

A Chronicle of Redemption

Chapter 18: Giving in the History of Redemption

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CHAPTER 18: GIVING IN THE HISTORY OF REDEMPTION 1 Chronicles 29; 2 Chronicles 1

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to 1 Chronicles 29. I am so grateful for the time we had together last week as a faith family as we fasted and prayed together. I've heard from a variety of you just about how meaningful, how powerful that time was for you. I was having lunch on Monday...I was breaking my fast in a lunch with five brothers and sisters from Kenya who were here in our worship gathering last Sunday and are a part of Compassion in Kenya.

They grew up in abject poverty and are now graduating from college and influencing their cultures and providing for their families...just incredible stories. We were talking about different things, and they asked me at one point, they said, "Well, is that something you all do often? Do you all fast together often like that?" I said, "Well, actually, no. That was the first time we've done that. I imagine for some people it was their first time to ever fast, and so this was something we need to do more and we're going to do more."

So, I just asked them. I said, "Well, do you guys fast together like that very much?" There was this awkward pause at the table, and one of them spoke up and said, "Well, in our church, we start every year with a 28-day fast." "Oh, okay. Oh, I'll take that as a yes. Yeah, well, we're going to do that, like, next, but we were starting with one day, and then clearly by January, we'll be ready for 28. Yeah. So anyway, anybody got anything else they want to talk about?"

So anyway, I'm hoping that we're going to do that some more in the days to come. Obviously, I did not preach last week, and I am clearly making up for lost time in what you have in front of you, with a...count them...15-point sermon with a variety of sub-points and sub-sub-points. I had one person come up to me last week and say, "Pastor, just want you to know that was the best sermon you've ever preached," so I can take it.

In all seriousness, when I saw where our Bible reading was going to be this week, in 1 Chronicles 29, an emphasis in this text is on giving, and it's a picture of the people of God giving, my mind immediately went to some of the things that, a few weeks ago, I taught for six or seven hours on at Secret Church when it comes to giving. There were some things in my study, looking at the gospel and possessions and prosperity, that I thought, "As soon as I have an opportunity, these are things that I don't just want to teach at Secret Church. These are things we need to look at as a faith family." Some important things...even some things that my mind has shifted on and transformed a bit as a result of that study.

So, what I want to do this morning is I want us to look at 1 Chronicles 29. I want us to see this picture of giving at this point in redemptive history, and then let it lead us into thinking about giving in overall redemptive history, and I want us to dive into some of those things that I think are important for us to dive into as a church when it comes to our giving. So, we're going to read 1 Chronicles 29, we're going to see this story, and then we're going to

let it drive us, lead us, into seeing where we are, as the people of God in 2010, fitting in to giving in overall redemptive history. So, let's start with 1 Chronicles 29:1.

And David the king said to all the assembly, "Solomon my son, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced, and the work is great, for the palace will not be for man but for the LORD God. So I have provided for the house of my God, so far as I was able, the gold for the things of gold, the silver for the things of silver, and the bronze for the things of bronze, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, besides great quantities of onyx and stones for setting, antimony, colored stones, all sorts of precious stones and marble. Moreover, in addition to all that I have provided for the holy house, I have a treasure of my own of gold and silver, and because of my devotion to the house of my God I give it to the house of my God: 3,000 talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and 7,000 talents of refined silver, for overlaying the walls of the house, and for all the work to be done by craftsmen, gold for the things of gold and silver for the things of silver. Who then will offer willingly, consecrating himself today to the LORD?"

Then the leaders of fathers' houses made their freewill offerings, as did also the leaders of the tribes, the commanders of thousands and hundreds, and the officers over the king's work. They gave for the service of the house of God 5,000 talents and 10,000 darics of gold, 10,000 talents of silver, 18,000 talents of bronze and 100,000 talents of iron. And whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the LORD, in the care of Jehiel the Gershonite. Then the people rejoiced because they had given willingly, for with a whole heart they had offered freely to the LORD. David the king also rejoiced greatly.

Therefore David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly. And David said: "Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.

"But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding. O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own. I know, my God, that you test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. In the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you. O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep forever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of your people, and direct their hearts towards you. Grant to Solomon my son a whole heart that he may keep your commandments, your testimonies, and your statutes, performing all, and that he may build the palace for which I have made provision."

Then David said to all the assembly, "Bless the LORD your God." And all the assembly blessed the LORD, the God of their fathers, and bowed their heads and paid homage to the LORD and to the king. And they offered sacrifices to the LORD, and on the next day offered burnt offerings to the LORD, 1,000 bulls, 1,000 rams, and 1,000 lambs, with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel. And they ate and drank before the LORD on that day with great gladness.

