

Godly Contentment Part 4 - "Joyful Generosity" (6-6-21)

Introduction: Review - Key to contentment: Worshipping the God of true Peace

1) Content or Craving?

Paul's encouragement to be content . . .

1 Timothy 6:6-8 (ESV)

(6) But godliness with contentment is great gain, (7) for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. (8) But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

Note: A biblical framework for contentment in our finances - my needs are met!

From Jesus' sermon on the mount Matt 6:19-34 . . .

Consider the birds & the flowers - They are fed & clothed and how much more does God loves us!

Paul's warning about what steals our contentment . . .

1 Timothy 6:9-10 (ESV)

(9) But those who **desire to be rich** fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. (10) For the **love of money** is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this **craving** that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

- **Desire** - to will deliberately, have a purpose, be minded, willing as an affection
- **Love of money** - greed and closely related to coveting
- **Craving** - to stretch one's self out in order to touch or to grasp something

2) The Key to Contentment

Luke 19:1-4 (ESV)

(1) Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. (2) And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. (3) And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was **small in stature**. (4) So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way.

Note: To compete with the crowd, he ran ahead and climbed up for a glimpse. This was a familiar strategy!

Luke 19:5 (ESV)

And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today."

Note: Don't settle for a life of grasping for a glimpse, when the king wants to be your guest!

Luke 19:6 (ESV)

So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully.

Note: Stop your climbing, come down (humility), and receive him (not his stuff) with joy!

Luke 19:7-10 (ESV)

(7) And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” (8) And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” (9) And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. (10) For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Note: The generosity of Jesus (when properly understood and received) will produce generosity in us!

True freedom (salvation) from striving, craving, and greed leads to . . .

- **Peace** with God & man
- **Joyful Generosity**

Psalm 4:5-8 (ESV)

(5) Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD. (6) There are many who say, “Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!” (7) You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. (8) In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

3) Worship Response (Spiritual Discipline): Tithing**2 Corinthians 9:6-7 (ESV)**

(6) The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. (7) Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a **cheerful giver**.

Note: Understanding sowing & reaping - you can only grow what you sow!

Then you won't be reluctant or just give out of guilt. It will be your joy to give!

2 Corinthians 9:8 (ESV)

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having **all sufficiency in all things at all times**, you may abound in **every good work**.

Note: Giving & generosity goes beyond money, and it invites the gracious generosity of God to touch everything in our lives!

2 Corinthians 9:9-11 (ESV)

(9) As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” (10) 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**. (11) You will be **enriched in every way to be generous in every way**, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

Note: Our generosity is rooted in the character of our Lord - He is generous, so we will become like Him!

Conclusion: Financial contentment is rooted in the character of God, and trusting Him & not our own striving for success & stability . . .

Hebrews 13:5-6 (ESV)

(5) Keep your life free from **love of money**, and **be content** with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (6) So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

Additional Notes related to Tithing & Good Financial Stewardship

Topics the Bible address related to Money . . .

- **Contentment** (1 Timothy 6:6-12)
- **Anxiety** (Matthew 6:25-34)
- **Greed** (Luke 12:15)
- **Debt** (Proverbs 22:7)
- **Hard Work** (Colossians 3:22-25)
- **Saving against winter seasons** (Proverbs 6:6-11)
- **Care for the poor, widow, orphan, foreigner** (Proverbs 22:9)
- **Oversight** – pay attention to your money, where is it, where is it going (Proverbs 27:23-24)
- **Invest** – use your money wisely (Matthew 25:14-30)

Number of Verses in the Bible addressing money . . . The Bible contains over 2,000 verses about money and possessions—some bible scholars have estimated that 15% of everything Jesus said related to issues of money.

Wisdom in Stewardship – it includes and starts with the tithe but it's about the full 100%. We give him 10% but we honor him with all. This applies to anyone whether you have \$10 or \$10 million. Tithing creates the need for order & budgeting which leads to:

- Meeting practical needs – family, friends, and beyond
- Proper balance between saving & spending – spend less than you make
- Avoid debt – borrow is slave to the lender
- Affords opportunity for offerings & generosity

The tithe is a biblical principle, and relational response (From “Just Give” sermon on tithing 2/18/2018) . . .

