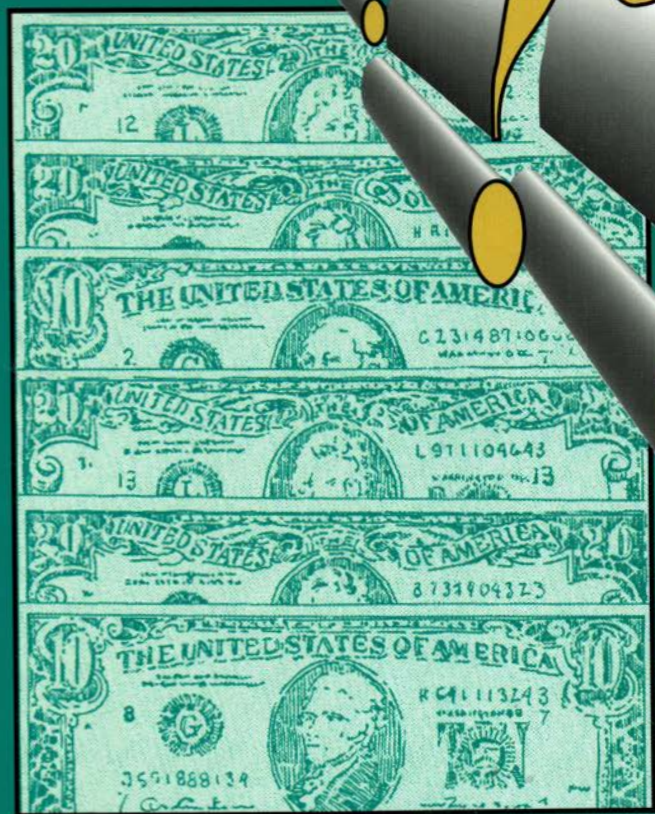


Will God Supply All Your Needs



■ Jack Michael

Will God Supply All Your Needs?

by
Jack Michael

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Introduction

"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19).

Undoubtedly, Philippians 4:19 is one of the most familiar verses of scripture in the entire Bible. It's also one of the most frequently used scriptures in the Bible.

It seems like new Christians discover this verse of scripture, just after they've discovered John 3:16!

You'll find this scripture in all the promise books. It frequently appears in the form of wall plaques, magnetic stickers for our refrigerators, and other decorative forms of display.

Christians; young and old; fervently claim, confess and cling to this scripture by faith!

Pastors pray strong, authoritative prayers for the members of their congregations, using the promise of this verse.

Nevertheless, the question I put before you in this book is:

WILL GOD SUPPLY ALL YOUR NEEDS?

That's right, the title of this book is in the form of a question!

Philippians 4:19 is definitely a promise of God to his people; but there are some things we must FIRST do in order to qualify for, and subsequently experience the reality of this promise!

If you'll carefully notice, the promises of God; although they are available to us through God's grace; have a prerequisite attached to them! For example, Psalm 37:4 says:

"...and He shall give you the desires of your heart."

Unfortunately, we sometimes neglect the first part of that scripture, which says:

"Delight yourself also in the Lord..."

Now, don't misunderstand me. When I use the word, *"prerequisite,"* I'm not talking about putting New Testament believers back under Old Testament Law.

Sometimes, Christians get upset when you talk to them about biblical principles of giving. *"Don't try to put me back under the Law,"* they scream!

However, the prerequisite of which I am speaking is a matter of New Testament grace! I'm referring to ACTIONS, which demonstrate FAITH! Remember, James 2:17 says, *"So also faith if it does not have works (deeds and actions of obedience to back it up), by itself is destitute of power - inoperative, dead!"* (AMP).

Will God Supply All Your Needs?

Chapter One

A Letter to the Philippian Church

"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19).

When the Apostle Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the above words, they were originally part of a letter which he sent to the church in Philippi.

Today, the book of Philippians is part of the Bible. Consequently, the information contained therein is available to, and applicable to all Christians. Originally though, it was a letter addressed specifically to the Philippian church!

This brings us to an important question. Why did the Holy Spirit inspire Paul to write these words only to the Church at Philippi?

He wrote letters to other churches, which are now a part of the Bible. These other letters were also inspired by the Holy Spirit; but only to the Philippian church did he write:

"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Paul's writings to the other churches also included instructions about finances. For example, he wrote to the Corinthian Church:

"I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what was lacking to me the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself." (2 Corinthians 11:8-9).

One chapter later, in the same epistle, he expounded upon the improper attitudes and actions of the Corinthian Church:

"For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong!" (2 Corinthians 12:13).

This scripture is made even clearer from the Amplified Bible:

"For in what respect were you put to a disadvantage in comparison with the rest of the churches, unless [it was for the fact] that I myself did not burden you [with my financial support]? Pardon me [for doing you] this injustice!"

Yes, Paul did write to other churches on the subject of finances, but it was mostly in the form of admonishment or correction. Notice carefully what he said to the Corinthian Church in 2 Corinthians 9:8:

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work."

Notice that Paul said to the Corinthian Church, *"...God is ABLE..!"*

But remember, to the Philippian Church, he said, *"...God SHALL..!"*

Why then, did the Holy Spirit inspire Paul to word his writings to the Philippian Church, *"...God SHALL supply all your need..?"*

That, of course, is the subject of this book! In the coming chapters, we'll be exploring precisely why the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle Paul to write these well known words to the Christians at Philippi.

And, in the process, you'll be able to evaluate your own life. You'll be able to determine whether or not you qualify to claim the benefits of Philippians 4:19; and if not, what you can do to correct the situation!

Chapter Two

Out of Context

Christians often have a bad habit of trying to apply scriptures out of their context.

Let me explain. "*Context*," according to Webster's Dictionary, is: "*the parts of a discourse that surround a word or passage, and can throw light upon its meaning.*"

Sometimes, Christians incorrectly attempt to apply individual verses of scripture to their lives, or to their circumstances, without regard to the scriptures that surround it!

They lift the individual scripture out of the Bible, and then try to build a doctrine based upon that scripture alone!

This is what has happened in the case of Philippians 4:19. It has been lifted out of its scriptural context and fashioned into beautiful wall decorations, placed into Precious Promise books, made into magnetic stickers for our refrigerators, and bumper stickers for our cars.

Sunday school children have memorized this scripture; and Christians in general have been encouraged to claim it by faith, without regard to what prompted the Apostle Paul to write such words.

No doubt, the individual scripture in itself is truth, but in order to determine the whole truth, we need to examine the surrounding scriptures as well.