Let's pray. Father, we know that we are a wealthy people in this room, particularly compared to the rest of the world and our brothers and sisters in the rest of the world. We praise you for food that is available to us today, for water that is available to us today, for shelter over us, for clothes on our back. We take none of these things for granted. We thank you for them and the abundance of resources you have given us beyond these things. We pray today, particularly amidst a materialistic culture, that by your Spirit through your Word, you would change our minds and our hearts to be one with yours; that you would make us and mold us into a people who give to your glory. We want to be faithful in redemptive history to give in a way that honors and glorifies you, and so we pray that you would teach us today. Transform our hearts that we might give with our whole hearts, willingly, just as we see here...in even greater ways than we see here...based on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Three Reflections on Old Covenant Giving...

All right, three reflections on old covenant giving. That's where we're going to start. This picture, what you see at the very beginning of 1 Chronicles 29, is David giving his gifts. Then, you see the people giving, and these are massive gifts. When you get to verse 7, it says they gave "5,000 talents and 10,000 darics of gold, 10,000 talents of silver," and so on. Talents and darics, these are not measurements that are familiar to us, and there's even some debate over what all this means, but most estimate this is like 190 tons of gold, 375 tons of silver, 675 tons of bronze, 3,750 tons of iron. We're talking about, literally, millions of pounds of gold and silver and bronze and iron and other things that were given on this day. This was a good offering day. This is a strong Sunday right here when they gave millions of pounds of all this stuff.

Giving is God-driven, God-centered, and God-exalting.

What I want you to see...what I love about this passage is how David responds to such extravagant giving. He doesn't say, "Look at how great the people are, or how great the gifts are." Instead, his response is to turn his face toward heaven to bless the Lord and say, "Look at how great God is." You see this; first reflection on old covenant giving: giving is God-driven, God-centered, and God-exalting. Giving is God-driven, God-centered, and God-exalting. In verse 10, he prays, "*Blessed are you, LORD...Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty...*" One author said, "David just ransacked the theological dictionary to attribute different characteristics and titles to God." The whole picture is he is glorifying God through the people's giving.

There's a couple of truths here that I want you to see that are coming out in David's prayer that are huge. First...and you have this in your notes...in this prayer, David is showing us that God is the owner of all things, and we are His stewards. God's the owner of all things; we are His stewards. Look at verse 11, "*Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom...*" Verse 12, "*Riches and honor come from you...In your hand*

are power and might..." Verse 14, *"Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to thus offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you."* Did you catch that? What he's saying is, "Everything we've given belonged to you anyway." God is the owner of all things. This is the glaring reality of Scripture.

God owns your house and your car and your TV and your clothes, and for that matter, God owns you. God owns your wallet and everything in it. He owns your bank account and everything in it. So, anything we give is simply giving to Him what He already owns. Now, it's like if you have a nice car, and you give it to me to drive around for a couple of days, and I bring it back to you, and I say, "Out of the depth of my heart and generosity, I want to give you this car." You would look at me and at least think, if not say, "Thank you for your humble generosity, but it's mine anyway." The reality is, anything we give to God, He already owns. We are stewards of it. Another way to put this: God is the giver of all things, and we are His servants. What this means is because God gave it, God has the authority to say what to do with it. We are not masters with our money; we are servants with our money.

Just as Jesus is Lord over every decision we make. We realize this, church. We have lost the right to determine the direction of our lives. Jesus directs our paths. Jesus directs every decision we make, and not just every decision we make; Jesus determines every dollar we spend. We are not in control of our spending; God is in control of our spending. He leads. He guides. He says, "This is what to do with it." He's the owner. He's the giver. We are stewards. We are servants. That's the whole picture. What David is praying here, when he talks about how it all belongs to God and everything they give is only coming from God, and they're giving because their hearts were driven by God to give. Giving is God-driven, God-centered, and God-exalting.

God's people give out of celebration, not out of obligation.

Second reflection: God's people give out of celebration, not out of obligation. Verse 9, *"The people rejoiced because they had given willingly...they had offered freely to the LORD."* Verse 17, *"I know, my God, that you test the heart...In the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I see your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously."* You get to the end in verse 22, *"They ate and drank before the LORD on that day with great gladness."*

The picture here is what we see in 2 Corinthians 8 in the New Testament, but it's here in the Old Testament. God loves cheerful givers; God creates cheerful givers; God compels cheerful givers. This is not people saying, "Well, Old Testament giving was just obligatory. It was law-driven." Does this look like obligation? This is celebration. This is joyful celebration and giving. Second reflection: God's people give out of celebration, not out of obligation.

Our giving is always attached to our hearts.

