

# A GIVING LIFESTYLE



***BY ANDREW PETERS***

# Principle 1: Giving to God in a Better Covenant<sup>1</sup>

1. To tithe or not to tithe that is the question –
  - a. There are those who argue that Christians are no longer bound by the law and thus do not have to tithe. That is, because we have a new covenant we are no longer bound by the restrictions of the old covenant.
  - b. New and better covenant:
    - i. Jesus proclaimed that he was establishing new covenant in his blood (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; Hebrews 12:24);
    - ii. Paul indicates that we are ministers of a new covenant in the Spirit not the Law or written code (2 Corinthians 3:6-14);
    - iii. Hebrews indicates that Jesus instituted a *better* covenant with greater promises. The old covenant being now redundant and no longer able to fulfil its purpose is replaced by a much more excellent and better covenant (Hebrews 7:22; 8:6-13); and
    - iv. The laws of this new covenant will be written on their hearts and minds – it will be an internal rather than external adherence to the law (Hebrews 8:10; 10:16)
2. However, a better covenant with greater promises requires not less but more commitment to God and His purpose.

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<sup>1</sup> The reference to a better covenant does not diminish the meaning and nature of the old covenant or its Jewish adherents – it means that God has provided another way of redemption that enables us to respond to His call on our life. One that gives us greater promises, but with it more responsibility.

- a. If those of the old covenant were required to give a tithe or first one tenth of their income to God, then those of the better covenant with greater promises could not possibly be satisfied with giving less.
- b. The new covenant requires a giving of everything to God:
  - i. It means giving God our entire being and life – Paul writes, “I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:1-2); and
  - ii. It is no longer we who live, but Christ in us: Paul notes “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).
- c. Jesus notes that tithing complements a righteous life, not replaces it. He charges the Pharisees to continue to tithe, but at the same not to neglect justice, kindness and the love of God (Luke 11:42)

### 3. Continuance of Thanksgiving

- a. The Old Covenant tithe was a thankful response to the blessing of God on our lives and His provision for us. Even before the time of Moses, Abraham gave a tithe to the priest/king Melchizedek in thanks for God’s help. (Genesis 14:17-20; Deuteronomy 14:24).
- b. As such, it was a gift to God in appreciation; the first one tenth of their income that belongs to the LORD, for the tithe was the LORD’S (Leviticus 27:30-32; Mal 3:8).

- c. The new and better covenant calls us to give thanks to God and to be generous in that thanksgiving. Paul writes: "You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God; for the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God" (2Corinthians 9:11-12).
- d. The new covenant establishes a provision from God the Father in our lives that drives anxiety from our hearts (Matthew 6). Paul writes: "Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6).

#### 4. God Blesses our Giving

- a. In the old covenant, God challenged His people to bring their full tithe into his storerooms and He would bless them. "Bring the full tithes 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 an overflowing blessing. 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" (Malachi 3:10-11).
- b. Jesus tells us to give and that the measure we give will be the measure we receive back, multiplied – "give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back" (Luke 6:38).

#### 5. We bring our tithes to our local church for the ministry:

- a. God gave His tithe to the Levite ministers and priests as their inheritance for their service in the local church (Numbers 18:21). It was God's means of paying for His ministers and priests.

In the new covenant, the tithe is the beginning of our giving not the end. However, it comes with the promise that if we give our best to God He will multiple the best back to us.

## Knowing How to Give – over and above

Giving is a necessity of heart, lest we become cynical and bitter people who are caustic in relationships, anxious in activities, and fearful of life and its potential pitfalls.

In the first study we looked at the first principle of giving – ***giving to God***. It means giving to God that portion of our income that belongs to Him. Its use is His to determine since we have given it to Him. Its results are blessings in life, as God pours down unexplainable benefits, gifts and prosperity to us.

