

## **CHAPTER 5/6 “Getting Started”**

Martin Luther, “I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God’s hands, that I still possess.” 62

### ➔ **Giving is commanded**

✓ Tithing is commanded throughout the Bible as the way to **give to God first, to prioritize Him.** 63

**Proverbs 3:9 (ESV)** Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce;

**Malachi 3:8–10 (ESV)**

✓ Jesus validated the tithe...

**Matthew 23:23 (ESV)** <sup>23</sup>“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

✓ Jesus, then, raised the spiritual bar on everything starting in the Sermon on the Mount, 63-64

**We should ask God what He expects of us and walk in obedience. 64**

Studies on American Christians giving indicate a relatively few truly give significantly, though many *think* they give more than they actually do. 65

**HERB:** Barna study – about 6% of American evangelical, “born again” Christians have a Biblical worldview.

*“While a majority of evangelicals say tithing is a biblical commandment, only an estimated 13% engage in the practice, while half give away less than 1% of their income annually, according to the 2017 study, ‘The Generosity Factor: Evangelicals and Giving.’”* (data collected from 1,000 American evangelical Protestants).

✓ Tithing is God’s historical method to get us on the path of giving. It’s unhealthy (and unbiblical) to view tithing as place to stop, but **can be a good place to start**

**Tithes can launch us into the mindset, habits and skills of grace giving, 65**

**2 Corinthians 9:6–15 (ESV)**

### ➔ **Giving is obedience – God has expectations of us. 66**

God doesn’t expect us all to give the same amount, but in proportion to how He has provided for us.

Randy Alcorn does not recommend working up to tithing gradually, but in tithing by sacrificing and working hard to do so. “The point is not to rob God less – it’s not to rob God at all.”

**Obedience is about what we keep as well as what we give.** God doesn’t look just at what we give, but also at what we keep, 66

Many givers identify tithing as the action that first stretched them to give generously. They tithed and watched God provide and move their hearts deeper into His Kingdom, 67

**HERB: IT’S NOT ABOUT MONEY!!!!** God wants... deeply desires for us to experience all He promises by aligning ourselves with Him through obedience, “Test me in this”, Malachi 3:10...

And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

*The teaching of tithing has sometimes been abused, but let’s not throw out the baby of tithing with the bathwater of legalism, 67*

Ironically, many people can’t afford to give precisely because they are not giving.

**Haggai 1:5–6, 9 (ESV)** <sup>5</sup>Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. <sup>6</sup>You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.

<sup>9</sup>You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house.

If we fulfill our obligation to God first, we invite His blessing to help us pay our debts to people. But when we rob God to pay people, we rob ourselves of God’s blessing. No wonder we don’t have enough. It is a vicious cycle, and it takes obedient faith to break out of it.

➔ **Giving/ Tithing is not easy... at least at first. It's an act of obedient faith.**

When people say they can't afford to tithe, ask, "If my income was reduced by 10% would I die? If the answer is no, I have admitted I CAN afford to tithe. It's just that I don't want to.

It's not necessarily easy, but it IS much easier to live on 90% or 50% or 10% of your income **INSIDE the will of God** than on 100% OUTSIDE the will of God, 68

➔ **Giving is a faith skill.**

As with any skill, we get better with practice

Tithing is like a toddler's first steps: not his last or best steps, but they're a good start. 68

**HERB:** only met one person who said they didn't believe tithing was Biblical and gave at least 10%. It was an excuse, not a conviction unless they exceeded the tithe.

**2 Corinthians 8:3–5 (ESV)** <sup>3</sup>For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, <sup>4</sup>begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— <sup>5</sup>and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

"beyond their means" is pushing our giving **past the point where the figures add up, giving when the bottom line says we can't**, 69

Example of Scott Lewis following God's nudge to ask Him to provide more money so they could give in ways that seemed impossible. 70

**James 4:13–17 (ESV)**

Death isn't best opportunity to give; it's the end of your opportunity to give. God rewards acts of faith done while we're still living. 72

Example of Wesley, 72-73

**HERB:** challenge is to be **so aligned with God that we know how He wants us to steward His money** - what to give and what set aside for the future. We must be wise as serpents, not simply following the world's ways of investing and saving, but **radically obedient through intimacy and alignment with God.**

➔ **Giving leads us to live Right-Side Up in our Upside Down culture.**

American dream is to die with as many cards as possible, but God's way is the opposite. 73

**A large inheritance is not a blessing... most often a curse.** Let God decide how much to leave them.

**HERB:** "The Ultimate Gift" movie is an example.

God is the greatest giver in the universe and he won't let you outgive Him, 73

**Luke 6:38 (ESV)** <sup>38</sup>give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

Example of R. G. LeTourneau, 76

The health and wealth gospel dishonors Christ 76

✓ The reason God has given us so much

Answer is 2 Cor 9:10-11

**2 Corinthians 9:10–11 (ESV)** <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

Prosperity gospel would answer with selfish benefits, but scripture tells us it is **so that we can be generous in every way which will produce thanksgiving to God** 77

**KEY 6: God prospers me, not to raise my standard of living, but to raise my standard of giving.**

**Is it really a blessing or a test?**

A "test" reveals who we really are and what we truly love. The choice is to be faithful, use the owner's money as pleases Him, or to be selfish and steal, using the money for what pleases us,

**1 Corinthians 4:1–2 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup>This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. <sup>2</sup>Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.

**HERB:** one facet of humility is to be in our place as servants and giving God His true place as God, Owner, in charge making the decisions with no obligation to give us information while expecting us to serve in our roles.