Then, third reflection: our giving is always attached to our hearts. In verse 9, when David talked about how they gave willingly, he says, *"...with a whole heart they offered freely to the LORD."* When you go back up to verse 5, you see David give the invitation. *"Who then will offer willingly, consecrating himself today to the LORD?"* That language literally means, "Who will devote their hearts to the Lord?"

What we're seeing is that generous giving is the overflow of a God-centered heart; that the heart is attached to our giving. This is what we see in the New Testament too, isn't it? Jesus says, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Our heart and our money always go together. Where our money is shows where our heart is. That's the humbling

truth, isn't it? Where our money is shows where our heart is. Our giving is always attached to our hearts.

Now, I want you to look with me in verse 6. It says, "*The leaders of fathers' houses made their freewill offerings.*" "Freewill offerings..." You might underline it or circle it. That's one type of offering in the Old Testament, under the old covenant. What I want to do is I want us to think about the Old Testament now, and I want us to see how this picture...freewill offerings...fits into Old Testament gifts altogether.

Three Types of Old Covenant Gifts...

Tithes were given to ...

So, you've got in your notes three types of old covenant gifts. We're not going to have time to turn to all these different places, so you might just write down little notes that we talk about in your notes there where this is found. First type of Old Testament gift was the tithe. Tithes were given. Verse here: Leviticus 27:30. Leviticus 27:30 says, "*Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's; it is holy to the LORD.*"

The meaning here of tithe is, literally, a tenth part...1/10, ten percent...that was a tithe. Now, the picture here in Leviticus 27:30 is that from the land, from the fruit of the trees, the produce, a tenth is to be given to the Lord. What I want you to see, though, is there were different tithes...different tenths, so to speak...that we see in the old covenant that God's people were to give. First, a tithe was given to support the priests and Levites. A tithe was given to support the priests and the Levites. God commanded His people to support the spiritual leaders in the community of faith to fulfill God's calling on their lives. Numbers 18:21-24 talks about a tithe for the priests and Levites; Numbers 18:21-24.

Second, a tithe was given to provide for community celebration. There was a time when all of the people would bring a tithe together, and they would celebrate there at the central sanctuary. Deuteronomy 14:22-23: a tithe was given to provide for community celebration. Then, third, finally, a tithe was given to help the poor and the needy. A tithe was given to help the poor and the needy. Deuteronomy 14:28-29; Deuteronomy 14:28-29. Now, this one was a little different. This first tithe was given every year: a tenth to help support the priests and Levites. The second was given every year also: to provide for this community celebration, but then, there was this third tithe given to help the poor and the needy that was taken every three years. Deuteronomy 14:28 says, at the end of every three years, you bring out all the tithe of your produce, so the sojourner, the fatherless, the widow shall come and eat and be filled. So, this was every three years. So, you had a tenth given every year here, a tenth given every year here, and then a tenth given every three years here.

You add that up, and what you realize is in the Old Testament under the old covenant, we think, "Well, that just means when people tithe in the Old Testament it means they gave ten percent of their income." However, the reality is you put these together, and the total tithe every year was about 23 percent per year. Two tithes a tenth each...10 percent, 10 percent, 20 percent...and then one tithe...10 percent split out over three years...3 percent...about 23 percent per year.

That's what the people of God were giving. Now, I want to offer a little side note here. Because of the unique nature of Israel, the people of God, they were a nation-state, and so they were a government. Part of their giving here in the tithes was similar to...not exactly

the same, but similar to what we might sometimes give when it comes to taxes; and so that's just a little side note, but the picture here is 23 percent of their income per year was being given like this. This was just one type of offering, one type of gift in the old covenant. So, I want us to kind of break out from our thinking that in the Old Testament, tithe, just ten percent of their income, and that was the end of their giving. No. The tithe was actually 23 percent of their income, and that was only the start of their giving. The tithe was only the beginning of their giving. This 23 percent was not the ceiling of their giving; it was the floor, so to speak. It was where their giving started.

Firstfruit offerings were given to offer the best to the Lord.

In addition, the Israelites gave two other types of old covenant gifts. First, firstfruit offerings were given to offer the best to the Lord. Firstfruit offerings, which basically means first off the top, your first and your best from....an example of this. Leviticus 19:23-25; Leviticus 19:23-25 talks about giving the first off the top of the production of your vineyard. Exodus 23:16 talks about giving the first off the top of your production of wine or grain or oil. Exodus 23:16; Numbers 15:20-21. Numbers 15:20-21 talks about giving the first off the top of any course meal. So, these were firstfruit offerings.

Freewill offerings were given to offer the excess to the Lord.