So, let's set aside our promise books for a little while. Let's temporarily remove our wall plaques and magnetic stickers, and let's look a little deeper into this matter. Remember, the Apostle Paul said in Acts 20:27:

"For I have not shunned (or avoided) to declare to you the WHOLE counsel of God."

This time, let's not begin with Philippians 4:19. Instead, let's back up and begin with verse 10.

As we proceed, I believe you'll begin to understand why Paul wrote to the Philippians, "...my God **SHALL** supply all your need..."

"But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. (verse 10).

Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content. (verse 11).

I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. (verse 12).

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (verse 13).

Nevertheless, you have done well that you shared in my distress. (verse 14).

Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. (verse 15).

For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. (verse 16).

Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. (verse 17).

Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. (verse 18).

Of course, now that we have begun to get a glimpse of the whole picture, we finally arrive at our favorite scripture:

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (verse 19).

The fact is, within verses 10-18, there are a number of vitally important "**KEYS**" which actually qualified the Christians at Philippi to partake of the promise in verse 19!

In the following chapters, we'll be looking, individually, at these essential keys.

And, let me continue to encourage you. Check up on your own life to see if you qualify for the promise of Philippians 4:19.

Chapter Three

The Philippian Church Was A Giving Church

"Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress." (Philippians 4:14).

Many churches are not giving churches. Instead, they are stingy or fearful; sometimes using the excuse of sound management!

A nationally known Christian singer told of performing a concert in a church of 1,500 members. They gave him \$15.00!

Once I ministered in a particular church for four days. At the last service, the pastor made a big issue of encouraging the people to give a generous offering to my ministry.

After the service I was enjoying a cup of coffee in a little area near the church office. I overheard someone inform the pastor of the amount of the offering. Then, I heard the pastor, in a hushed tone, explain that they were giving me only a portion of the offering.

As I said, many churches are not giving churches. Instead, they are stingy, and often times storing up money with no specific purpose for its use. Meanwhile, the enormous task of completing the Great Commission still lies before us!

In Luke 12:16-21, Jesus commented about storing up things for no specific purpose:

"Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: the ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, what shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops? So he said, I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him, You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided? So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not RICH TOWARD GOD!"

Now don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying you shouldn't have a savings account, or investments.

This rich man's problem wasn't just the storing up of treasure. It was the storing up of treasure with no specific purpose for its use! And, of course, his main problem was not being rich toward God!

Usually, if a church is not a giving church, you have to look no further than the leadership to pinpoint the problem! The congregation just reflects the training they have received.

Not only was the Philippian Church a giving church; they were also a church that was sensitive to the Holy Spirit. They recognized that Paul was experiencing financial problems, and they gave to meet that need.

Philippians 4:14 from the Amplified Bible makes things clearer:

"But it was right and commendable and noble of you to contribute for my needs and to share my difficulties with me."

Christians need to develop a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit in their giving. Otherwise, they are likely to give out of their emotions.

It's an obvious fact that many Christians give to large, highly visible, glamorous type ministries, because their emotions are touched by cleverly effective appeals for money.

As a result, Christians often fail to give where the needs are genuine.

Again, please don't misunderstand me. I'm not against giving to big ministries. I'm just against Christians being manipulated!

The Philippian Christians could have been persuaded by their emotions, or influenced by human reasoning. After all, Paul was in prison when they sent him this offering. They could have reasoned that since Paul was in prison, his ministry was obviously finished. No need to waste an offering on Paul. May as well give our money somewhere else!

Instead, they were sensitive and obedient to the Holy Spirit!

Well, how about you? Are you a giving person? Do you belong to a giving church? Are you sensitive to the Holy Spirit to recognize where, when and how much God wants you to give?

Do you give in the direction of, "*Flashing Lights*," as your emotions are touched; or are you sensitive to recognize where genuine works of God are experiencing financial difficulty?

And, so far, how do you qualify to claim the promise of Philippians 4:19?

Chapter Four

The Philippian Church Was The Only Church Giving to Paul!

"Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only." (Philippians 4:15).

Obviously, the Philippian Church was the first church in Europe to give to Paul. Apparently, they were the only church giving to him!

I'm sure it's becoming clearer now, why Paul never wrote to the other churches, "...my God shall supply all your need..!"

Remember, Paul not only ministered in all these churches; he actually started them! Yet, only the Philippian Church ministered to him financially!

I've had the opportunity, and privilege to minister in a lot of churches. Most of those churches ministered to me financially; some quite generously.

However, there were a few churches that gave me absolutely nothing. These particular churches had one thing in common. They were struggling to survive! For some reason, they had not yet discovered the scriptural principle:

"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." (Luke 6:38).

And remember, these principles don't just apply to churches, as a religious structure, or an organization; but they especially apply to the people who make up the churches!

I once shared the responsibility of tithing and giving with a Christian brother who was deeply in debt. He explained that he was unable to give because of his current financial situation, but he fully intended to start giving to God as soon as he was out of debt.

This brother misunderstood the principle. It doesn't say, "give, *AFTER* it has been given to you!" It says, "Give, and it will be given to you..." We have to initiate the process!

Interestingly, I talked with this brother about six months later. He was deeper in debt than before.

Remember, Paul wrote, "...my God shall supply all your need..," only to the Philippian Church. He couldn't write such words to the Corinthian Church. They weren't giving!

"Were the people in the Corinthian Church born again Christians?" Yes, they were!

"Didn't God love them?" Yes, he did!

"Didn't God also want to provide for their needs?" Yes, he wanted to!

But, God responds to us according to the principles of his word. So, he could only say to the Christians at Corinth, "*you are inferior to the other churches!*"

To the contrary, in his Third Epistle, the Apostle John wrote about an individual named Gaius. Listen to what he said:

"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers." (3 John 2).

I wonder why John was praying, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that Gaius would prosper?

Maybe it was because of the lifestyle this person was living? Listen to what John said about Gaius in verses 5-6 of the same epistle:

"Beloved, YOU DO FAITHFULLY whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you SEND THEM FORWARD ON THEIR JOURNEY IN A MANNER WORTHY OF GOD, you will do well."

It's rather clear why the Holy Spirit inspired John to pray that Gaius would prosper!

There's something else very important to recognize from our opening verse of scripture in this chapter. The Christians at Philippi were giving to Paul AFTER HE DEPARTED FROM THEIR CHURCH:

"...when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only." (Philippians 4:15).

In other words, the Philippian Church was giving to missions!

Unfortunately, many churches are concerned only with their own, little, internal, church affairs. Often, they are oblivious to the responsibility of fulfilling the Great Commission outside their own doors. From my observation, these churches are also struggling to survive!

Jesus commanded us:

"...go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15).

Some people have actually been called by God to GO! Everyone else has been called to SEND those who go!