PICTURE: God as Coach tells us the position to play, the number of minutes to play, the opposing player to guard, when to sit the bench, etc. and we are to do as He instructs no matter what.

*What would you think if the FedEx guy takes your package home for himself instead of delivering it? Just because God puts money in our hands doesn't mean He intends for it to stay there!, 79*

## **2 Corinthians 8:12–15 (ESV)**

***Abundance isn't God's provision for me to live in luxury, but for me to help others to live.*** 79

God gives some of His children more than others so they help one another.

**Proverbs 30:8–9 (ESV)** <sup>8</sup>Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, <sup>9</sup>lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the Lord?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.

***When those with too much give to those with too little, two problems are solved. When they don't, two problems are perpetuated. God distributes wealth unevenly not because He loves some of His children more than others, but so His children can distribute it to their brothers and sisters ON HIS BEHALF.*** 80

**Philippians 4:11–13** <sup>11</sup>Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. <sup>12</sup>I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. <sup>13</sup>I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

## **CHAPTER 6/7 "For Such A Time as This"**

John Wesley, "I judge all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity"

CT Studd, "Only one life will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last."

**Five minutes after we die we will know exactly how we should have lived/** What will I then wish I would have given away while I still had the chance?" , 84

**HERB:** Serious application: How much do we fool ourselves (give into enemy and culture deception) to believe we are obeying God when we are not? Comparing ourselves to what we were or to others? Justifying ourselves or believing that we are better and doing better than we actually are by God's standards?

✓ Could it be God's plan for world evangelism to give one nation incredible affluence to share with the world?/ What are we doing with the wealth God has provided to reach the lost and help the suffering?/ How often do we hold people accountable for their giving, not just their finances (questions at page bottom), 86

✓ How does a young Christian in the church learn to give if never hears the stories of givers? 87

✓ "Through an unfortunate misinterpretation of Matt 5:16, we've hidden giving and therefore hidden its joy and deprived God of glory. We've failed to draw Christians toward giving. And they lack gladness and purpose because of it."

Motive cannot be "in order to be seen by men" but we are to let our light shine through good works. 88

EXAMPLE of a church that caught a vision for giving to free slaves in Sudan – became contagious. 89

Example of King David and others giving to build Temple – people rejoiced because people had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord.

Hearing the stories of people of faith throughout history provide examples and deepen our faith as we learn what God has done through them, inspiring us to ask God to do more through Him and giving beyond what we've ever considered. 90

**HERB:** the importance of a point of reference...

Just as Esther was in a position of privilege, so it is with nearly everyone who reads this book. Why has God sovereignly entrusted us with wealth? It is for "such a time as this", to be part of something much larger than our part of the world. ***"It is no accident that you live in this time and place in history"***, 91

ESSENTIAL: **do not** respond with personal ideas and actions! **ASK GOD what He wants you to do!!** "What are the good works You have prepared me to do in my lifetime, starting today?" 91

Remember it about **the JOY of giving** in obedience to God. 92

***“Why not set a figure you can live on, then tell God that everything He provides beyond that you’ll give back to Him? When you do that, the desire to make more money takes on a Kingdom purpose. It’s transformed into desire to help others more and expand God’s Kingdom!”***

*“We have no way of knowing how long our prosperity will last. Why not give away the abundance while we still can? Let’s give until our hearts are more in touch with God’s Kingdom than remodeling projects, business ventures, dream vacations, or retirement plans. Let’s ask God...”*

***Only God can tell us how much we should give above and beyond. 92***

Obeying God in giving or anything else is not burdensome, rather a path to experiencing joy, delighting in God’s commands, (Psalm 119:47) 93

Giving should start with your local Bible-believing, Christ-centered church. Beyond that, Alcorn suggests supporting organizations characterized by Biblical standards and the supernatural work of God’s Spirit over secular organizations (for almost every good secular organization there’s a Christian organization doing the same work but with an eternal perspective. 93

**MY GIVING COVENANT**, Six step giving covenant, p. 94-96

1. I affirm God’s full ownership of me and everything entrusted to me.
2. I set aside the firstfruits - starting with at least 10 percent - of all I receive, treating it as belonging exclusively to the Lord.
3. Out of the remaining treasures God entrusts to me, I will seek to make generous freewill gifts.
4. I ask God to teach me to give sacrificially to His purposes, including helping the poor and reaching the lost.
5. Recognizing that I cannot take earthly treasures from this world, I determine to store them up as heavenly treasures — for Christ’s glory and the eternal good of others and myself.
6. Recognizing that God has given me my family, my friends, my church, and others in my circle of influence, I ask Him to help me share the Treasure Principle so they, too, may experience present joy and future rewards.

The only statement of Jesus recorded in the book of Acts not in the Gospels:

**Acts 20:35 (ESV)** 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.’”

### ➔ **Eternal Perspective**

IMPORTANT: the real happiness is giving God what’s His. Giving is doing what we were made for: loving God and our neighbors. Giving boldly and joyfully affirms Christ’s Lordship. 96

**If we want to experience true, God-given joy we will ...**

Transfer our assets from earth to heaven by giving humbly, generously, frequently to God’s work.

Embrace Christ’s invitation to “Give and it will be given to you” (Luke 6:38) and then when He gives us more, remind ourselves of His reason for doing so: that we may be generous on every occasion.

Send our treasures on ahead to heaven where they will safely await us which will cause us to experience the freedom and the joy that comes from sensing God’s smile. 98

***When you give, you’ll feel His pleasure 99***

**Takeaways...**



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