So, you had tithes, firstfruit offerings, and then, third type of old covenant gift: freewill offerings that were given to offer the excess to the Lord. That's what we're seeing here in 1 Chronicles 29. What they're giving here was over and beyond, above and beyond, their tithes and their firstfruit offerings. This was even more: freewill offerings.

Now, I have to show you something here. Go back with me to Exodus 36. You have to see this. Exodus 36:3. What I want us to see here is that the tithe was just the starting point and giving in the Old Testament under the law went so far beyond the tithe. 23 percent plus firstfruit offerings plus freewill offerings, and I want you to see a picture. We see it already in 1 Chronicles 29, but I love this picture in Exodus 36; look at this freewill offering. This is when God's people had come out of slavery in Egypt. They were about to construct...they were working on constructing the tabernacle, and so they needed offerings, freewill offerings, to be given to construct the tabernacle. Listen to this.

Exodus 36:3.

And they received from Moses all the contribution that the people of Israel had brought for doing the work on the sanctuary. They still kept bringing him freewill offerings every morning, so that all the craftsmen who were doing every sort of task on the sanctuary came, each from the task that he was doing, and said to Moses, "The people bring much more than enough for doing the work that the LORD has commanded us to do." So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, "Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary." So the people were restrained from bringing, for the material they had was sufficient to do all the work, and more.

Like, they were giving too much. It was necessary to tell the people of God, "Stop giving!" Oh, for the day in the church when we put out the beacon like, "Okay, you're too generous. Stop! You're giving too much; we have more than we need." What a great picture! This is freewill offerings. No ceiling on this. Tithe in the old covenant...just the floor of giving. That's where it started, and it wasn't just ten percent, it was 23 percent. On top of that, you had firstfruit and freewill offerings. So, that's the picture in the Old Testament. It's where 1 Chronicles 29 fits in.

Begs the question, "What does this have to do with us, then, as the people of God in 2010?" We are not the old covenant people of God. We're in a much different picture here, and we know that when we see commands in the old covenant, that we are to look in the new covenant. If a command in the old covenant is repeated in the new covenant, then we are to follow it. It is binding upon us. However, if a command in the old covenant...like we see in all kinds of things in Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy...if it is there in the old covenant, but it's not reiterated in the new covenant, then we are not to automatically apply it. So, that begs the question, then...and it is a question that is debated all across the board in our Christian culture today: is tithing commanded for new covenant believers? Should new covenant believers tithe? This is where diving in to study for Secret Church was challenging and transforming.

Three Conclusions Moving into New Covenant Giving...

Transforming some of my thoughts on this whole picture. We briskly walked over this about a year ago when we were walking through 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 and talking about giving, but I want us to revisit this. Let's move now into new covenant giving, and I want to put before you three conclusions based on the picture we see in the old covenant and in the new covenant.

There is no command to tithe under the new covenant.

Number one...here's the deal: there is no command to tithe under the new covenant. There is no command to tithe under the new covenant. Now, I want you to hold your place here in 1 Chronicles 29 because we're going to come back here, but go with me to Luke 11. Luke 11:42. Here's the deal: there is only one time in the entire New Testament that tithing is even addressed. I say one time; it's one conversation Jesus had with some religious leaders, and it's recorded by both Matthew and Luke. We're going to look at Luke's account.

So, technically there's two occurrences, but they're talking about the same situation. One time in the entire New Testament where the tithe is even mentioned, and I want you to see it. Luke 11:42. Jesus is talking to religious leaders, the Pharisees. Listen to what He says, *"Woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others."* So, basically, Jesus says, "You guys are tithing...great. You ought to do those things, but you're missing the point. You tithe, and then you show the justice and love of God in the way you treat those who are in need around you. If you tithe and you ignore those who are needy around you, and you do not show them the justice and love of God, then you're missing the whole point." So, Jesus here does not command tithing.

He does imply that they ought to be doing that, but even at this point some say, "Well, the reality is, though, Jesus is talking here still in an old covenant framework. He has not gone to the cross, died on the cross for our sins, risen from the grave, sent His Spirit, inaugurated the church. It's not where we see this. This is before that even happened, so He's still talking to religious leaders in an old covenant framework." Does that mean then that we should throw tithing out the window? Some people say yes, because it's not mentioned anywhere else in the New Testament, but it's at this point that I want to be really hesitant to throw it totally out the window, because what we do see in the rest of the New Testament is very interesting. We do see the things that the tithe provided for, in many ways, emphasized in the New Testament church, i.e. provision for leaders.

We see that talked about throughout Paul's letters. Care for those who are in need, we certainly see that. In fact, that's where we realize when you see the new covenant inaugurated...okay, people believe in Christ for the first time in Acts 2 as they hear the gospel preached for the first time. They trust in Him, and then they repent, and they're baptized. The Spirit has come down at Pentecost, and what's the first picture we see? In Acts 2, what we see is not people giving the tithe. Instead, they are selling their possessions and giving to one another.