1. Pre-law – Cain & Abel (Gen 4), Abram & Melchizedek (Gen 14), Jacob's ladder @ Bethel (Gen 28)

Genesis 4:2-7 (ESV)

(2) . . . Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. (3) In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, (4) and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, (5) but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. (6) The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? (7) If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

Note: Our giving to God – first & best! This is the concept of the **First Fruits**.

- Cain gave “in the course of time”
- Abel gave the first born and of their fat portions
- God warns – don't compare, do what's right, for sin is crouching at your door. This is between you & him!

Abram, coming off a victory of setting his family & neighbors free, and gaining many possessions in the process . . .

Genesis 14:18-20 (ESV)

(18) And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) (19) And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; (20) and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Note: The tithe is a tenth, or 10% - Abram gives God's priest (maybe Jesus, certainly a type of Jesus), 10% of what he just earned in battle.

2. The OT law – Exodus 13, Leviticus 27, Numbers 18, Deuteronomy 12, 14, 26

Part of Moses final words to people before He dies and they enter the Promised Land . . .

Deuteronomy 26 opens with a reminder of all the Lord has done for them, to set them free, and bring them into this new land, and he says this is your response to Him . . .

Deuteronomy 26:10-17 (ESV)

(10) And behold, now I bring the **first of the fruit** of the ground, which you, O LORD, have given me.' And you shall set it down before the LORD your God and **worship** before the LORD your God. (11) And you shall **rejoice** in all the good that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house, you, and the Levite, and the sojourner who is among you. (12) "When you have finished paying all **the tithe** of your produce in the third year, which is the year of tithing, giving it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your towns and be filled, (13) then you shall say before the LORD your God, 'I have removed the sacred portion out of my house, and moreover, **I have given it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow**, according to all your commandment that you have commanded me. I have not transgressed any of your commandments, nor have I forgotten them. (14) I have not eaten of the tithe while I was mourning, or removed any of it while I was unclean, or offered any of it to the dead. I have obeyed the voice of the LORD my God. I have done according to all that you have commanded me. (15) Look down from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless your people Israel and the ground that you have given us, as you swore to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey.' (16) "This day the LORD your God commands you to do these statutes and rules. You shall therefore be careful to do them with **all your heart** and with **all your soul**. (17) You have declared today that the LORD is your God, and that you will walk in his ways, and keep his statutes and his commandments and his rules, and will obey his voice.

Notes: Bringing of the First Fruits & Tithe is an act of Worship!

- It is given in Worship – notice with all your heart & soul.
- It is given with Joy!
- It is given for the care of the priests, widows, orphans, and foreigners.
- It is given no matter their current situation –in good and hard seasons, it is not withheld (verse 14)

King David's final prayer to God, blessing over God's people, and celebration of the money provided by the people for the building of God's temple . . .

1 Chronicles 29:10-18 (ESV)

(10) 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. (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 in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. (12) 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. (13) And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name. (14) "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. (15) 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. (16) 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. (17) 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. (18) 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 toward you.**

Notes: We see both Moses & David addressing this issue of giving to God. Notice common themes . . . Worship, joyfully, freely, because God is the ultimate provider forever!

Additional Passage on First Fruits . . .

Exodus 13:2, 12-16 (ESV)

(2) "Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine." . . . (12) you shall set apart to the LORD all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be the LORD's. (13) Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. (14) And when in time to come your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' you shall say to him, 'By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery.'

Notes: All firstborn males to be given or redeemed (notice this is connected to the Passover)

- All of the **clean** animals the firstborn is given as a sacrifice to God
- All of the **un-clean** animals aren't worthy of sacrifice. So, in order to keep them they must be redeemed by the sacrifice of a clean animal.

3. The OT in times of Reform – 2 Chronicles 31, Nehemiah 10 & 12

2 Chronicles 31:4-5, 9-10 (ESV)

(4) And he commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem to give the portion due to the priests and the Levites, that they might give themselves to the Law of the LORD. (5) As soon as the command was spread abroad, the people of Israel gave in abundance the first fruits of grain, wine, oil, honey, and of all the produce of the field. And they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything . . . (9) And Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites about the heaps. (10) Azariah the chief priest, who was of the house of Zadok, answered him, "Since they began to bring the contributions into the house of the LORD, we have eaten and had enough and have plenty left, for the LORD has blessed his people, so that we have this large amount left."

