



GOD'S PLAN *for* GENEROUS LIVING

LIVING GENEROUSLY

NEW IN CHRIST...

When you become a Christian, you start down a road of renewal that will ultimately lead you to become more like Christ. This means casting aside your previous thinking (Romans 12:2) and embracing the new life Christ has promised for those who are "in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

One of the first areas where this change is required is in one's attitude towards our possessions, including money. In our old life financial success was a basis for security, peace of mind, and the pursuit of pleasure and comfort. However, as a follower of Christ, we learn from the Scriptures that everything we have comes from the kind hand of God.

"God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." 2 Corinthians 9:8

Furthermore, we are provided these things so that we may share them with others, and not accumulate wealth for ourselves.

"You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God." 2 Corinthians 9:11

Let us align our attitude to that of Christ and acknowledge his ownership of all that we are and have, and commit to using it for his purposes.

NEXT...

We need to change our thinking about giving. The world considers giving as an obligation, a duty to bear, the sharing with others what you have. Christ wants you to think of giving as a joyful privilege! That is quite a contrast. When you sing joyfully to the Lord in our worship services, the time for the offering is to have that same enthusiasm. It is a time for gratitude and thanksgiving, for all that Christ has done for us!

"Each of us should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7

You might ask, "What if I don't feel that joy of giving? Should I just give anyway?" You may have heard of the "Treasure Principle" it is based on Christ's teaching.

"But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:20-21

Christ was teaching that usually the heart follows obedience. If you practice giving, your heart tends to value it, because that is where you are investing.

ADDING IT UP...

"Where will the money come from to give?" That is where faith and trust come into play. There is a scriptural principle about "first fruits". When God instituted offerings his followers would give back to him, he said bring the first of the flock or the field to him. This would be a symbol how believers can put God first. They would not know if there would be any other "fruit" to follow.

"Bring the best of the first fruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God." Exodus 23:19

Many Christians put Christ first by having an auto withdrawal from their bank to support the Lord's work. They then live on the remainder, trusting God to provide for their needs and those of their family. The Met has many people who do this each month and have proven God's faithfulness over decades.

DON'T GET DISCOURAGED...

This may all seem difficult, you may never have thought God was so interested in what you do with your money. However, the Bible includes about 2000 passages dealing with money and possessions. For example, the Apostle Paul told the early Christians to excel in the grace of giving.

"See that you also excel in this grace of giving." 2 Corinthians 8:7

Grace is a work that God does in your heart, life and circumstances to mold you more to the likeness of Christ. Paul's encouragement is to excel in this grace. By "excel", he means to not settle for mediocre giving, but to make it a priority. The good news is that God will help you by providing for your needs. As you extend yourself in giving, you will find God is faithful.

BE CAREFUL...

Committing to give generously will impact your spending. If you practice giving off the top rather than from what is left, you will want to take greater care how you spend to avoid wasting money or going into debt. As Christians who are committed to giving, we also want to be good stewards of what God has provided.

"Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise." Ephesians 5:15

You will be amazed at how easily you can avoid unnecessary expenses, and how God enables you to meet your needs while giving generously.

HOW MUCH?

If you are committed to giving generously of your finances, and want to experience the joy of placing Christ first in all you do, then the obvious question is "How much should you give?" There is no prescribed amount such as a membership fee for belonging to Christ! The guidance from Scripture is that we are to give in proportion to our income.

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

OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE

The Old Testament Scriptures specified a tithe or tenth of one's income was to be offered to the Lord. As Christians, we are not under the law to tithe in the same way, but it is a helpful guide as to what God had expected to be returned to him from the income he had provided to his followers. Many Christians have settled on the idea of tithe as a basis for their giving. However, it is important not to get caught up in trying to meet some legal standard, but rather to aim for generosity as a lifestyle.

WHO DO I GIVE TO?

The bulk of your giving to the Lord's work should go to the church ministry where you fellowship and grow as a believer. But don't stop there...support a missionary, a family member who is needy, and don't forget the poor. Once giving generously becomes your lifestyle, you will want to expand your giving to bless people and ministries of all kinds! There is a principle of "sowing and reaping" that is found in Scripture.

"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously." 2 Corinthians 9:6

A farmer who skimps on seed cannot expect a bumper crop. In the same way, the Christian who seeks to bless others and experience the joy of giving will not want to cut corners.

IS THIS ABOUT GENEROUS GIVING OR GENEROUS LIVING?

It is important to re-orient your mind to generosity in every area of life, not only giving. You can be generous in serving, helping others, and in relationships. Be generous in loving others as well as expressing kindness to strangers. Forgive others who may have hurt you, and give others the benefit of the doubt when you hear of someone's wrongdoing. And share Christ with someone as a genuine act of generosity, for he has given us new life!

Visit metbiblechurch.ca/give to learn more.