In this study we look at the second principle of giving – ***loaning to God in our giving to others***. It also comes with the benefit that God will not let us out give Him; He will not be in debt to us – but return to us what we give. *“One who is gracious (kind) to a poor man lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his good deed”* (Proverbs 19:17 NASV/RSV).

We have called this *knowing how to give* because we are now going beyond simply giving to God what belongs to Him. We are looking to the world around us and its needs.

1. Jesus, in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man encourages us to see the need that is present on our very doorstep. We need to step out in faith to assist those who are poor and in need (Luke 16:19-31).
2. In the parable of the rich man storing up his wealth in bigger barns, Jesus encourages us to use the things that God has given to us, rather than hoard them up (Luke 12:13-21). He calls us to be rich towards God, not simply the things of this world. He does not demean having riches, as long as the riches do not have us.
3. Giving to others is not simply for those who are rich and powerful, but for all of us, no matter what condition of life we might be experiencing. In the story of the widow’s mite, Jesus complements the woman for

her faithfulness to God in giving all that she had (Mark 12:41-44). The inference being that God was not going to leave her destitute after such devotion to Him.

4. God considers our physical possessions as secondary to true life. He does not forbid possessions, and in fact declares His desire for us to prosper. “Let them shout for joy and rejoice, who favour my vindication; and let them say continually, ‘The LORD be magnified, who delights in the prosperity of His servant’” (Psalm 35:27). However, he warns that the desire for physical possessions can be a snare that robs us of eternal life (Matthew 13:22).
5. Giving to others involves using the skills and abilities that God has given to us to bring relief, friendship, encouragement, sustenance, hope and affection into their lives. Through the parable of the talents Jesus encourages us to risk the things that God has given to us in giving to others and declaring to them “good news”. It is such giving that prevents us from being driven by fear and falling into the traps of wickedness and slothfulness, like the one-talent man who buried his gift (Matthew 25:14-29).
6. The opposite of love and giving is fear. Fear stands up to prevent us doing all that our heart tells us to do in caring for and acting for others. It intimidates us to such an extent that we often turn away from what God asks us to do and rob that person of a blessing from God that might transform his or her life. Fear takes away or delays our good intentions, intentions that if acted upon will transform the world around us. “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:18-19).

## Giving in the Centre of God's Highway

The miracle working power of God operates in the centre of God's highway, where He is working towards the culmination of His purpose.

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This study looks at the third principle of giving – ***giving to God's purpose***. It refers to our giving to God's purpose in the here and now, where God has His specific work and purpose.

God has a highway that is the centre of His activity and purpose. We do not often hear of it because of quotes from the Old Testament texts to the New Testament primarily occur from the Greek version of the Old Testament called the Septuagint.<sup>2</sup> For instance, the translation of the Hebrew text of Isaiah 40:3-4 gives us:

A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a **highway** for our God. Every valley shall be lifted

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<sup>2</sup> This was a translation of the Hebrew into Greek by Jewish scholars around about the third century B.C.

up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

However, the quote from the Septuagint version in Matthew 3:1, Mark 1:3 and Luke 3:4 give us:

For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the **way** of the Lord, make his **paths** straight."

Luke 3:5-6 continues:

Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

We can see from this that the terms highway and path can be synonymous. A number of familiar scriptures describe the highway of God as His paths: Ps.16:11 "Thou dost show me the **path** of life; in thy presence there is fullness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore". Ps.25:10 "All the **paths** of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies".

Not only does God have a highway, but it is also still under construction in the most desolate and insignificant of places of the earth, as the sequence of these passages from Isaiah indicate:

Isaiah.33:8 The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceases. Covenants are broken, witnesses are despised, there is no regard for man.

Isaiah.49:11 God says: and I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be raised up.

Isa.62:10: God says: go through, go through the gates, prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway, clear it of stones, lift up an ensign over the peoples.

God's highway needs to be built up in every generation, and where desolation and destruction has wreaked havoc, God moves in to restore His highway (Jeremiah 6:16; 31:21).

