

The Test of Commitment

Pastor George M. Stahnke, 03/04/2000

Introduction: Its important to understand the biblical principle of giving. Repeatedly the Bible associates our money with our commitment and walk with the Lord.

While teaching on giving may be uncomfortable for some, it is important for all. As in every area of our lives, we seek to be principle driven. The area of financial giving should be no different. It is my hope that you will be encouraged and that through your obedience greatly blessed!

I. The blessing of financial commitment

Malachi 3:10-11 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. 11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty.

Proverbs 3:9-10 Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; 10 then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

Luke 6:38 Give, and you will receive gifts—the full measure, compacted, shaken together and overflowing, will be put right in your lap. For the measure with which you measure out will be used to measure back to you!" —The Jewish New Testament

II. The test of financial commitment

Deut. 25:4 Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.

Oxen were often used to tread out the grain on a threshing floor. The animal was attached by poles to a large millstone. As it walked around the millstone, its hooves trampled the grain, separating the kernels from the chaff. At the same time, the millstone ground the grain into flour. To muzzle the ox would prevent it from eating while it was working. Paul used this illustration in the New Testament to argue that people productive in Christian work should not be denied its benefits--they should receive financial support —**Life App Notes - Deut. 25:4**

1 Cor. 9:7-11 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? 8 Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? 10 Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. 11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?

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Malachi 3:7-9 Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?' 8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me.

During Malachi's day, the people were not giving tithes, so the Levites went to work to earn a living, thereby neglecting their God-given responsibilities to care for the temple and for the service of worship. Everything we have is from God; so when we refuse to return to him a part of what he has given, we rob him. Do you selfishly want to keep 100 percent of what God gives, or are you willing to return at least 10 percent for helping to advance God's kingdom? —**Life App Notes - Malachi 3:8**

III. The test of a right spirit towards commitment

1 Cor. 16:2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

2 Cor. 9:7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

hilaros, hil-ar-os', Greek Stg 2431; from the same as Greek 2436 (hileos); propitious or merry ("hilarious"), i.e. prompt or willing :- cheerful.

Hebrews 6:10 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.

Dr. Hugh McKean of Chiangmai, Thailand, tells of a church of four hundred members where every member tithes. They receive a weekly wage of forty stangs (less than twenty cents] and their rice. Of this meager existence, each gives a tenth every week. Because of this, they have done more for Christ in Thailand than any other church. They pay their own preacher and have sent two missionary families to spread the gospel in a community cut off from the outside world. They are intensely interested in all forms of Christian work, especially work for unfortunates of every kind; and their gifts for this kind of work are large. They have not only accepted Christ, but, having found Him good, they are making Him known to others. Oh, by the way, this church of all tithers is also a church of all lepers--every person has leprosy.

—James S. Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988), p. 461.

Matthew 6:19-21 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal.²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Storing up treasures in heaven is not limited to tithing and giving alone. There is a sense in which giving our money to God's work is like investing in heaven. We also understand that all acts of obedience to God are eternal investments.

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Five test questions regarding financial commitment

- Are you satisfied with your current giving? __Yes __ NO
- Does your giving reflect biblical teaching? __Yes __ NO
- Does your giving reflect your love of the Lord? __Yes __ NO
- Does your current level of giving reflect your commitment to this congregation and the Lord's work? __Yes __ NO
- What changes do you intend to make after reading this teaching?