Then, you get to Acts 4, and it says, "Much grace was upon them all, and there was no needy person among them." It's what Deuteronomy 15 in the old covenant had talked about: "There shall be no poor among you." Here, in Acts 4, there was no needy among them, because...listen to this...people, Christians were selling their houses and their lands and bringing all their resources; sacrificing resources to bring them together to help those who were in need.

Giving in the new covenant involves greater sacrifice than giving in the old covenant, not less.

So, what we realize is, yes, there is no command to tithe under the new covenant. Instead, giving in the new covenant involves greater sacrifice than giving in the old covenant, not less...greater sacrifices, not less. People take a passage like Acts 4 and say, "Now, New Testament is grace giving, and that's why we need to throw the tithe out, because that's law. We're grace givers now." That's like common throughout this discussion in our culture right now, in the church and our setting. We're grace givers, not law givers.

Well, here's the problem: like, we're holding on to being grace givers, saying we need to disregard the tithe. The only problem is the average North American Christian gives 2.5 percent of their income to the church. I think that's probably generous, and I hope that that is not the case in our faith family. I hope that it would be higher here, but the problem is we are talking a lot about grace giving, but the reality is in the law even if we just took the old covenant and just took ten percent, and the picture is a people who had the law that were giving four times as much as people who claim that they have grace. The reality is, if we have grace in the person of Christ...2 Corinthians 8:9...*"though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor..."* Left His throne in glory to walk a road to a cross to die for our sins and rise from the grave. A people who follow Him, who know this grace, will give far more extravagantly than those who had the law alone.

Tithing is a helpful guideline for giving under the new covenant, but it is not a legalistic mandate.

So, the picture here is that, if we are not giving with greater sacrifice than those in the law, then we have missed the point. Which leads to conclusion number three, and this one I'm going to unpack some; it needs a lot of unpacking, but what I want to put before you as pastor to people is that tithing is indeed a helpful guideline for giving under the new covenant, but it is not a legalistic mandate.

There's so much here, and I want to unpack why I'm saying this. In the next part of your notes, you'll see three reasons why tithing's a helpful guideline, but before we get there I just want to put it on the table here. Not a legalistic mandate; this is not a pastor saying to people, "We have a command in the New Testament under the new covenant that we are called to obey." This is not saying that, but this is a pastor to people saying, "I think we need to not throw tithing out the window and to let it be a guide for us, a help for us." I'll put it on the table. My encouragement, based on what we see in all of redemptive history...I'm going to show you why...is that we start our giving, start your giving with the

first ten percent to the church. I want to, like, pause right here and give a thousand qualifications.

Number one being I, in no way, want to sound self-serving in this...i.e., let me drum up some Scriptures and get the faith family giving more. What I simply want to do is I want us to see where we stand in redemptive history, and I want us to consider how we can most honor God with our giving. I want you as an individual or as a family to consider how you can most glorify God with your giving. I want us as a faith family...particularly in an incredibly wealthy materialistic culture...I want us to make sure that we go above and beyond looking at how we can glorify God with our giving.

So, start your giving with the first ten percent to the church. I'm going to explain this in a minute. This is the "floor" of giving. It was the floor of giving in the Old Testament. Old Testament saints, it was automatic; they give their first and their best to the Lord, and I just don't see how New Testament followers of Christ can give anything less than that. How is that possible, for anyone transformed by the grace of Christ, to give less than what was required of every single saint in the Old Testament, no matter what their income level? It would make no sense for us to give less than that, so that is a starting point floor of giving, and then expand your giving with greater percentages according to your excess.

What I want to say is, basically, what we're seeing in redemptive history is start with the tithe, but don't stop, people of God. The people of God before you have not stopped there either, and we have more grace. So, let the tithe be the floor, and then realize there is no "ceiling" on giving. To be finished and done with saying in the church, "I'm going to work my way up to ten percent." You don't work your way up to the starting point. You start at the starting point.

Three Reasons Why Tithing Is Helpful In New Covenant Giving...

Then, you work your way up from there, and you ask God, "God, how can I sacrifice and give generously, not out of obligation, but out of celebration of what Christ has done in me?", because a God-centered heart produces generous hands...that we see all throughout Scripture...three reasons why tithing is helpful in new covenant giving. These are three reasons why, as pastor, I am putting something before you that is not explicitly commanded in the New Testament.

Tithing honors a biblical principle.

