

# ***BEING STEWARDS OF GOD'S MONEY***

## ***Principles & Practices: Principle Four***

I will seek God, not money

### ***GENEROSITY***

*What promise of reward energizes my investments?*

From the seed principle of STEWARDSHIP has flowed the other principles of Biblical Stewardship. There was CONTENTMENT and the SELF-CONTROL. The final principle that we will study, again coming out of the idea that God owns everything and we are but stewards (or managers), is that of GENEROSITY.

GENEROSITY is the most “upside-down” of the principles we have looked at. We find that when we earnestly seek God first, that He blesses us with all that we need. It is indeed more blessed to give than to receive. But Biblical generous-living needs to be energized by a number of mind-renewing concepts. Let’s look at some of them together.

2 Corinthians 8:9 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

**The first concept to energize our generosity is the example of Jesus. Explain what the Apostle Paul means about Christ being “rich” and then becoming “poor” so that we might become “rich.”**

2 Corinthians 9:12-15 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. <sup>13</sup> By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, <sup>14</sup> while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. <sup>15</sup> Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

**2 Corinthians 8-9 is the largest text dealing with giving in the New Testament. We just saw of the example of Christ is to be a model to us. Paul then thanks the Corinthians for their generosity. How does verse 15 fit into his thought-flow?**

**How has the example of Christ's love stirred you to be generous?**

1 Corinthians 4:6-7 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup> I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another. <sup>7</sup> For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

**A second mind-renewing concept is the gratitude that we should have for all we have received. According to this text, what do we have that has not been a gift to us from God?**

**Gordon McDonald once said, “Generous giving begins with the posture of total humility.” How could that quote tie to the text we just read?**

Matthew 6:19-21 (ESV)

<sup>19</sup> "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

**A third concept that helps renew our minds is found in the desire we should have to invest wisely. After all, who wants to throw away what they have? What is it that we can “store up” in heaven?**

**Why is such “sending it on ahead” (even though you cannot take it with you) a good investment?**

1 Timothy 6:17-19 (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. <sup>18</sup> They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, <sup>19</sup> thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

**What is the reasoning behind challenging those who are rich in this present age to be “rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share”?**

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup>The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. <sup>7</sup>Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup>And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that having all contentment in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

**The fourth mind-renewing concept that energizes our generosity is found in the law of sowing and reaping. This is not just a general principle, but in the context of the chapters in 2 Corinthians, it is about financial giving to the poor. What does this text promise God will allow us to reap?**

Acts 20:33-35 (ESV)

<sup>33</sup>I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. <sup>34</sup>You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. <sup>35</sup>In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

**As the Apostle speaks to the Elders upon his departure, he gives to them what example of his personal application of Jesus' principle, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"?**

**This is the fifth concept that helps motivate generous living: The blessing of giving! When have you found this principle to be true in your life?**

2 Corinthians 8:8 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup>I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.

**The final stimulant for generosity is again found within the context of 2 Corinthians 8-9 (why not read the whole text). Paul challenges the people to be generous so that their love may be proved to be what?**

**It is easy to say, "I love you." But without generosity towards the needs of others, that statement may ring hollow. Is this final mind-renewing idea one that presses you to get practical about your "love?" If so, how?**

**With those concepts helping us to renew our minds, we need to address a question that many have, "Are rewards a legitimate motivation for generosity?" It is easy to assume that since eternal life is a free gift of God's grace that there is no place for different levels of rewards for believers. Let's check the Scriptures to see what they say.**

Matthew 11:20-24 (ESV)

<sup>20</sup> Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. <sup>21</sup> "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>22</sup> But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. <sup>23</sup> And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. <sup>24</sup> But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you."

**What does Jesus teach here about degrees of punishment?**

Romans 14:10-12 (ESV)

<sup>10</sup> Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; <sup>11</sup> for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." <sup>12</sup> So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

**Here the context is talking about believers. Who will have to stand and give an account before God?**

John 5:24 (ESV)

<sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

Romans 8:1 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

**YET . . . We must not understand that a believer's giving account will involve being punished since Jesus has taken all our punishment for us.**

Revelation 11:18 (ESV)

<sup>18</sup> The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."

**But the time will come when God rewards His servants. In the context of this verse, are the rewards different for different believers?**

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. <sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

**In the context here, is Paul talking about believers or unbelievers?**

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw- <sup>13</sup> each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. <sup>14</sup> If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

**What is the person's work that Paul is referring to?**

**How does this text address that salvation is by grace AND that there are differing rewards that the Lord will give (which are to be motivation for us in this life)?**

1 Corinthians 4:2-5 (ESV)

<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. <sup>3</sup> But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. <sup>4</sup> I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. <sup>5</sup> Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

**All we have is a gift from God. In a sense, it is a "trust." What is required of those who have been given a trust to be a steward of?**

Revelation 3:11 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.

1 John 2:28 (ESV)

<sup>28</sup> And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

2 John 8 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup> Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.

**The hope of rewards is not our primary motivation for generosity (see rather the mind-renewing concepts in the first part of this lesson). But it is a biblical one. The way we live is also motivated by not wanting the regrets described in these verses. What are these regrets?**