However, if pastors don't teach and train their people to be missions minded, who will finance the Great Commission?

If individual Christians don't respond to the needs of missionaries, how can they go?

"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And, how shall they hear without a preacher? AND HOW SHALL THEY PREACH UNLESS THEY ARE SENT..?" (Romans 10:14-15).

I've also had the opportunity to observe churches, and individual Christians, who are missions minded. As a result, they generously support missionaries, missions efforts and missions projects.

These churches, and individuals, are either already blessed by the Lord, or they are due to receive a blessing! Listen to these words from Proverbs 11:25:

"The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself."

I asked God what he meant by the statement, "*...he who waters will also be watered himself?*"

He reminded me of what is most in need of water. It's DRY PLACES! In other words, places like:

(1) Missionary efforts in foreign; and often remote or distant lands.

(2) Smaller ministries that maybe aren't as visible or glamorous as larger ministries.

(3) Ministries that seemingly are lacking in prominence, because they labor in places which are obscure; and therefore, they go unnoticed by most of the body of Christ.

(4) Pioneer efforts to start ministries that previously did not exist!

Well, how about you? Do you belong to a church that is missions minded? And, what about you personally? Are you reaching out beyond your own little familiar area to help complete the Great Commission on a broader scope? Are you sensitive enough to the Holy Spirit that God can call upon you to water dry places?

And thus far, how are you qualifying to claim God's promise of Philippians 4:19?

Chapter Five

The Philippian Christians Had A Lifestyle Of Giving

"For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities." (Philippians 4:16).

The Christians in Philippi didn't just give one offering to Paul, and say, *"there, we have given an offering to this missionary. We have fulfilled our responsibility. His needs are no longer on our conscience!"*

Instead, Paul said, "*For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again...*" These Christians in the church at Philippi had a lifestyle of giving!

And remember, the main offering Paul is talking about in this fourth chapter of Philippians is the one brought to him by Epaphroditus while he was imprisoned in Rome. In the above scripture, we learn that the Philippian Church sent Paul at least two other offerings while he was preaching at Thessalonica!

As I said before, the Christians at Philippi had a lifestyle of giving!

From a child, I was taught the lifestyle of giving. My parents were diligent to teach me the principles of tithing, giving offerings and in general, just being a generous person.

In a similar manner, I have taught those principles to my children. When they were very young, I would give them 50 cents as an allowance. I would purposely give them small change so they could give 5 cents tithe; and if they so desired, they could give an additional amount as an offering.

One time, when my oldest daughter was very young, she gave a really small offering to a large ministry. This ministry sent her a letter describing in great detail how blessed they were by her offering.

Of course, the letter was computer generated; and her offering obviously didn't accomplish much; but the incident served to impress upon my daughter the importance of giving.

I've taught my children to give regardless of the amount of money they received. I've taught them to give regardless of where the money comes from.

If they received money for an allowance, they tithed. If they received money as gifts for Christmas; or as a birthday present, they tithed. Even if they found money on the ground, they tithed!

Regardless of the earthly source, I have taught my children to honor the Lord!

Consequently, as they have grown into adults, the principles of tithing, giving offerings, and being generous have not been difficult concepts. From an early age, they learned the scriptural principle of being faithful in small things, and now, they are also faithful in larger things!

"He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much." (Luke 16:10).

It's very important to teach your children biblical principles while they are young. Most Christians are familiar with 2 Timothy 3:16:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

What we often fail to see is the preceding scripture, where Paul says of Timothy:

"...FROM CHILDHOOD you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:15).

Christians who were older in life before they accepted Jesus Christ, often have a great struggle obeying the scriptures in the areas of tithing and giving offerings.

If you have small children, teach them and train them in these principles early in life! Don't take the approach that they're probably too young to understand such things; and that they can concentrate on such matters when they are older and more mature.

Remember, the Bible says, *"...he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much."*

Teach your children a lifestyle of giving, and teach them early!

The Christians at Philippi had a lifestyle of giving. They were giving to Paul, *"...once and again..."* for his necessities.

Well, how about you? Do you have a lifestyle of giving? Do you qualify to claim God's promise, *"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus?"*

Chapter Six

The Philippian Christians Were Generous Givers

"Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God." (Philippians 4:18).

The Christians at Philippi were generous givers. Notice that Paul said, *"...I have all and abound. I am full..."*

In other words, the offering sent to Paul from the Philippian Church totally provided for all his needs!

Many Christians are not generous. They give as little as possible. There's an old saying among church people, "*Lord, if you'll keep the preacher humble, we'll keep him poor.*"

Of course, this was meant to be a joke, but unfortunately, it often reflects the truth.

This kind of attitude is totally contrary to the word of God. 1 Timothy 5:17-18 says:

"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, you shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain, and, the laborer is worthy of his wages."

Did you notice the part about DOUBLE HONOR? That word, "*honor,*" literally means "*a value;*" and it is believed that the word, "*Honorarium,*" comes from this word!

Those who serve God full-time, depending upon the ministry to provide their needs, should be cared for in a generous manner!

There's something else that's important to see here. The Christians at Philippi were not rich. Supplying all of Paul's needs was not easy for them. They didn't just give an offering from the interest they earned on their mutual funds!

Listen as Paul describes their economic condition in 2 Corinthians 8:1-2:

"We want to tell you further, brethren, about the grace (the favor and spiritual blessing) of God which has been evident in the churches of Macedonia [arousing in them the desire to give alms]; for in the midst of an ordeal of severe tribulation, their abundance of joy and their depth of poverty [together] have overflowed in a wealth of lavish generosity on their part." (AMP).

As strange as it may seem, from my experience in the body of Christ, the most generous givers are sometimes those who have the least!

Rich people often experience difficulty in giving. I suppose that when they figure up the tithe, it's such a large amount, they can't bear to part with it! Maybe they weren't trained to give before they were rich. Remember that scripture from Luke 16:10:

"He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much."

A rich person might think they're doing good in the area of giving. The amount they give may exceed other individual givers in the church; but if they're not giving an actual tithe of their income (10%); plus offerings in addition to tithing, then they're failing to obey God!

You see, God looks at things differently than we do:

"Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And MANY WHO WERE RICH PUT IN MUCH. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans (about 2 cents). So He called His disciples to Him and said to them, assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood." (Mark 12:41-44).

There's something I like about God; his word touches everyone! Listen from 1 Timothy 6:17-19 as he gives instructions to the rich:

"Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

The truth is, wealthy Christians could be a great blessing to the kingdom of God. Those who are generous can have a tremendous impact in helping to fulfill the Great Commission!

I thank God for wealthy Christians who are sensitive to the Holy Spirit, and obedient to the principles of God's word! They are a tremendous blessing to those of us who are in full-time ministry!