Why do I think it's a helpful guideline? These three reasons; number one: because tithing honors a biblical principle. Clearly, the Old Testament describes it. This was the pattern for the people of God throughout generations in the Old Testament, and it was serious. Many of the things they were providing for are things that the New Testament does tell us to provide for as well: the care of the poor and the needy, support for leaders in the church. A variety of things that we see in the Old Testament are reiterated in the New Testament, and the Old Testament describes this. Second, Jesus endorses it. Sure, Jesus doesn't command it, but His words to those religious leaders certainly endorse tithing. "You ought to do those things." They don't give the indication that tithing was soon going to be cast out the window, and as we've talked about, what He does lead us to do is give more, not less.

So, this honors a biblical principle. Old Testament describes, Jesus endorses, and if I could take it a step further, church history illustrates this. Christians have practiced this. Like, we're not coming on the scene in the 21st century, especially with all our wealth, and

saying, "Well, we've got new pictures of giving." Like, Irenaeus, church father, right after the New Testament, talked about tithing was the normal practice of the church, "the tenth." Augustine, a few hundred years later, talked about the exact same thing. He talked about how "the tenth" is given, and then in the other 9/10, that we give alms above and beyond from that. Jerome, another church father, said, "If anyone shall not do this..." pay tithes "he is convicted of defrauding and supplanting God." So, for the first few hundred years after the New Testament canon was closed, it was normal. It was considered wise and normal for the New Testament Christians to be tithing.

So, here's the deal: if generations throughout God's people and redemptive history in the Old Testament made this practice important in their spiritual lives, if Jesus endorsed it, and if those first few centuries of believers practiced it, then I think we need to be careful not just to throw it out just like that. This honors a biblical principle.

Tithing reinforces the truths of God's ownership and our stewardship.

Second, it reinforces...tithing reinforces the truths of God's ownership and our stewardship. Even the...we've seen this. This is what God was doing in the tithe. He was teaching them, He was training them to see His ownership in all things. When they would give the first and their best immediately to God, it was reminding them that they didn't own it in the first place. Isn't this...don't we need this? Don't we need to see our paycheck, no matter how big or small it might be, and immediately remind ourselves, discipline ourselves to see, "I don't own this. The Lord owns this. I'm a steward of this."

Well, how do we keep that mentality? Well, this is exactly what God was doing. It's part of the reason God gave His people the tithe, to remind them of these things. We need that reminder every single paycheck we get in our culture. That we are not masters with our money; we are servants with our money, and it all belongs to God, no question. The way we remind ourselves of that, discipline ourselves of that, remember that God owns it and we're stewards, is to give off the top, immediately.

Tithing helps us in the constant battle with greed and materialism in our hearts.

Third reason why this is a helpful guideline is because tithing helps us in the constant battle with greed and materialism in our hearts. We know we are among the most wealthy people in the entire world. We are in the top tier of the world's people for wealth, and we have Scriptures that warn us all over the place of the dangers of wealth. There are even points where Scripture teaches that it is difficult for someone that is wealthy to even be a Christian at all; not impossible, but difficult. That's why 1 Timothy 6, Paul says, "Those who desire to be rich plunge themselves into ruin and destruction."

That's just the desire to be rich. So, what does he say later in 1 Timothy 6? He says, "Command the rich..." now this is command, "Command the rich to be rich in good works, to be generous, and to be willing to share." Don't miss it. Giving is the antidote to materialism. That's not in your notes; that's, like, no extra charge. The antidote to materialism in our culture is giving. So, the picture is tithing helps us guard all of our tendency toward our money and possessions taking over our hearts. We give.

Tithing disciplines us, guides us, leads us in that. This is why I would say to every member in this faith family that I think it would be...based on all we see in Scripture...a helpful guideline for you in your life or for you in your family to start your giving with ten percent to the church. This is the training wheels of giving. Caleb has a bike with training wheels on it; so, this is where it starts, training wheels, and then work to shed the training wheels and just go way beyond that.

I know that there are different economic levels represented in this room. I know there are different economic struggles that are represented in this room, and I, in no way, want to be blind to those, but the reality is this is a picture we have seen throughout redemptive history. We stand in a line of people for whom God has provided in such a way that they learned along the way to give. To give intentionally, to give consistently, and to give extravagantly to make His glory known, and we need to be careful not to throw aside all that has gone before us and come on the scene and come up with all kinds of reasons for why we are giving less in our day.

Three Prayers for New Covenant Givers...

We have been given great grace, which leads us to the whole end of this. Three prayers for new covenant givers, and this is where I want to bring you back to 1 Chronicles 29, really, 2 Chronicles 1. Here's the deal: we read at the end of 1 Chronicles 29 in verses 18 and 19 what David did as he prayed. He prayed for the people to continue to have hearts...listen to what he said. He said, *"Keep forever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of your people..."* Then, he said in verse 19, *"Grant to Solomon my son a whole heart..."* He prayed that their hearts would always want to give like this, be enthralled with God like this.

