“There are two tests of a true disciple: wealth and poverty.”

The Bible says far more about wealth and poverty than it does about heaven and hell.

Some common mistakes Christian churches make

✓ They avoid talking about money.
✓ They talk too much about money.
✓ They talk about money in the wrong way.

As a blessing from God be thankful.
As an opportunity for ministry be responsible.
As a dangerous deception don’t let it define you.
As a desensitizer to God, people, & your spiritual need don’t let it blind you.

How to read the Old Testament

The Mosaic Law and “tithing”?
Some facts about tithing

- **Descriptive:** Abraham’s sharing 1/10 of the spoils of war with Melchizedek (a priest of God). Heb.7:4, Gen.14:20

- **Prescriptive:** The Mosaic law. Lev.-Deut.
  
  The Hebrew tithe system was a part of the feudal relationship between God, His people, and the promised land. It was an extension of the 8th commandment.

  - Until the 19th cent. many states in the USA collected a tithe from their citizens.
  - The practice of tithing is unknown outside the Judeo-Christian tradition.

THE ISRAELITES LIVED AS STEWARDS IN A “FEUDAL SYSTEM” WHERE GOD WAS THE PROPERTY OWNER.

“The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me.” Lev. 25:23

- The tithe was a part of the Holy Land stewardship.
- The Year of Jubilee returned land to its original owner (manager) after 50 years. Lev.25:8-13
  
  “Thou shalt not steal.” Ex. 20:16

- The people were to respect the property under the stewardship of others.
- This commandment implies “stewardship” but does not suggest “ownership”.

THE BIBLICAL TITHE WAS LINKED TO THE COMMANDMENT - “DO NOT STEAL” FROM GOD.

Malachi 3

“8 Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. 9 You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! 10 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.”

THE BIBLICAL TITHE WAS A TRANSACTION OF GIVING AND RECEIVING.

Proverbs 3

“9 Honor the Lord from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce; 10 so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.”

The giver would be blessed materially if the giver put the Lord first in the handling of material wealth.

THE OLD COVENANT SYSTEM WAS A “FLAT TAX” INVOLVING 3 TITHES.

10% priesthood (Levites) (Num.18:21,24)

10% temple (Temple) (Deut.14:22-27)

10% charity (the poor) every 3rd year (Deut.14:28,29)
The O.T. defines blessing and cursing in material terms.

Deuteronomy 28

“All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the Lord your God. … 11 The Lord will make you abound in prosperity … 13 The Lord will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, … to observe them carefully.”

- Vs 1-14 list the many blessings that will come with obedience all of which are material.
- Vs 15-68 list the many curses that will come with disobedience all of which are material.

“Sowing and reaping” seems to be the “great commission” of the prosperity gospel.

2 Corinthians 9:6

“Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully.”

Mark 10 (Matt.19:29)

“… 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.”

The prosperity evangelist Kenneth Copeland’s net worth is $760 million.

Mark 4:8 The Parable of the Sower

“And other seeds fell into the good soil and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”

Two models of sowing and reaping.

We are the sower

- Faith is the seed
- God is the soil
- We reap what we sow materially.

God is the sower

- We are the soil
- the Word is the seed
- God reaps in and through us spiritually

How to read the Old Testament

What do the Apostles teach us about giving?

2 Corinthians 9

“… Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. … 10 Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; 11 you will be enriched in everything for all liberality.”

Sowing and reaping (in the teaching of the Apostles) had more to do with “righteousness” and “for all liberality” than personal material wealth.

2 Corinthians 9:6

John 18:36

“My kingdom is not of this world.”

Should a Christian tithe?

(a parallel issue)

Should Christians honor a Sabbath day (Saturday) and keep it holy (refrain from working)?

(Three guidelines)

- The tithe is mandated under the Old Covenant but not after Pentecost.
- The New Covenant calls for more than a tithe from most of us - (equality).
- We should not stand in judgment of those who do or do not practice tithing.
“It’s not how much of my money I give to God, but how much of God’s money I keep for myself.”

R.G LeTourneau

“Tithing isn’t the ceiling of giving; it’s the floor. It’s not the finish line of giving; it’s just the starting blocks. Tithes can be the training wheels to launch us into the mind-set, skills, and habits of grace giving.”

Randy Alcorn

“17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.

18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,

19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.”

1 Timothy 6

“Wealth is a gift
Generosity is a sign

Basics

“17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.

✓ Enjoy material wealth as a gift from God.
✓ Don’t mistake it for a sign of superiority.
✓ Don’t place too much hope in it.
✓ Be prepared to gracefully lose it.

Galatians 3

“24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, . . . 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”

When we start training wheels are a restriction to teach & protect. After we get the point they are a restriction to a gracious heart.
Materialism is not the possession of wealth, but rather the preoccupation with material things by both the rich and the poor.

Basics

“18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,"

✓ “Do good” for the kingdom with what you have been given.
✓ Don’t necessarily give it all away but rather manage it as God’s steward.
✓ View generosity as your true treasure.
✓ Enthusiastically initiate sharing what you have been given.

Basics

“19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.”

✓ Saving for the future is important and let it be measured in testimony rather than money.
✓ Measure and seek a “life” that is Christ like in terms of perspectives, values, priorities, expectations, and courageous faith.

Why do Christians give?

They are need driven
They are blessing driven
They are duty driven

They should be worship driven

When asked about her ministry as a social worker she replied, “My ministry is not social work, it is worship. My care for the suffering is my love for Jesus.”

Mother Teresa

What we would tell visitors to the congregation - We are not asking you to give but rather:

• If you are worn out - REST!
• If you are wounded - HEAL!
• If you are immature - LEARN!
• If you aren’t a believer - WATCH & LISTEN!

So that some time down the road you can - WORK, HEAL, TEACH and BELIEVE!
“We take a new convert and immediately make a worker out of him. That is not God’s way. God meant that a convert should first learn to be a worshipper, and then his work will have God in it.

A.W Tozer

“Seeking the Lord” in decisions

✓ Before the coming of the Spirit, disciples were asked to “seek the Lord” for revelation in guidance. Acts1:24-26
✓ After Pentecost, believers were to seek wisdom more than revelation. Jas.1:5-8
✓ For most decisions seek: (because we already have the Spirit indwelling us)
   ★ Broad PERSPECTIVE
   ★ Clear VALUES & PRIORITIES
   ★ Realistic EXPECTATIONS
   ★ Courageous FAITH

Giving is a challenge to both

FEAR & FAITH

At the heart of the Gospel is freedom from

FEAR to FAITH

Our challenge with material wealth is not our lack of love for the needy.
We have no problem being generous with someone else’s stuff.

Our challenge is FEAR that we will not be secure and happy without the stuff we have acquired.

We too often fail to trust that we can be secure, fulfilled, and happy with less stuff.

How much should I give?

2 Corinthians 8

“12 For if the readiness (to give) is present, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he does not have. 13 For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality – 14 at this present time your abundance being a supply for their want, that their abundance also may become a supply for your want, that there may be equality; 15 as it is written, “He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little had no lack.””

• The underlying basis for this teaching is the “community” of the Body of Christ.
Acts 2
“44 And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; 45 and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.”

Acts 4:32
“And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.”

We should not only pray, expecting God to answer our prayers but also pray that we might be the answer to someone else’s prayer.