Of course, the truth is, God desires for all his people to be generous, regardless of their current economic status!

I am fully convinced that if all Christians would tithe, and give generous offerings, there would be more than enough money to support all legitimate ministries, and easily complete the fulfilling of the Great Commission!

I believe Paul was able to complete his ministry only because of the generosity of the Philippian Church!

As stated in a previous chapter, the epistle to the Philippians was apparently written from prison in Rome. Religious tradition tells us that Paul was stuck in a little, dirt hole in the ground with just a few meager rays of sunlight occasionally penetrating his cell. But, listen to these words from Acts 28:30-31 as Paul describes his incarceration:

"Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him."

Did you notice that Paul dwelt for two whole years in a rented house? Did you ever wonder where he got the money to pay the rent?

And, what about his ministry in Rome? Was it fruitful? Listen as Paul explains to the Philippians about the fruit of his ministry; and the fruit of their generosity:

"All the saints greet you, but especially THOSE WHO ARE OF CAESAR'S HOUSEHOLD." (Philippians 4:22).

It's that time again. Time for our end of the chapter checkup.

So, how about you? Are you a generous person? Is God's kingdom being advanced because of your generosity?

And once again, do you qualify to partake of God's promise, *"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus?"*

Chapter Seven

God Wants To Bless You

"Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account." (Philippians 4:17).

Although the scriptures command us to tithe and give offerings, don't get the wrong idea about this matter. God's not trying to take your money! He doesn't need it! In Psalm 50:12, he says:

"If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world is Mine, and all its fullness."

As I previously said, God does not need, nor is he trying to take your money! However, he does want you to participate in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the earth.

God has given his people the task of fulfilling the Great Commission. Not just the part that says, *"...go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature..."* God has also given his people the responsibility of financing the entire effort.

But, it's also true that God wants to bless you for helping to build his kingdom. In a manner of speaking, God wants to show his appreciation. To be even more specific, he wants to supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus!

In our opening scripture, the Apostle Paul said, *"...not that I seek the gift..."* Now, let's understand something. Paul needed this gift! He desperately needed the offering sent by the Philippian Church. However, his daily agenda wasn't centered around finding ways to raise money! Paul was busy teaching the word of God and expanding the kingdom of God.

He goes on to say, *"...I seek the fruit that abounds to your account."* I believe he was essentially saying, *"because you Philippians have generously supplied my needs, I am praying for you, and believing, and declaring that God will now supply all your needs."*

Notice also that Paul said, "...I seek the fruit that **ABOUNDS** to your account." He didn't say God was going to sparingly dish out a few trinkets. He indicated that God was going to bless them with abundance! Clearly, God wants to bless his people!

Now, it's equally true that God doesn't want his people to become greedy, or fearful about money. When we begin to experience a little prosperity due to the blessings of the Lord, he doesn't want us to store up all our money and become selfish. God wants us to continue giving all of our lives; and as we grow in faith, become even more generous!

So, in this chapter, let's concentrate on what God wants to do for us. In previous chapters, we've concentrated on what God expects from us; but now, let's discover what he wants to do in return.

I'll make it easy for you. In the following scriptures, let's magnify God's intentions by putting his return blessings in **CAPITAL** letters.

*"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food (or provision) in My house, and prove Me now in this, says the Lord of hosts, **IF I WILL NOT OPEN FOR YOU THE WINDOWS OF HEAVEN AND POUR OUT FOR YOU SUCH BLESSING THAT THERE WILL NOT BE ROOM ENOUGH TO RECEIVE IT. AND I WILL REBUKE THE DEVOURER FOR YOUR SAKES...**" (Malachi 3:10-11).*

Notice that God says, "...I will rebuke the *DEVOURER* for your sakes..?" Exactly who is this devourer?

To be more specific, we should ask; who desires to devour your finances, so that you become fearful, and convinced that you cannot afford to obey the financial principles of God's word?

The answer is; **NONE OTHER THAN SATAN HIMSELF!** 1 Peter 5:8 warns us:

"Be sober, be vigilant (on the alert); because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour!"

But, let's not provide an opportunity for the devil! Your obedience to God's word will expose Satan's defeat! Let's continue to magnify God's intentions toward us:

"Give, and IT WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU: GOOD MEASURE, PRESSED DOWN, SHAKEN TOGETHER, AND RUNNING OVER WILL BE PUT INTO YOUR BOSOM (or your lap). For with the same measure that you use, IT WILL BE MEASURED BACK TO YOU." (Luke 6:38).

"Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; so YOUR BARNs WILL BE FILLED WITH PLENTY, AND YOUR VATS WILL OVERFLOW WITH NEW WINE." (Proverbs 3:9-10).

"Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in His commandments...WEALTH AND RICHES WILL BE IN HIS HOUSE..." (Psalm 112:1, 3).

"The generous soul WILL BE MADE RICH, and he who waters WILL ALSO BE WATERED HIMSELF." (Proverbs 11:25).

"That I may cause those who love me TO INHERIT WEALTH, THAT I MAY FILL THEIR TREASURIES." (Proverbs 8:21).

Is there any doubt that God wants to bless you? Only if you do not believe his word!

Here's a little misunderstanding that puts Christians into bondage. I've heard ministers of the gospel say something like, *"you should not give in order to receive. That's giving with self-seeking, or selfish motives!"*

Well, I agree that you should give for the right reasons, and with the right motives!

For example, you should give because it is commanded by God!

Also, You should give because you are an obedient, disciplined follower of Christ; and therefore, God can trust you with money!

You should give because Jesus Christ has changed your life; and now, you have a sincere desire to help spread his gospel throughout the world!

But, according to the Bible, you should also give in order to receive!

The entire biblical concept of giving can be compared to sowing seeds:

"Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness." (2 Corinthians 9:10).

Have you ever heard of a farmer who planted seeds, and then was accused of having the wrong motives because he expected something to grow?

In the same way, when we plant financial seeds into the kingdom of God, we should not only expect them to further the gospel; we should also expect them to produce a harvest for us!

"...the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher ought to thresh in expectation of partaking of the harvest." (1 Corinthians 9:10 AMP).

GIVING IS THE LORD'S WAY OF PROVIDING FOR HIS PEOPLE!

So, when you give, YES, please do check your motives to be sure you're giving for all the right reasons! And, one of those reasons is to receive God's provision for your needs!

Chapter Eight

How To Be Sure God Will Supply All Your Needs

In the first six chapters, I touched on a number of scriptural principles relating to the subject of giving.

Then, in the last chapter, I focused on receiving God's blessings in return.

