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## Stewardship Part IX

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### The Teething of Tithing

How do you feel when churches, ministries, or even missionaries seek you, asking for funds? Does it give you a toothache? Do you cringe and make the quickest possible exit, or do you see those requests as opportunities to serve? A lot of people run away from stewardship because they do not see it as God does. This is a reflection of our spiritual condition! We should never separate money and finances from our spiritual life. Yet, so many Christians do, seeking to be cheerful with what they can keep, not with how they can be used. Have you ever thought that the way we give is a prime picture of what is in our hearts and our level of commitment to our Lord? And, when we refuse to give or are very stingy, we are missing key opportunities to serve and be used of God?

If we really want to be mature and growing Christians, we must take the Bible seriously! That means discovering God's character, holiness, fear, and awe, and learning how we can grow further in the depths of the faith. Then, perhaps in realizing what Christ did for us, we can start to take to heart the seriousness of being a wise steward. Stewardship is an act of worship and gratitude by the Believer, in response to His grace. In so doing, we acknowledge God's power and authority over our lives. Then, we respond to others around us with these godly precepts.

Stewardship and tithing are hot subjects today and Christians seem to love to debate them. Unfortunately, most seem to have a skewed idea of what these subjects entail, and only impart their assumptions, not the facts from God's Word. I just read through some Christian message boards about this topic, and what amazed me was how people were arguing back and forth out of total ignorance, from both sides. Some people, saying they were pastors, were getting Greek words totally wrong and passages out of their context. People claiming to be mature Christians were using inappropriate language and tone, putting the other person down and even verbally attacking those who did not share their skewed opinion. Neither group was willing to dig into the text of the Bible to see what it really says; they just wanted to spout off with their preconceived ideas.

As a former academic debater, I know that it is essential to form an argument on facts and logic, and not emotionalism and presumptions. With Scripture, this is fundamental and essential! Nevertheless, these message boards were all filled with assumptions and emotions, no real facts, no word studies, no thought-through doctrinal arguments. It was just, "what I believe" or "what my church does." Oh, how sad this is! The Bible was being used just like a buffet, to pick and choose what would fit their experiences and mindsets, ignoring the rest, and unconcerned to what God's Word really said in its simple, clear, and concise form. The Bible means what it says and says what it means. The key is context--not reading into it what is not there, or taking out what is there.

One clear theme emerged from these message board “discussions.” People did not want to take responsibility for what God’s Word said, or what stewardship really means in applying it to their wallets. Emotions and personal Will blocked reason and Scripture. Instead of carefully crafted arguments, people mused the Word to force their views so they did not have to give to the church. I was dumfounded, and thought these must be high school or young college students who never read a Bible, but some of them said they were pastors! I do not know if that is true, due to the immaturity of their language and arguments, but it would seem that the checking of facts and conviction of the truth were definitely absent.

## Questions

1. In your experience, what happens when all a person does is chase wealth?
2. How can being a good steward give you a sense of victory, hope, and comfort?
3. How have you seen blogs and message board discussions on stewardship? How often are the points from Scripture and from personal feelings? Why does this matter?
4. Why does it seem that most Christians today have a skewed idea of what stewardship is about and only impart their assumptions, not the facts from God’s Word?
5. How has money enticed you in the past? How has it become an “identity” for you or for others whom you have known?
6. What can you still learn from these passages we have been studying about being responsible?
7. Are you chasing your desires or our Lord? How can the answer to this question help determine what direction you take in life?
8. How would you describe your perspective on life; what is God doing in you and through you?
9. As you look back on your life, do you see good times or bad times as more prominent?
10. What do you need to do to focus on how you can be more obedient with His call to the poor and oppressed?
11. How does our love and kindness unveil the possibilities and opportunities Jesus gives us? What happens when we do not do this?
12. How does the fact that one of the aspects of the great news of Christ gives us the ability to learn and grow through good financial gains and your tough money days? How can it better keep you from stress and worry?

13. To seek wealth over God and His call will rob you of His precious opportunities and the substance of Himself. How so? Why not?

14. When something comes your way, whether it is a monetary blessing or a problem, how can you take it, handle it with excellence, and learn and grow from it? How would your walk with Christ grow and in turn be a blessing to others if you did this?

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