In Matthew 6, Jesus calls us to assist God in the restoration of His highway, where he tells us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. This call comes with the promise that Father God will provide all that we need to live and survive in this world. Mark in particular, as noted above, declares that the coming of Jesus was to restore the highway of God, to bring to the bear the kingdom of God in the forlorn and lost world in which we live. In John 5 Jesus tells us that His purpose is to do the will of Father God. He notes that the miracle working power of God that works through Him only occurs because He does what He sees the Father is doing.

We need to centre ourselves on the highway of God – to be focused upon what God is doing today, not what He did yesterday, last year, last century or last millennium. What are God intentions for today and tomorrow? How do we set our own generations and the generations to come to prosper in the things of God and grow a strong and vibrant Church? We do it by sowing into His kingdom, rebuilding His highway and establishing His purpose. There are at least three ways that we can give to God in the centre of His highway:

1. **Our gifts and abilities:** using to the fullest the gifts and abilities that God has given to us for the purpose He gave them to us. In addition, we need to encourage others when they step out to use their gifts for His purpose and glory.
2. **Gifts of Faith and Giving:** for those who have gifts of faith and giving, it means to go over and above and to sow finances and resources into our Church so we can achieve the vision and

purpose of God for our local church – this is what we call our ***extra-mile, over, above & beyond people*** to do.

3. **Work where the Father is working:** we need to give to where we see the Father working. For us, it is the building of a new church to provide resources for outreach and community care so that we can impact our city for Jesus Christ. The miracle-working power moves where the Father is at work:
  - 2005, BCC changed its by-laws that enables us to install a low-pressure pump sewerage system if needed.
  - In 2009, negotiation with BCC provided a way to reduce our infrastructure fees from \$550,000 to around \$56,000.
  - In 2009, BBMA offered us \$960,000 (incl. gst.) for the sale of the St Jude’s Church.
  - In 2010, after negotiation with BCC, because of neighbourly protest, saw the approval of BBMA DA application.
  - In 2010, we received a grant to purchase a second hand twelve-seat bus to assist us in transporting our members and others to parish functions.
  - In 2010, we received tax-deductibility status for our building and education programs.
  - In 2011, significant gifts from many of St Jude’s members and the Ruth Featherston Bequest enabled us build a great worship and seminar area at Judah that seats over 100 people, with audio/visual set up and stage that can be used as a sanctuary, called the Media room. We also enclosed the porch as a new reception area.
  - In 2011, we advertised for printing the notice sign at Judah, with 4 quotes coming in around \$350, the fifth quote did it for nothing (because he was a Christian).
  - In 2011, tender prices from \$1.4 to \$1.8 million were reduced to \$830,000, with additional work being done by the parish.

- 2011, we have seen reticent neighbours giving permission for the sewer to go through their properties free of financial charge.
- 2011, the sale of St Jude's church in Buller Street was finalise
- 2012, we moved our congregations up to Judah to worship in the new Media room just as earth-works began on the new church and car park,
- 2012, the first stage of construction of the church was completed by James Trowse Constructions,
- 2013, after two tenders attempts the contract was signed to installed a 250m sewer main through six properties. The sewer main was completed in September 2013.
- 2013, we received a donation of a corporate telephone system with 14 hadnsets;
- 2013, second stage of construction of the new church was completed with installation of paths and carpet in the new church.
- 2013, first confirmation service was held in the new church with Bishop Geoff smith.
- 2013, the church was dedicated by Archbishop Phillip Aspinall and Bishop Jonathan Holland
- 2013, the church's name was officially changed *to St Jude the Apostle Anglican Church* and Judah Ministry Centre was changed *to Cornerstone Ministry Centre.*
- 2014, new lighted cross and signs placed on the church and ministry centre.
- 2014, Ps Andrew was inducted as the new Rector of the Parish.
- More to come...