Now, let's bring things together, and get an overall view of God's principles of giving and receiving; and solidify our understanding of this important issue.

As you take positive steps to implement these principles in your life, you can be confident that God, according to his faithfulness, will supply all your needs!

1. Tithe.

"And ALL THE 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." (Leviticus 27:30).

Please notice, ALL THE TITHE belongs to the Lord! It doesn't belong to you!

"BRING ALL THE TITHES into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove Me now in this, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it." (Malachi 3:10).

Some Christians try to explain that tithing was an Old Testament principle, based on the Old Testament Law; and therefore, is not valid under the New Testament.

I disagree, for several reasons. First of all, tithing was not originally established via the Old Testament Mosaic Law. Tithing has been around much longer! I personally believe that tithing began with Abel, who likely learned from his father, Adam!

"Abel also brought of the FIRSTLINGS of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering." (Genesis 4:4).

Later in the book of Genesis, we have the story of Abram paying tithes to Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God. Genesis 14:20 says, *"...and he gave him a tithe of all."*

For another account of that same event, please see Hebrews 7:1-6.

Here's my point; Abraham, who practiced the principle of tithing, lived 430 years before the Law of Moses (see Galatians 3:17).

However, the most convincing argument for continuing to honor God with a tithe of our income, is the fact that Jesus, in his teachings, did not declare tithing as unnecessary, or no longer required.

As Jesus taught, he would occasionally upgrade the thinking of the people. He would say something like this, *"...you have heard that it was said to those of old....but I say to you..."* As an example, listen to Matthew 5:27-28:

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

By so doing, Jesus upgraded our thinking about certain matters, and therefore gave us a clearer understanding of the truth.

But, Jesus never upgraded our thinking on the subject of tithing. The only time he mentioned tithing, he reinforced the principle.

"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. THESE YOU OUGHT TO HAVE DONE, without leaving the others undone." (Matthew 23: 23).

The scribes and Pharisees were being so careful about the law, and their traditions, that they were actually tithing of their spices!

Jesus rebuked them for ignoring justice, mercy and faith; but even while emphasizing the importance of these weightier matters, he didn't say that tithing was no longer required!

He didn't even suggest that tithing of their spices was a bit ridiculous and unnecessary. Instead, he said, "...THESE YOU OUGHT TO HAVE DONE..!"

2. Give Offerings in Addition to the Tithe.

"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." (Luke 6:38).

This scripture is talking about offerings. It says, "...with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

God has already established the measure of the tithe, (10%); but in this principle, you establish the measure!

This understanding is reinforced in 2 Corinthians 9:7. Paul is receiving an offering for the saints at Jerusalem because of a prophecy which warned about a coming famine (see Acts 11:27-29). Listen as Paul explains to the people about an offering, NOT THE TITHE:

"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."

You don't have to purpose in your heart whether or not to tithe. The commandment to tithe is recorded, and forever settled in the eternal word of God!

In fact, I believe you should tithe even if you're doing so grudgingly, or of necessity; simply because it's obedience to the word of God. Hopefully, you'll do it cheerfully!

But, God desires that we give offerings as well as tithe. When we tithe, we're doing that which is required; but when we give offerings, we're doing so of our own free will!

Where we give offerings, when we give them, and the amount we give are under our control. It pleases God when we give beyond that which is required!

3. Give To The Poor.

"He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and he will pay back what he has given." (Proverbs 19:17).

Once we lived next door to a lady who had been abandoned by her husband. She had two small children, and was having a very difficult time financially.

One day, she told me she would have to quit her job because of the inability to pay her automobile insurance. It wasn't much of a job, but it was all she had. She needed the automobile for transportation to the job.

God spoke to me to pay her insurance. The very next day, I received an unexpected check in the mail for the amount I paid for her insurance, plus about five dollars extra. When I helped this lady, I was lending to the Lord, and he repaid me!

"He who gives to the poor will not lack, but he who hides his eyes will have many curses." (Proverbs 28:27).

"For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me." (Matthew 25:35-36).

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

Once I was standing in line at a fastfood restaurant, waiting to order food. Suddenly, God spoke to me, and had me turn and look to my right. There was an old lady standing in the corner. She was filthy; she was wearing dirty, raggedy, old clothes; and she was missing about half of her teeth.

The other people in line were all laughing and talking and ignoring this lady. Maybe they were choosing not to notice her! However, when you belong to God, he'll make sure you notice things he wants you to do.

I determined that I would buy her a meal. When I got to the head of the line, I looked for her, but she was gone. I ran out of the restaurant and saw her going up the street. I raced after her and asked if she was hungry? She said, *"yes, but she couldn't accept any hand-outs."*

I informed her that I was a Christian, and that God expected me to feed those who were hungry and poor. I gave her some money and she ordered herself a good meal. I also gave her a little extra so she would have some money in her pocket!

God not only expects us to tithe. He not only desires that we give offerings in addition to the tithe. He also wants us to have pity on the poor.

4. Honor Your Parents.

"Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise: THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU and you may live long on the earth." (Ephesians 6:2-3).

God commands children to obey their parents (see Ephesians 6:1).

When we become adults, and are no longer required to obey our parents, God still expects us to honor them! One way God expects us to honor our parents is to help them financially, if they need it!

Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees, because they had devised a means of releasing themselves from the responsibility of caring for their parents.

"...all too well you reject the commandment of God that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, Honor your father and mother; and he who curses father or mother, let him be put to death. But you say, if a man says to his father or mother, Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban (that is, dedicated to the temple); and you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother." (Mark 7:9-12).

Again, I need to clarify something. When the Bible talks about helping our parents, it's talking about offerings, NOT THE TITHE!

Someone once questioned me, "*doesn't the Bible say charity begins at home?*" They were suggesting that if you needed the tithe to take care of your family, then you weren't obligated to give it to God.

I don't know where people come up with such ideas. Certainly not from the Bible!

Remember, Jesus said the scribes and Pharisees were rejecting a commandment of God in order to keep their TRADITION!

God would not have us reject one of his commandments in order to keep another! The tithe has a very specific place to be given, and a very specific purpose for it's use! More about that in Chapter 10.

Let's get back to our point. The scribes and Pharisees had created a tradition which they said released them from the responsibility to help their needy parents. Essentially, the tradition said that all of their money was dedicated to the temple.

It's questionable whether the scribes and Pharisees ever gave this so-called dedicated money to the temple; but even if they did, they themselves eventually benefited from it!

Basically, their days consisted of hanging around the temple, debating the Law of Moses, and occasionally making up some new laws!

Here's my point. If your parents are needy, God expects you to honor them, by being a blessing to them financially. So, don't create an excuse which supposedly releases you from that scriptural responsibility.

