God is good and holy and he desires for us to share in that. So, we can be confident that when God asks us to tithe, it is for our good. And that is how we can ultimately see something like stewardship – giving our money away – as something that is a free and joyous activity of the children of God. Again, this is not an easy thing to do...it requires sacrifice and trust. But in the end, God promises to bless us, to provide for us, and to strengthen us, even as he strengthens his Church through these gifts so that the Gospel of Christ may be proclaimed in us.

Consider the following things:

1. Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-8. What does God say about the one who gives generously?
2. What does God say will happen if we give generously and cheerfully? Will we lack for anything? Will we be less able to give to other things we desire to support?
3. With these two ideas in mind, how can we get to a point where our giving is made in joy, rather than reluctantly or compulsory? What things might we need to do? What things may be prohibiting you from doing this?
4. Read Proverbs 3:9. When we give our tithes to the Church, how should we view the recipient? Is it the Church's money? Is it supporting the bottom line?

Again, God desires the best for you. He never asks you to do something that will endanger you or be bad for you. What our Lord asks is for your good, and his purpose is to bless you. Tithing is not always easy, but it is godly and it will change your life. That is what happens when we step out in faith. Certainly some things may need to be given up to follow our Lord's instruction. But the other changes are all for the better for us: we will find peace and contentment. That is the joy that comes from placing everything into the hands of the Lord. He is faithful and he will supply our every need. Christ is our guarantee of that, for he has given all to have you with him eternally.