

“A Generous Church”

Acts 4:32-37

Acts: The Unstoppable Gospel

Acts 4:32 – And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.

4 Money-Orientations:

1. Money as status
2. Money as security
3. Money as enjoyment
4. Money as control

15 Financial Stewardship Principles – “A Biblical Worldview of Money”:

1. Everything we have belongs to God. (*1 Chronicles 29:11; Psalm 50:12; Deuteronomy 10:14; Haggai 2:8; Leviticus 25:23; Psalm 50:10-11; Job 41:11b; 1 Corinthians 4:2*)
2. God gives to us as He pleases. (*Proverbs 22:21; 10:22; cf. Deuteronomy 8:18; 1 Chronicles 29:12; Ecclesiastes 5:19*)
3. Earthly riches are temporary. (*Job 27:19; Proverbs 27:24; 23:5; Psalm 39:6; James 5:2-3*)
4. You can't worship God and money at the same time. (*Proverbs 3:9; 13:7; Psalm 52:7; Exodus 20:23; Luke 16:13-15*)
5. More money will not bring you happiness. (*Ecclesiastes 10:19; 5:10; cf. Job 36:19; Revelation 3:17; 1 Timothy 6:17-19*)
6. Be content with what God gives you. (*Proverbs 30:8; cf. Philippians 4:11-13; Hebrews 13:5*)
7. The God who created us in His image loves to give. (*Psalm 84:11; Psalm 37:4; Proverbs 2:6; 3:34; 8:20-21; cf. Ecclesiastes 5:19*)
8. God gives to us so that we will give to others. (*Psalm 112:9; 146:7; Proverbs 3:9-10; 22:2; 22:9; 29:7; 29:13; 31:20; Luke 12:33; James 2:5; 1 John 3:17; 1 Timothy 6:17-19*)
9. Our giving is to be a form of worship. (*Proverbs 3:10; 14:31; 19:17; Matthew 10:8*)
10. Our giving is to be generous. (*Proverbs 22:9; James 1:5; Mark 12:41-44; 2 Samuel 24:24; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; Leviticus 27:30; 1 Timothy 6:17-18*)
11. Our giving is to be gracious. (*Proverbs 14:31; 19:17; Exodus 25:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7*)
12. Giving is to be our first financial priority. (*Proverbs 3:9-10; Exodus 23:19a; 2 Corinthians 9:15*)
13. Faithful giving results in incredible blessings. (*Proverbs 22:9; 14:21; 19:17; Psalm 41:1-3; Proverbs 3:9-10; 13:21; 28:27; 11:24-25; Luke 6:38; Corinthians 9:6; Philippians 4:17; Malachi 3:8-12*)
14. Holding back our giving has serious consequences. (*Proverbs 11:24b; 21:13; 28:27; Ecclesiastes 5:13; Luke 16:10-11; 2 Corinthians 9:6; Matthew 25:14-30*)
15. The habit of Biblical giving is a learned behavior. (*1 Chronicles 29; Proverbs 22:6*)

Statistics on Giving:

- 20-25% of professing Christians give regularly to a local church.
- Less than 5% tithe on their earnings.
- Average Christian gives about 2.5% of their income.

The disciples' beliefs about money came directly from the teachings of Jesus (Luke 6:30; Matthew 5:42; Luke 12:33, 14:33; Matthew 6:19-21; Mark 10:45).

Acts 4:33 – “And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.”

Acts 4:34-35 – “For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales³⁵ and lay them at the apostles’ feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.”

6 Biblical Requirements for Providing Financial Support: (David Guzik)

1. The church must discern who the truly needy are. (1 Timothy 5:3)
2. If one can work to support himself, he is not truly needy and must provide for his own needs. (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12; 1 Timothy 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:11)
3. If family can support a needy person, the church should not support them. (1 Timothy 5:3-4)
4. Those who are supported by the church must make some return to the church body (1 Timothy 5:5, 10)
5. It is right for the church to examine moral conduct before giving support. (1 Timothy 5:9-13)
6. The support of the church should be for the most basic necessities of living. (1 Timothy 6:8)

Clarification #1 – This practice of selling property is not normative for all Christians. It occurred only in Jerusalem, it’s not commanded directly anywhere in the New Testament, and it’s never mentioned again after Acts 5.

Clarification #2 – This passage does not teach communism.

- Communism says, “What is yours is mine; I’ll take it.”
- Christianity says, “What is mine is yours, I’ll share it.”

Acts 4:36-37 – “Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),³⁷ and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.”

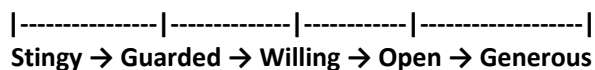
In the coming months, we’ll see Barnabas living up to his name:

- Introduces Paul to the apostles (Acts 9:27).
- Goes on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:1 – 14:28).
- Attends the Council of Jerusalem to defend the gospel (Acts 15:1-20).
- Gives John Mark a second chance (Acts 15:36-39).

Never underestimate the impact of encouragement!

Conclusion:

Do you consider yourself a generous person? Where would you place yourself on this spectrum?



Martin Luther: “There are three conversions necessary to every man: the head, the heart, and the purse.”

When Christ gains control of our bank account, that’s how we know he’s really become the Lord of our life.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

1. How do you know if someone is a generous person? Do you consider yourself to be generous?
2. Which one of the 15 Financial Stewardship Principles stands out to you the most, and why?
3. Why do you think there’s such a gap between what Christians claim to believe about money and their actual giving practices?
4. What practical thing(s) do you need to do or change in response to this message?