Remember, the Bible says, "*Honor your father and mother...THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU..!*" In other words, if you honor your needy parents by being a blessing to them financially; then, God will make sure that it's well with you financially!

5. Honor The Lord First.

"Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the FIRSTFRUITS of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9-10).

Some Christians give to God last. After taking care of all their financial obligations, and some of their personal priorities, they give God whatever is left over. Sometimes, It may not include offerings. It might not even amount to a tithe!

I've made it a priority to honor God with the FIRSTFRUITS of my increase. I'm talking about both the tithe and offerings. God has never left me destitute.

I remember one time after giving a tithe, and also offerings to several ministries, that I had 19 cents left in my checking account.

At the time, it was my only bank account. I didn't have a savings account! I didn't have any stocks, bonds, annuities or anything else; just 19 cents! God didn't abandon me! Shortly thereafter, he financially blessed me!

6. Give To God Even During Hard Financial Times.

Since seriously committing my life to God, I have never failed to tithe, or to give offerings, regardless of whether times were fat or lean.

Once, after figuring our monthly budget, we discovered that we could either tithe and give offerings, or eat; but we couldn't do both. My wife and I discussed the matter, and chose to obey the commandment to tithe and give offerings on the strength of Psalm 37:25:

"I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread."

During a period of about one month, some amazing things happened. One night a lady came to church carrying a huge fruit basket. It was the biggest fruit basket I had ever seen. It contained many varieties of fruit, including whole pineapples. This dear lady was sort of frail, and it was all she could do to carry that basket. She walked right down the aisle of the church to the front row where I was seated with the other pastors. She set that fruit basket right in my lap, and said, *"God told me to bring this to you."*

At the time, I was only an associate pastor; but she didn't give the senior pastor, nor the other associates so much as a grape!

Another lady came to the church one day and practically threw a package at me. She said, "*here, every time I try to cut this thing, God won't let me. He keeps saying, take it to Pastor Jack!*" The package contained a ham.

A number of times that month, people came up to me and said, "*we've been meaning to invite you and your family for dinner. Would this week be a good time?*" I replied, "*this week would definitely be a good time!*"

We never missed a meal. God took wonderful care of us, because we chose to keep giving, even during a financially hard time.

7. Be A Generous Person.

"The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself." (Proverbs 11:25).

You can implement and establish all these principles in your life. You can choose to fervently obey God and honor the principles of his word with your finances.

As you do so, you can, with confidence, claim and cling to the promises of God.

You can become like the Christians at Philippi, knowing that you too qualify to claim God's promise, "*And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus!*"

Chapter Nine

Is There A Coming Financial Collapse?

These days, if you walk into a book store, whether Christian or secular, you'll find lots of books which prophesy or predict an imminent financial collapse of our monetary systems.

Most of these books focus on America's problems with the national debt, trade deficits, the declining value of the dollar and other economic uncertainties.

However, the general feeling is that such a financial collapse would affect not only the United States, but the entire world.

This brings us to an important question. From a biblical perspective; **IS THERE, FOR CERTAIN, A COMING FINANCIAL COLLAPSE OF OUR MONETARY SYSTEMS?**

Although the Bible seems to imply that the end times will be characterized by extreme economic conditions; I'm convinced, despite the multitude of warnings, prophecies and predictions, that nobody, for sure, knows the answer to that question!

Yet, I would have to admit, that the signs are pointing in that direction!

So, what if there is a financial collapse of the world's monetary systems? Will Christians be affected by such a collapse; and if so, how will we survive???

Earlier, we looked at a portion of scripture from which God was challenging rich people. Let's look again at those scriptures. I think we will find something there for all of us:

*"Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in UNCERTAIN RICHES but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, **STORING UP FOR THEMSELVES A GOOD FOUNDATION FOR THE TIME TO COME**, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (1 Timothy 6:17-19).*

Please notice two things. First, the Bible refers to wealth as **UNCERTAIN RICHES!** Not even those who are extremely rich can be assured of the future. Regardless of how much money you have managed to store up, I advise you to put your trust in the living God!

Secondly, let's focus on that part of the scripture which says, "**...STORING UP FOR THEMSELVES A GOOD FOUNDATION FOR THE TIME TO COME...**"

What is this, "*...time to come..*," and how do we store up for it?

I don't think it's referring to Heaven only! Even though, "*...storing up for themselves a good foundation..*," may ultimately apply to the hereafter; I'm convinced that it will also affect us in the here and now!

Let me say it another way; perhaps this, "*...time to come..*," in addition to referring to the hereafter; could also be speaking of **TIMES OF FINANCIAL INSTABILITY HERE ON THE EARTH**, when even riches will be uncertain!

How then, are we to prepare for such a time? How do we; whether or not we're rich; store up for ourselves a good foundation for the time to come, whatever time may bring?

The answer is right there in that portion of scripture! It says, "**...LET THEM DO GOOD, THAT THEY BE RICH IN GOOD WORKS, READY TO GIVE, WILLING TO SHARE..!**"

But, we need to be more specific. Since this portion of scripture is speaking about finances, then we need to understand how to:

(1) DO GOOD, (2) BE RICH IN GOOD WORKS, (3) BE READY TO GIVE, and (4) WILLING TO SHARE, specifically in the area of finances!

I provided the answer for you in the last chapter. If a financial collapse occurs, or even if it looks like one is going to occur:

- (1) Keep on tithing,
- (2) Continue to give offerings,
- (3) Don't stop helping the poor,
- (4) Make sure you honor your parents,
- (5) Honor the Lord with your firstfruits,
- (6) Give to God even during hard times,
- (7) And...always be generous!

People today get overly concerned about the future. There's a tremendous emphasis on preparing for retirement. There are multitudes of individual retirement plans, annuities, pension plans, and other such retirement programs.

I'm not suggesting that these things are wrong. They're just uncertain!

Personally, I can't understand why anyone would ever retire? As for me, I'm going to work for God until Jesus returns, or until the day I go home to Heaven!

Getting back to our point; the best way to prepare for the future, regardless of what the future may bring, is to practice the financial principles and commandments of God's word!

Why? I'm certain you already know the answer!

Even if all the banks fail; even if the Social Security System becomes completely bankrupt; even if the insurance companies go under; and even if pension plans, annuities, stocks, bonds, and other such things become totally worthless; yet, **THE WORD OF GOD WILL NOT FAIL!**

A bit of practical advice. Romans 13:8 says:

"OWE NO ONE ANYTHING except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law."

I realize this scripture is primarily talking about walking in love; but I also believe that God, through his Holy Spirit, is prompting his people to get out of debt!

