

**The Bible and Personal Finances
Part 4**

This morning we will continue our series on “The Bible and personal finances.” So far we have considered the foundational truth that God owns everything and we are only stewards of whatever God has entrusted to us (Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalm 24:1). And then we began to consider biblical principles that will help guide us in that stewardship.

So what the first biblical principle that I shared with you? The first biblical principle that I shared with you was that it is more blessed to save than to borrow (Deuteronomy 15:6, 28:12).

But now we are going on to a second biblical principle that is of far greater importance. And what is that principle?

It is more blessed to give than receive (Acts 20:35). I am sure that you were expecting me to get around to this at some point in time. And I am certainly not going to disappoint you. But I know that in expanding on this principle this morning there will be some people here that will think that the reason I am sharing this principle with you is in order to enrich the coffers of this church. This in fact might happen but this is absolutely not the reason I am sharing this principle with you. I am sharing this principle with you because this is what the Scriptures teach and we truly want you to enter into the blessedness of this particular activity.

So let me ask you this question. Where did the teaching that it is more blessed to give than receive come from? According to **Acts 20:35**, this teaching came from Christ. So how blessed is giving according to Christ?

Christ considered the activity of giving not just moderately blessed but exceedingly blessed, both in terms of the present age and the age to come (Mark 10:28-30). Let me read for you **Mark 10:28-30**. **“Peter began to say to Him, ‘Behold, we have left everything and followed you.’ (29) Jesus said, ‘Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, (30) but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers**

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and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.’”

So what do we learn about the exceeding blessedness of giving in terms of the present age and the age to come in these verses? Let us first of all consider how Christ illustrated the extreme blessedness of giving in terms of the present age.

Christ illustrated the exceeding blessedness of giving in the present age, first of all, in terms of relationships (Mark 10:29-30).

Jesus told His disciples that anyone who left their mother, father, brothers and sisters for His sake and the sake of the gospel would receive one hundred times as much in the present age. Isn't this exactly what He said? So how should we understand this?

Did Christ mean that if one of His disciples left the comfort and support of their biological family that they in return would be given one hundred new biological families to replace the one that they had left? This would be an absurdity! This is not what Christ meant at all. So if Christ did not mean this then what did Christ mean?

Christ in essence told His disciples that those who had left the comfort and support of their biological family would be compensated exceedingly by being joined to a much larger spiritual family (Eph. 4:11-16). This is obviously, I believe, what He meant.

But what exactly was this larger spiritual family that Christ was referring too? And of course the answer would have to be that Christ was referring to His church that would be shortly established at the coming of the Holy Spirit.

And why would Christ's church be exceedingly of greater importance than our biological family? It is because Christ's church supplies us what we need in order to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus and to successfully fulfill our individual part in expanding Christ's kingdom in this world.

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Let me read for you **Ephesians 4:11-16**. “**And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, (12) for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; (13) until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. (14) As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; (15) but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, (16) from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.**”

Are our biological families important? Of course our biological families are important. But our church family is exceedingly more important in light of eternal things. Therefore if we assign the appropriate value to our church family that we should, then our spiritual family the church would more than compensate for any loss that we might feel if we felt compelled to leave our biological family in our pursuit of Christ and His purposes. How much so! How about one hundred times!

Do we view our church family in this way? Do we see this church family as absolutely essential for our spiritual maturing and ultimate effectiveness in our work of spreading the gospel of Christ? Hopefully we do since this is the truth.

But Christ did not limit His remarks concerning the exceeding blessedness of giving in this present age simply to relationships. Christ secondly illustrated the exceeding blessedness of giving in the present age in terms of material wealth (Mark 10:29-30).

What did Jesus say to His disciples about the blessedness of giving in respect to their material wealth in **Mark 10:29**? Christ told His disciples in **Mark 10:29** if anyone left His house or farm for His sake and for the sake of the gospel He would give to them, in this age, one hundred times as much in terms of houses and farms. Wow! What an investment strategy!

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It appears on the surface that Christ is telling His disciples that no matter what they give up materially they would receive one hundred times as much materially in return. In other words, it would appear on the surface that Christ was telling His disciples that if they gave up a \$1000 for His sake and for the sake of His kingdom they should expect at least \$100,000 in return.

Clearly, at least on the surface, it appears that this is what Christ said but is this really what He meant by what He said? This is the question that we must answer. And I believe that the answer is absolutely and categorically no! This is not what Christ meant by what He said.

The reason why we cannot understand that giving up material resources for the sake of Christ, such as houses and farms, is a guaranteed path to greater material wealth is because of the context.

First of all, let us look at the immediate context and more specifically what had taken place just prior to **Mark 10:28-30**? And what was that? It was a conversation between Christ and a rich man in **Mark 10:17-22**.

This rich man wanted to know what He must do to in order to inherit eternal life. Jesus responded by telling him to go sell everything that he had and give it to the poor. When Christ said this to him He was not giving the rich man an investment strategy in order to obtain earthly wealth. Christ was giving him an investment strategy in order to secure for himself spiritual wealth. Did the rich man understand this? Absolutely? Unfortunately, for this rich man, he preferred material wealth to spiritual wealth and that is why **Mark 10:22** tells us that he went away grieved.

And then based on the rich man's response what did Jesus then tell His disciples? Let me read for you **Mark 10:23**. "**And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, 'How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!'**" In other words, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they love Christ and what He is able to give them more than they love anything else and that includes money.

Why is this? It is because if we love anything more than we love Christ and what He is able to give us it will prevent us from bowing down before Him and embracing Him as our Lord and Savior by faith. And if are unable to bow ourselves before Christ and embrace him as our Lord and Savior by

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faith then we will not be able to enter the kingdom of God because we can only enter into the kingdom of God through Christ.