God, give us hearts that are enthralled with Your worship.

So, then we get to 2 Chronicles 1, and what I want you to see is what happens in Solomon's leadership. David dies at the end of 1 Chronicles 29; 2 Chronicles 1, Solomon takes over, and based on this picture, I want to put before you three prayers that I am praying for my own life, family, and for us as a people when it comes to giving and redemptive history. First prayer: God, give us hearts that are enthralled with your worship. God, give us hearts that are enthralled with your worship. This is where Solomon's reign starts. It says in verse 1, 2 Chronicles 1:1, that *"Solomon the son of David established himself in his kingdom, and the LORD his God was with him and made him exceedingly great."* In the verses to come, he leads the people out to the tent of meeting where the glory of God dwells and listen to this...verse 6: *"Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before the LORD, which was at the tent of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it."* This was the first picture in Solomon's reign. It was worship...1,000 burnt offerings. That's a lot of burnt offerings, and the first picture we see is Solomon saying, "My heart belongs to you, God." God, give us hearts that are enthralled with your worship. This is where giving starts, brothers and sisters.

Before we even talk about this percentage or this or that, that we would do practically in our lives, the starting point is hearts in this room that are enthralled with the glory of God and enthralled with the worship of God; that want more than anything else in this world, God to be worshiped. Until that's the starting point, all of our talk after that won't make any sense. Extravagant giving won't make any sense, because it won't get you ahead in this culture. It won't advance you, because it will be denying you and glorifying God, and that's the whole picture of Christianity, what Jesus has called us to. God, give us hearts enthralled with your worship.

God, give us minds that are filled with Your wisdom.

Second, God, give us minds that are filled with your wisdom. So, right after he offers 1,000 burnt offerings, God appeared to Solomon and said to him, verse 7, *"Ask what I shall give you." And Solomon said to God..."* verse 8, *"You have shown great and steadfast love to David my father, and have made me king in his place. O LORD God, let your word to David*

my father be now fulfilled, for you have made me king over people as numerous as the dust of the earth.” Verse 10...this is what he asks for; you know the story:

“Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people, for who can govern this people of yours, which is so great?” God answered Solomon, “Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked possessions, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked long life, but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may govern my people over whom I made you king, wisdom and knowledge are granted to you.”

This is our great need: hearts that are enthralled with the worship of God; minds that are filled with the wisdom of God. We know that we live in a culture where we are surrounded by worldly wisdom, particularly when it comes to how we spend our money. Not just in the culture, but in the church...infiltrated with worldly wisdom on how we spend our money, and we desperately need the discernment of God to know how to handle our checking accounts, because we hear all around us great financial advice that leads to hoarding, storing up bigger barns, getting better stuff, and we’ve got to be careful. We need the wisdom of God. So, God, give us hearts that are enthralled with your worship and minds that are filled with your wisdom.

Then, flowing from that...let me go ahead and read it. What happens right after this, midway through verse 12, God says, *“I will also give you riches, possessions, and honor, such as none of the kings had who were before you, and none after you shall have the like.”* You read the rest of the chapter, he’s got 1,400 chariots, 12,000 horsemen; like, that’s a lot of chariots and horsemen. Silver and gold became as common as stone; possessions, riches, and honor.

God, give us hands that are generous with Your wealth.

God give us hearts that are enthralled with your worship, minds that are filled with your wisdom, and then hands...God, give us hands that are generous with your wealth...your wealth; it belongs to you. Now, here’s the deal: I want you to see the progression here. Look at this and realize, brothers and sisters, a proper use of wealth is grounded in God-given wisdom and God-centered worship. A proper use of wealth...I’ll say that one more time...a proper use of wealth is grounded in God-given wisdom and God-centered worship, because what we’re going to read in the days to come is Solomon lost sight of God-centered worship, and his heart turned away from the Lord, leading him down a road of worldly wisdom that led him to squander and misuse and abuse the wealth that had been entrusted to him, and it all started with his worship. It’s what we’ve talked about over and over again the Old Testament’s pointing us to. We all need new hearts.

We need hearts that are conquered and captivated by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though He was rich, became poor for our sakes, so that we in our poverty might become rich. We need hearts that are captivated by the glory of a Savior who left His throne in glory to die on a cross for our sins, not so that we could live it up with all the pleasures in this world, but so that we could spend our lives for His glory in this world, and when our hearts are captivated with the desire for His glory, and we are begging God, pleading for God in every single one of our lives, in our businesses, in this room, our jobs, and our families...we’re asking God, “Give us wisdom to give according to your Word, according to what is best for the advancement of your gospel and your glory.” God-centered worship leads to God-given wisdom, leading to generous hands.