Now, I understand that in today's society, especially in America, one often has to borrow money to obtain the basic necessities of life. I'm talking about things like home mortgages, automobile loans, and other necessities.

It's not my intention to put anyone under guilt because they owe money. But, I'm also convinced that God wants his people to get out of debt.

So, set some goals for yourself, and begin working toward financial freedom. Obviously, financial freedom will enable you to dedicate more of your time, energy, **AND FINANCES** to the work of God!

I'm equally convinced that God's best for us, his people, is reflected in his instructions to Israel in Deuteronomy 28:12:

"...you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow!"

Chapter Ten

Some Practical Information

On the subject of tithing, there is often confusion and controversy! People frequently ask me, "*where should I give the tithe?*"

I've heard pastors fervently declare that the tithe goes exclusively to the local church; and all other ministries, including evangelists, Bible teachers, missionaries, musicians, singers, etc., are supported by offerings that are in addition to the tithe.

I've heard others ministers emphasize that you should tithe where you're being spiritually fed. They use the analogy that you wouldn't eat a fine meal at one restaurant, and then pay at another restaurant!

So, just exactly where should the tithe be given? To answer this question, we must look once again to Malachi 3:10:

"BRING ALL THE TITHES INTO THE STOREHOUSE, that there may be food in my house, and prove Me now in this, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."

This word, "storehouse," literally means "a depository." Being more specific, a depository is: "a place where something can be kept or stored until it is needed."

In the Old Testament, we see the example of people actually bringing items of food (*oil, wine, grain, the firstlings of their flocks*), which were then stored or kept until needed.

In today's society, the depository would most likely be a bank account, or some other means of storing FINANCES until they are needed.

However, even in today's society, I think it would be perfectly acceptable if you wanted to tithe food and other items, as long as you also tithe of your financial income!

Our next question should be; where is this storehouse?

In the Old Testament, or under the Old Covenant, the storehouse was the temple:

"Now Hezekiah commanded them to prepare rooms IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD, and they prepared them. Then they faithfully brought in the offerings, the tithes, and the dedicated things..." (2 Chronicles 31:11-12).

Although there were exceptions to the laws governing tithing (see Deuteronomy 14: 24-25); primarily, the tithe was to be brought into the temple for two basic reasons.

First, the actual presence of the Lord was there! Secondly, it was the place where the priests and Levites served God!

In a similar manner, we should bring the tithe into the place where the actual presence of God abides. Under the New Testament, or New Covenant, this place is not a temple; it's not a local church building; nor is it any other physical structure or object made by hands.

"Do you not know that YOU ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Under the New Covenant, which we now live, the tithe should still be brought into the temple. Only now, the temple is the body of Christ!

This brings us to our next question; what is the purpose for the tithe?

"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that THERE MAY BE FOOD IN MY HOUSE..." (Malachi 3:10).

As I revealed earlier, this word, "food," literally refers to actual items of food; but the implication is, "PROVISION!"

The tithe then, should be brought into the body of Christ, which is the present day Temple of God, that there may be PROVISION FOR THE WORK OF GOD.

Finally, let's answer the question; exactly who, or what is this provision for? Numbers 18:21 reveals the following:

"Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting."

The children of Levi included both the priests and the Levites. The priests being those who directly served God by offering sacrifices for the people; and the Levites being those who indirectly served God by being custodians of the temple.

In the body of Christ today, we still have the equivalent of the priests and Levites.

The priests would be those in the fivefold ministry (see Ephesians 4:11).

The Levites would be those who support the fivefold ministry such as administrators, secretaries, various artists, custodians, and any other type of the ministry of helps.

Here is my personal recommendation on the matter of tithing; if you are committed to a local church, where you are serving God, and being spiritually fed, give your tithe there!

However, it's important to understand that you are not scripturally bound to give your tithe only to a local church. Should the Holy Spirit instruct you to give the tithe elsewhere within the body of Christ, for the work of the Lord, I believe you have the freedom to obey!

Sorry, but the tithe does not go to charities other than the work of God; even if they are combating muscular dystrophy, or some other worthwhile cause!

And remember, the tithe is brought into the body of Christ for the primary purpose of financially supporting those who are depending upon the ministry for their livelihood!

"Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel." (1 Corinthians 9:14).

Over the years, whenever I have taught on the subject of finances, I could almost be assured that someone would ask me this next question; *"should I tithe on the gross amount of my income, or on the net amount?"*

When people ask this question, they're specifically asking if they should tithe on the amount of their income before the federal and state governments take out taxes; or if they should tithe on the amount left over after the taxes have been taken out?

I've heard people lightheartedly respond, *"if you want a net return, then tithe on the net amount; but if you want a gross return, then tithe on the gross amount."*

Well, that's a seemingly logical, humorous response; but to be completely truthful, it's not a scriptural response!

Unfortunately, the Bible does not provide an absolute, concrete answer to this question. Ultimately, it becomes a matter of personal conscience between you and God. However, there is a scripture which provides us with some insight and guidance:

"Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all YOUR INCREASE." (Proverbs 3:9).

The decision you have to make, between you and God, is whether YOUR INCREASE, is the amount of money you make, before or after taxes?

Normally, at this point in my discussion, someone will ask the next obvious question, *"Brother Jack, how about you? Do you tithe on the gross amount of your income, or on the net amount?"*

Personally, I tithe on the gross amount. I consider the total amount of my income as increase, regardless of where it comes from, and regardless of what the government requires in taxes. That is also my recommendation to you!

You see, I've observed some problems in this area. Sometimes people will decide that not only are their taxes exempt from tithable responsibility, but also such things as rent, mortgage, utilities, car payments and other such obligations. By the time they finish deducting all their so-called obligations, their increase, as they calculate it, is small; and the amount they eventually tithe is also small!

If you're not careful, you could deceive yourself into totally eliminating the responsibility to give to God!

I'm not trying to figure out how little I can give to God. I'm striving to be generous to the work of God. I sincerely desire to play a large role in fulfilling the Great Commission!

Within certain segments of the body of Christ, there is a teaching called, "*whole life stewardship*." Basically, this teaching says that since, "*The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness...*" (Psalm 24:1); then everything we possess already belongs to God.

Therefore, if a person truly dedicates their life to serving God, then giving by percentage (*tithing 10%*) is irrelevant, because the truly dedicated person is willing to give all to God!

Well, I'll have to admit, such a concept sounds quite spiritual; but I believe there are some potential pitfalls. Let me explain why.

This concept of, "*whole life stewardship*," could easily provide undisciplined Christians, of whom there are many, with an excuse not to obey the principles of God's word.

A person could reason that since they have already given everything to God, then there's really no need to practice specific Bible principles such as: tithing, giving offerings, helping the poor, honoring your parents, honoring God with your firstfruits, giving to God during hard times, and being generous!