So is it easy for rich men to enter the kingdom of God when we realize that they must love Christ more than they love their money? No, it is not easy. In fact, Christ told His disciples that it would be a hard thing, not an impossible thing but a hard thing.

And this line of thought eventually led to Peter's outburst in **Mark 10:28** when he said, "**Behold we have left everything and followed you.**" So let me ask you this question. Based on the immediate context, what was Peter concerned about when he told Christ that they had given up everything to follow Him? Was he concerned about obtaining spiritual riches or material riches? Based on the immediate context, Peter, in Mark 10:28, was only concerned about obtaining spiritual riches and therefore Christ's response in Mark 10:29 must be interpreted in light of that concern. Therefore when Christ spoke to His disciples about receiving one hundred times as much in houses and farms in this present age we must understand that remark more in a spiritual sense than in a material sense and this is very consistent with the flow of thought that we have already established in Christ's remarks about the blessedness of giving as it related to family.

But it is not only the immediate context that points us in this direction. The broader biblical context also points us in that direction both in terms of what Christ taught in other passages as well as what He and His disciples actually experienced. In other words, based on the broader biblical context, Christ made it very clear to people that they should not expect grand houses and expansive farms if they chose to follow Him (Matthew 8:18-20). Let me read for you **Matthew 8:18-20**. "**Now when Jesus saw a crowd around Him, He gave orders to depart to the other side. (19) And a certain scribe came and said to Him, 'Teacher, I will follow You wherever you go.'** (20) **And Jesus said to him, 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.'**" Now does this sound as if Christ was promising would-be disciples who were willing to leave their homes and farms far more of the very same thing in return? And of course our answer would have to be no. He did not do it here in **Matthew 8:18-20** and neither did He do it in **Mark 10:28-30**.

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And Christ and His disciple's lack of material wealth as recorded in the New Testament confirm this thought.

Therefore putting this all together let me ask you this question. Did Christ in **Mark 10:29** actually mean that if one of His disciples did in fact leave their house or farm for His sake and the sake of the kingdom that they in return would literally be given one hundred more houses and one hundred more farms? No! Based on the immediate and broad based biblical context this would be an absurdity.

And the absurdity of it is magnified even more when we realize that whatever Christ was promising them must be consistent with the persecutions that Christ told them would accompany whatever He was promising them according to **Mark 10:29** and certainly the accumulation of huge amounts of material wealth is certainly not consistent with the idea of persecution.

So if Christ did not mean that those who had given up houses and farms would not be exceedingly blessed with additional houses and farms, what did Christ mean? Christ in essence told His disciples that those who had left houses and farms would be compensated exceedingly by an overwhelming satisfaction equivalent to a hundred houses and farms. This is what Christ meant.

John Piper put it this way. **“There is one hundred times more joy and satisfaction in a life devoted to Christ and the gospel than a life devoted to frivolous comforts and pleasures and worldly advancements.”**

And don't we know this to be true from our own personal experiences as the disciples of Christ. Let me ask you this question. What would you rather have a million dollars in the bank without Christ, such as the rich man who rejected Him in **Mark 10**, or a handful of change in your pocket with Christ, such as was the case with Christ's eleven disciples? The answer is obvious. The pocket full of change with Christ is far more satisfying than a million dollars in cash without Christ. How much more satisfying? How about 100 times more!

Those who give and give generously and even sacrificially in this life for the sake of Christ and for the sake of His gospel will never feel shortchanged on

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any level in this life. And this is the truth. They will in fact feel exceedingly blessed a hundred times over.

We are now ready to turn our attention from what Christ said about the exceeding blessedness of giving in respect to the present age to the exceeding blessedness of giving in respect to the age to come. So what did Christ tell His disciples about this?

Christ told His disciples that those who left their families and their house and farms for His sake and the sake of the kingdom not only would receive blessings in this life but eternal life in the next.

Let me read for you once again **Mark 10:28-30**. **“Peter began to say to Him, ‘Behold, we have left everything and followed you.’ (29) Jesus said, ‘Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, (30) but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.’”**

Now I want to make this as clear as I possibly can. We are not saved through giving up things for Christ. We are saved by faith in Christ and the giving up of things for Christ is simply the evidence that we are in fact saved.

Why would this be so? It’s obvious! Giving is the evidence that we are in fact saved because giving is what Jesus is all about, and if He truly is indwelling us and living His life through us of course we will give.

If you are here this morning and are quick to give and to give generously and sacrificially be excited. It confirms that you are in fact heaven bound or that you will be a recipient of eternal life in the age to come.

But if you are here this morning and giving is the last thing you think of, and even when you do give it is done sporadically and even then sparingly, you should be concerned. Why? You should be concerned because the lack of giving is not consistent with someone who is truly a genuine born-again disciple of Christ.

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So let me ask you this question. Is it more blessed to give than receive? And what is the answer? When giving is done for Christ's sake and the sake of His gospel the return on that investment will be extraordinary both in terms of the present age and the age to come. And why have I shared this with you? I have shared this with you because this is the truth and this is what the Scriptures teach.

The only question that is still outstanding is what will we do with this truth? Will we accept it and seek to apply it to our lives and our financial decisions or will we not. And this obviously is not a decision that many professing believers find easy to make in light of the unrelenting message of the world that happiness is found in stuff.

But if we can reject the message of the world and embrace the message of Christ we have embraced an investment strategy that will pay off big time, which leads us to our prayer.

May God give us the grace to experience the exceeding blessedness of giving in this age and the age to come.