What if...Church at Brook Hills...what if God wanted His gospel spread to every person on this planet, and His church serving and loving people in incalculable sufferings in the world? If God wanted that, maybe, maybe He would entrust great resources to His church. It is exactly what He has done. We have, in the church of Jesus Christ, far more than enough resources to get this gospel to every people group on the planet, and along the way, to love and care for people who have no food or water.

So the question is, will we let the grace of God lead us not to make more excuses for giving less than that which the people of God did before us in the Old Testament? Will we let the grace of God in Christ compel us to sacrifice more; to start...helpful guideline for any one of us to start at a tithe, and to go beyond that. I know that as soon as I say that, there are people who say, "I just can't do it."

I've recommended before...I did at Secret Church...great book: *Money, Possessions, and Eternity*, by Randy Alcorn, and I want to share with you a couple things he writes. I just can't say it better than what he has said. Alcorn wrote...he's talking about objections people have. "If I'm going to tithe eventually...I'm going to tithe eventually, I just need to move toward it slowly." He says,

I'm often asked, "If I haven't been giving at all, won't God understand if I move toward it gradually, starting at 3 percent or 5 percent?" What if I told you [Alcorn writes], "I've had this bad habit of robbing convenience stores, knocking off about a dozen a year." But then I say to you, "This year I'm only going to rob a half-dozen. Is that better?" Well, yes, it's better, but what would you advise me to do? The solution to robbing God is not to start robbing him less; it's to stop robbing him at all. If tithing is God's minimum expectation, can I afford not to tithe? When people tell me [he writes], "I can't afford to tithe," I often ask, "If your income were reduced by ten percent, would you die?" They always admit that they wouldn't. Somehow they would manage to get by. That's proof that they really can tithe. The truth is simply they don't want to. An atheist could get by if he gave away ten percent of his income. Even if they don't believe in God, people can afford to tithe. How much more should Christians be able to trust God, and by faith step out in obedience and watch him provide?

Then, he gives three different scenarios...real quickly. First scenario:

Bill and Donna are in their mid-30s. Bill has steady work, but there's always too much month left at the end of their money. Bill and Donna sincerely intend to put in the offering box whatever is left at the end of the month, but between house payments, bills, and sticking a little in the savings, there's never anything left. They feel bad, but what can they do when they're out of money? The problem: Bill and Donna don't understand firstfruits. They should give to the Lord off the top, not out of what's left or not left. They don't realize that the tithe belongs to God, and there's a word for taking money that doesn't belong to them: stealing.

Second situation:

Joan's a 22-year-old just finishing college. Her 30-hour-a-week job pays just over minimum wage. She earns \$800 a month. Joan's parents still provide room and board, but she has to take care of her tuition, books, and other expenses. "I can't afford to give," says Joan. "I'm barely making it now. If I

gave a tithe, it would be \$80 a month, and I'd probably have to drop out of school. I'd like to give, but I just can't." The problem: Joan is not only robbing God. She's robbing herself of the opportunity to grow in faith. Right now, she doesn't believe God's promises in Malachi 3 or Matthew 6:33 or Luke 6:38 that he'll take care of her if she puts God first by giving him what's his. If God is capable of helping her get by on \$800 a month, isn't he also capable of helping her get by on \$720 a month? Joan's God doesn't seem very big; he can't even compensate for an \$80 shortfall.

Last one:

Don and Sue believe they aren't under law, but grace, and that tithing lends itself to a Pharisaical letter-of-the-law approach. They believe that God's law is written on our hearts, and we should freely give without compulsion. They are proud of their mature and liberating belief in grace giving. The problem: last year, Don and Sue's grace giving amounted to \$30 a month...about 1/2 of 1 percent of their income. While they laud grace and deplore the law, their actions suggest that grace is 1/20 as effective as the law. The problem is not with grace, of course, but their belief that grace means God has lowered his standards and doesn't care how we live.

Again, I want to be sensitive to the variety of circumstances represented around this room. At the same time, I want as pastor to lead you, not for the sake of a bank account here, but for the sake of your individual walk with the Lord.

For us as a community of faith, and ultimately for the spread of the gospel and the advancement of the glory of God around the world, I want to call us to give extravagantly. What if among the members of our faith family, in line with all those who have gone before us in redemptive history, the tithe was simply a starting point? What if those of us who were already there began to take steps to go far beyond that? I pray that God would take the wealth He has entrusted to us with the wisdom that He has promised to give us, and He would use us to make His worship known in Birmingham and to the ends of the earth.

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