Let me be honest with you; I've heard a lot of preaching about giving up everything for the sake of the gospel, but I could likely count on the fingers of one hand, the Christians I know who have actually done it!

On the other hand, one would probably need a high capacity computer to add up all the Christians who don't tithe!

If anyone truly lives a life of, "*whole life stewardship*," I commend them. However, if you would closely examine the lives of most Christians who claim to have given their all, I think you would discover that about 99% of them really haven't given up all that much!

Of course, I believe all of us should be willing to give up whatever God requires for the sake of the gospel; but primarily, I believe God expects us to obey the financial principles he has clearly set forth in his word!

Here's another portion of scripture that has caused some confusion:

"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly." (Matthew 6:1-4).

Christians have imagined that this portion of scripture is referring to all types of giving. Consequently, they try to be secretive about all their giving.

I've heard of Christians who always give cash. They won't write a check, because the pastor or the bookkeeper would know where the money came from.

I've heard of others who won't permit a record to be kept of their giving; not even for income tax purposes; because again, someone would know what they were giving, and it wouldn't be in secret!

The key to understanding these scriptures is found in the words, "*charitable deeds.*"

In the King James Version of the Bible, it uses the word, "alms," which literally means, gifts given to the poor, or to the needy.

ALMS ARE NOT TITHES, OR OTHER TYPES OF OFFERINGS; just gifts to the poor!

So, why would God have us secretly give to the poor? I can think of several reasons. First, some poor people are proud and they wouldn't accept a gift if they knew where it was coming from.

Second, some poor people are not proud, and if they knew where help was coming from, they would "camp out" on your doorstep!

Primarily though, I believe God wants poor people to recognize him as their source. If they're always looking to people, organizations, or the government as their source, they will never be delivered out of poverty.

However, if they will look to God as their source, and begin to practice the biblical principles of giving and receiving, they will deliver themselves from poverty!

Sometimes people ask me, "*Brother Jack, exactly who are the poor?*"

In today's society, there are all kinds of homeless people and street people wandering around our cities; most of whom appear able-bodied enough to get a job and work!

My sister-in-law intended to help a certain homeless man, until she observed him counting a big roll of money.

I knew a homeless lady who lived in a park in Honolulu. She attended church on a regular basis, usually wearing dirty, smelly, old clothes. Many of the church members helped her financially. Later, it was discovered that she had a trust fund in a California bank.

So, the question is a valid one. Exactly who are the poor? Again, the Bible has a way of uncovering the false. The Apostle Paul, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians, says:

"For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

This verse of scripture helps us to understand that the genuinely poor are, **VICTIMS OF CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND THEIR CONTROL**, rather than just lazy people!

So, how are we to know the difference? Obviously, you would have to observe someone for a while to determine their true state.

Other than that, I remind you of the importance of being sensitive to the Holy Spirit, rather than being led by your emotions!

One final thought. God does indeed want to bless you financially; and he doesn't care if you become prosperous. His word is clear on this matter. There are too many examples of wealthy people in the Bible, who got that way because God blessed them!

However, the primary reason God wants to bless you, is to enable you to be a blessing! Do you remember God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:2?

"I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and YOU SHALL BE A BLESSING!"

God wants you to help fulfill the Great Commission! He wants you to help build the kingdom of God; and he just wants you to help people in need!

You see, the truth is; you could become prosperous without God!

There are people who have become rich by cheating, dishonesty, or some other illegal or unethical means.

There are also honest people; who don't even know God; who have become wealthy through hard work and thrifty management of their money.

The teachings in this book are not about becoming wealthy. The question is not: DO YOU WANT TO BECOME PROSPEROUS?

The question is: DO YOU CHOOSE TO LIVE YOUR LIFE ACCORDING TO THE FINANCIAL PRINCIPLES OF THE WORD OF GOD?

Chapter Eleven

An Even More Important Issue

Are you truly a Christian? Have you been born again by receiving Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?

God's principles of financial giving and receiving are very important; but there's nothing more important than being right with God!

You could give away all your money, even to the work of God, and still not be a genuine, born again Christian!

There are many generous people in the world; some who have given enormous sums of money to worthwhile causes. Afterwards, I've heard misinformed people make comments like, "*they're such a fine, Christian person!*"

I commend people who are generous. I applaud the efforts they have made to relieve the sufferings of mankind. Unfortunately, this does not make them a Christian!

The Bible says that sin separates us from God. Somehow, that sin must be dealt with. It cannot be paid off with money!

That's why Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross. He died for our sins. Literally, he shed his life's blood to wash away our sins, and give us a right standing before God:

"...To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." (Revelation 1:5).

The Bible also says:

"But as many as received Him, (Jesus Christ), to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." (John 1:12).

Right now, you can enter into a relationship of right standing with God. It's your decision, because God has created you with a free will. Ultimately, this will prove to be the most important decision of your entire life!

If you're serious about this matter, here is a prayer you can pray. Direct your prayer to God! Pray out loud! Don't be embarrassed or ashamed!

Heavenly Father, I thank you for sending Jesus Christ into this world to die for my sins.

I thank you that his shed blood washes away my sin, and gives me a right standing before God.

Heavenly Father, I also believe, according to the scriptures, that you raised Jesus from the dead. He is alive now! He can come into my life by his Spirit, and cause me to be born again.

Lord Jesus, right now I choose to put my faith in you. I receive you as my Savior. I ask you to come into my life and cleanse me from sin!

I confess and proclaim that from this time forward in my life, Jesus Christ is my Lord!

Amen.

Additional copies of this book
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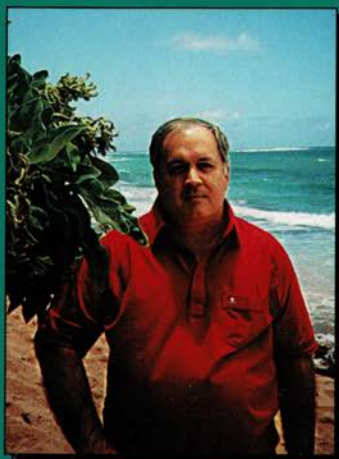
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Philippians 4:19 is one of the most familiar, and one of the most claimed verses of scripture in the Bible!

"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

However, like other promises of God, there are some things we must FIRST do in order to qualify to receive the promise!



Jack Michael is an Author, Missionary, and Bible Teacher. As a Bible Teacher, Jack concentrates on building a foundation of God's word into the lives of Christians. His teaching has been described as clear, understandable and practical. As a Missionary, God has given Jack a ministry vision and special burden to minister to the many peoples who inhabit the islands of the world.

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