

Blessed to Be a Blessing: Financial Disciplines of Discipleship

(Editor's Note: This is Part 2 of a three-part series, "Steps for Biblical Prosperity and Success in '24." Find Part 1 [here](#), and watch Charisma Magazine Online for Part 3, coming soon.)

From Genesis to Revelation, we find examples of how God's people are blessed to be a blessing to others. In Genesis 12, God chose Abram to be the "father of a great nation." Then, in verses 2-3, God described the destiny before him:

"I will make of you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless them who bless you and curse him who curses you, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

This Abrahamic Covenant became foundational to all other promises to the patriarchal family and the tribes of peoples it became. The promised blessings flowed to each of them, as they obeyed the "if ... then" conditional requirements. In response to and recognition of God's blessings, Abraham's people paid tithes and gave offerings.

The first mention of tithing was in Genesis 14, when Abraham gave a tithe or "a tenth part of everything" (Heb. 7:2b) recovered from marauding kings of the north who had kidnapped Abraham's nephew Lot, his entire family, along with their goods and possessions. This tithe was given to Melchizedek, the King of Salem and "priest of God Most High," who used it in a priestly act of worship. This ancient tithing practice was observed by Abraham's descendants hundreds of years before Moses and any formal guidelines for giving, as found later in the Law, itself.

Financial Disciplines of Discipleship

In the New Testament, Jesus affirmed tithing not as a religious law or legalistic obligation, but as a beginning point for an accepted discipline for His disciples (Matt. 23:23-24). New Testament giving is to be a demonstration of love and not law. If we have received the great gift of salvation freely, should we not give freely and liberally as well? Matching the giving minimum of people of God of the Old Covenant to sustain and expand local ministry seems like a good place to begin.

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Additionally, Paul challenged New Testament disciples to give generously and systematically to needy followers of Christ and to the poor (whom Jesus says we will always have around us). Funding appeals were also made to support Christian workers expanding the ministry to other areas and even nonbelievers in some cases. These were specific needs and specific collections or offerings, which were approved by congregational leaders. Accountability was expected from these outreaching ministries.

Grace Giving

The apostle Paul led the Corinthians in a specific plan of giving, which became a prudent pattern of modern offerings and collections as well. This type of systematic giving might be summarized as “grace giving” (2 Cor. 8:1-7): **Giving Regularly As Christ Enables.**

These gifts were to be:

- **Periodic:** when the saints gathered each week.
- **Personal:** No one else can do it for you.
- **Proportionate:** an equitable sum proportionate to your

income.

– **Preventive:** Regular giving precludes the need for pressured, emotional giving, poorly administered projects or unaccountable leaders.

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Someone has elaborated on Paul's principles of generous giving by advising, "Give according to your income—lest God make your income according to your giving!"

This is a new year and a new chapter in our journal of Christian maturity. May we each learn to excel in these disciplines of discipleship so our master may say of us, "Well done, you good and faithful servant ... come and share your Master's happiness!" (Matt. 25:21, NIV).

Since believers are now "in Christ" (Rom. 8:1), God no longer sees our sins and unrighteous imperfections needing temporary atonement by animals. Instead, He sees the righteousness of His own Son and His sacrifice on the cross, completely atoning for our sins (Eph. 2:13, Heb. 8:12).

Not only is our sin-debt canceled, but its record is also blotted out and "nailed to the cross" (Col. 2:13-15). Our relationship with God is fully restored (John 3:16-17, 20:31) and His promises of blessing now include us.

God Intends Prosperity for Us in 2024

As we said earlier in this series, God's larger sense of "prosperity" is to enable us to be "happy, holy and healthy." Psalms 35:27 in The Passion Translation says:

"But let all my true friends shout for joy, all those who know and love what I do for you. Let them all say, 'The Lord is great, and he delights in the prosperity of his servant.'"

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