

*You've Lost it. Get it Back.*  
*Restoring Extravagant Generosity*  
Troy Knight

**TALK IT OVER**

Key Scripture:

**Malachi 3:6-12 (NLT)**

*6 "I am the Lord, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already destroyed.  
7 Ever since the days of your ancestors, you have scorned my decrees and failed to obey them. Now return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. "But you ask, 'How can we return when we have never gone away?'  
8 "Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me! "But you ask, 'What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?' "You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me. 9 You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me. 10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test! 11 Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not fall from the vine before they are ripe," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. 12 "Then all nations will call you blessed, for your land will be such a delight," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies.*

**2 Corinthians 8:1-5 (NLT)**

*1 Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. 2 They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. 3 For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. 4 They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem. 5 They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do.*

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- If a rich relative died and left you \$50 million, how would you spend it? What one thing in your life would change the most?

Start **sharing**. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- **Read Malachi 3:6-12.** How were the Israelites cheating God? What blessings did God promise for those who tithed?
- A recent survey revealed that less than 5% of American Christians tithe. If so many blessings come with tithing, why do so few Christians practice it?
- **Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5.** Paul said the Macedonians were "very poor" yet had great joy and generosity. What would you say to the person who says, "I'll be generous one day when we have more money?"
- Pastor Troy said "tithing is the antidote to greed." How does generosity protect us from greed?
- **Read 2 Corinthians 8:6-12.** Summarize the teachings of these verses. How do we get to the place where we "give eagerly?" Where does that motivation come from?
- Have you ever taken Financial Peace University or another financial course that taught Biblical principles? What impact did it have on your life?
- What, if anything, is keeping you from practicing extravagant generosity?

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- This week, evaluate your financial plan and tithing to help bring that part of your life in line with God's plan for you.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Pray that members of your group feel convicted to give according to scripture, generously and joyously, and according to what they have, trusting Jesus in their obedience and submitting their whole lives to Him.

**2 Corinthians 8:6-12 (NLT)**

*6 So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving.  
7 Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving. 8 I am not commanding you to do this. But I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of the other churches. 9 You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich. 10 Here is my advice: It would be good for you to finish what you started a year ago. Last year you were the first who wanted to give, and you were the first to begin doing it. 11 Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have. 12 Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have.*

**Question: "What does the Bible say about giving?"**

**Answer:** The Bible has a lot to say about giving!

First, Jesus declares that our attitude toward money is indicative of the focus of our hearts: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). It is helpful to look at our various financial accounts and observe how we spend our money. Our love for God and His work will show up in how we give our money away.

The Bible gives some helpful principles to guide us in how we think about and how we give our money:

1. *God owns everything and gives His things, including money, to whom He chooses.* Consider Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." Consider also Proverbs 22:2, "Rich and poor have this in common: the Lord is the Maker of them all." The reality is that all we have is from God. He gives according to His purposes and plans. The question should never be "How much of my money should I give away?" but "How would God have me use His money?"

2. *How we spend and give away God's money is a fundamental aspect of worship.* Colossians 3:17 commands us to do everything for God's glory, whatever we do. Thus, when we spend and give our money, we must be confident that what we're doing glorifies God and honors Him. This includes our charitable giving to the church and other gospel ministries. But it also includes what we do with all of the money entrusted to us by God.

3. *Giving to the church and the ministry of the gospel is commanded by God.* First Corinthians 16:1–2 addresses the need for giving: "Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 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." Consistent giving to the church for the ministry is a directive of God to Christians.

4. *Giving is to be done with thoughtfulness, sacrifice, generosity, and joy.* We are to thoughtfully consider how much to give based upon our income (1 Corinthians 16:2). Along these lines, 2 Corinthians 9:6–7 says, "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." Thoughtfulness, generosity, freedom, and joy are all part of giving. We are to be "cheerful" in our giving. It's easy to be joyful when singing praise songs to God. This same joy should be present in our giving. We have an example of sacrificial giving in the Macedonians, who gave even in their "severe trial," "extreme poverty," and "beyond their ability" (2 Corinthians 8:1–9).

On top of their required giving, God directed the Israelites to give "freewill" offerings. Deuteronomy 16:10 explains that they were to give a "freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the Lord your God has given you." It is this directive that is most similar to the New Testament type of giving. There is no tithe required today, but our gifts are more akin to a freewill offering. After prayer and consideration, we give as we feel God would have us to. Believers have freedom in this area of worship. As the Lord prospers us, we should consider giving more.

5. *Our giving is to be done quietly.* Jesus warned us against giving with fanfare or in a manner that would draw attention to ourselves. He told us, "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" (Matthew 6:3). Our giving should "be in secret" (verse 4). And we have the promise that "your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (verse 4). God the Father's reward will surely be better than the applause and accolades of men.

6. *As we give for God's glory, sacrificially, generously, and joyfully, God promises blessing.* The one who gives generously also reaps generously (2 Corinthians 9:6). Proverbs 22:9 states, "A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor." And Jesus says in Luke 6:38, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." In our giving for the glory of God, we build up treasure in heaven. We do not seek earthly, material prosperity, but we rest assured that God will reward and bless us somehow, someday. Perhaps the blessing will come here on earth, but it will most definitely come in glory.

In Philippians 4:18, Paul describes the Philippians' financial gifts to him as "a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God." The church's practical help of Paul's ministry was noticed by God and pleasing to Him. We, too, can be faithful stewards of God's gifts in our giving.