Notes: Notice the over-flow of giving as they returned to the Lord, and notice the abundant blessing that followed!

Nehemiah 12:44-46 (ESV)

(44) On that day men were appointed over the storerooms, the contributions, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather into them the portions required by the Law for the priests and for the Levites according to the fields of the towns, for Judah **rejoiced** over the priests and the Levites who ministered. (45) And they performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did the singers and the gatekeepers, according to the command of David and his son Solomon. (46) For long ago in the days of David and Asaph there were directors of the singers, and **there were songs of praise and thanksgiving to God**.

Notes: Notice as they returned to the Lord, practically, they returned worshipfully. Don't give from obligation, but as a joyful response of worship and gratitude!!!

Bridging the Gap between OT & NT: Malachi 3 – the last book in the OT has some key things to say about the issue of tithing. After speaking about the coming of the Lord as a refiners fire (a glimpse to Christ's coming) we are gonna pick up in verse 6 . . .

Malachi 3:6-12 (ESV)

(6) "For I the LORD **do not change**; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. (7) From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?' (8) **Will man rob God?** Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. (9) You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. (10) **Bring the full tithe into the storehouse**, that there may be food in my house. 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. (11) I will **rebuke the devourer** for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the LORD of hosts. (12) Then all nations will call you **blessed**, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts.

- God doesn't change
- The tithe is His – He calls it robbery to withhold it from Him
- Put Him to the test! Whoa!
- He will rebuke the devourer
- He will bless abundantly – this is about more than your pocket book, this is about a blessed life!

Take Note: Living with **gratitude & generosity** will change your outlook, behaviors, and therefore your life.

4. NT giving . . . Acts 2 & 4, 1 Corinthians 9, 2 Corinthians 8 & 11, Philippians 4, 1 Timothy 5

One of our favorite passages to quote about the early church and their community . . .

Acts 2:42-47 (ESV)

(42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (43) And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. (44) And all who believed were together and had all things in common. (45) And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. (46) And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, (47) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Notes: NT generosity doesn't lower the bar; it raises it!

- Shared all their belongings and covered all the needs
- Daily gathering: worship, prayer, study, fellowship
- Similar passage: Acts 4 – laid their gifts at the disciples feet, and they distributed according to the need

Churches cared for their ministers and the greater body of Christ . . .

Philippians 4:15-16 (ESV)

(15) And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. (16) Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.

2 Corinthians 11:7-9 (ESV)

(7) Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? (8) I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. (9) And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way.

Notes: The Philippians gave to bless Paul, and help minister to other churches. Paul tells the Corinthians about this and further encourages them to grow in their giving in chapter 8.

5. NT Jesus & Tithing . . . Matthew 23, Mark 12, Luke 11 & 18

Jesus – having dinner by invite with a Pharisee . . .

Luke 11:42 (ESV)

"But 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.

Jesus – teaching in Jerusalem during the week of his death . . .

Matthew 23:23 (ESV)

"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.

Notes: Jesus affirms the tithe, while always pointing to the larger issue – The Heart!

- **Does God need your money? No!**
- **Does God want your money? Yes!**
- **Why? He is after your heart, and if He has your wallet, then He has your heart!**

This is personal to Jesus – because of who he is . . . Remember the principle of First Fruits & the Redemption of the Firstborn? The Clean was sacrificed in order to redeem the Unclean.

Jesus is the **Ultimate Tithe** & the **Ultimate First Fruit** – He is God's best given for our redemption. And because He was risen from the grave, He is also called the first fruit of eternal life (1 Corinthians 15)

Conclusion: The context of our tithing should be . . .relational. A loving response of joyful worship, given freely, to the God who has all, gives all, and who paid the ultimate tithe himself. Remember where we started this series . . . **All tithes are a reminder of The Tithe!**

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son . . ." (John 3:16)